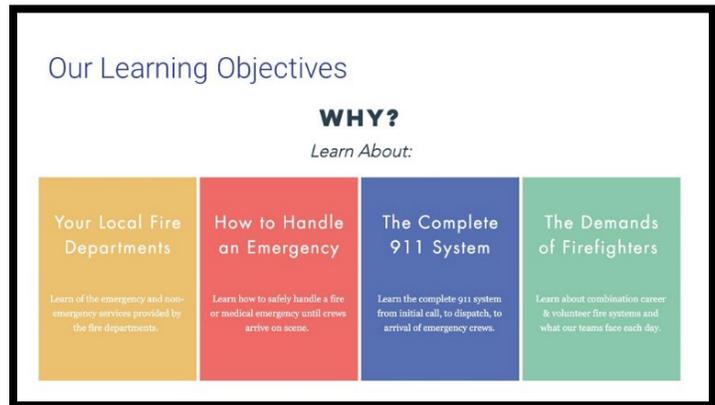


COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION: IT AFFECTS EVERYTHING

Jordan Cramer/Community Risk Reduction Coordinator

Citizen Fire Academies (CFA) can be an effective tool in connecting with your community. These types of interactions can affect your organization in a multitude of ways, some of which may be unexpected and highly beneficial to the fire department and the community.

Following are insight and tips shared from the successful experiences of the Peters Township Fire Department (Pittsburgh PA) in hosting Citizen's Fire Academies.



10 STEPS TO PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE CITIZEN FIRE ACADEMY:

1. Define your purpose for hosting a CFA
2. Determine program goals
3. Define what success looks like
4. Determine length of program (Suggest 6-8 weeks)
5. Determine class length (No more than 3 hours)
6. Create a budget:
 - Grants are available: Contact Kaitlin Lutz, at IAFC (KLutz@iafc.org/O:703-273-9835) <https://www.iafc.org/blogs/blog/iafc/2021/06/23/national-vws-fire-camp-scholarships>
7. Establish minimum age and develop a liability waiver (Consult your attorney)
8. Develop application process (Google forms work great)
9. Ensure access to ample turnout gear, equipment, and supplies
10. Brainstorm Marketing Strategies: Press release and print articles in newspaper; social media posts, township-wide email blasts, website launch with online application, paid social media advertising, market to various community groups, word-of-mouth, etc.

SAMPLE ACADEMY OUTLINE:

- Session 1: Welcome, Introduction and Orientation
- Session 2: Engine Company Ops
- Session 3: Truck Company Ops
- Session 4: Vehicle, Rope, and Water Rescue
- Session 5: EMS & EMA
- Session 6: All About 911

**All participants are required to schedule and participate in an individual ride-along*



OUTCOMES:

- ✓ Marketing Matters:
 - 16 applicants in first week (6=M, 10=F; 10=60+ y/o)
- ✓ Incredible relationships were formed between:
 - Participating fire departments
 - The fire department and the participants
 - Participants
- ✓ Increased pride and public support via social media and township council meetings
- ✓ Resulted in three new volunteer firefighters (2=Female, 1=Male)
- ✓ Resulted in non-emergency volunteers for community response team
- ✓ Created a community of champions for the fire department who were vocal advocates for the financial needs of public safety and who shared the info they had learned with friends, family, neighbors, and anyone who would listen!



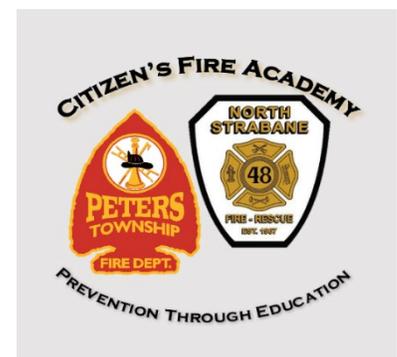
PRO-TIPS:

- ❑ Make it fun! Share a meal to give them that firehouse feel.
- ❑ Less PowerPoint and allow more time for Q&A and open discussions
- ❑ Keep concepts simple for lay-people and be sure to explain/outline jargon and acronyms
- ❑ Maximize hands-on activities everyone can do safely
- ❑ Stay in touch with CFA alumni and keep them informed and involved in your community engagement efforts

MAKE THE INVESTMENT:

A Citizen's Fire Academy is worth the investment of time, energy, and financial support. It can have a positive impact on your organization in so many tangible and intangible ways:

- ✓ Recruitment of operational and non-operational volunteers
- ✓ Retention and pride in your existing members
- ✓ Improved public relations and image
- ✓ Fire and life safety education: Community Risk Reduction
- ✓ Fundraising support
- ✓ Improved operational capabilities
- ✓ Capital improvement
- ✓ Strategic plans



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Bonus Content: "Building Community Equity—A Proven Best Practice"
<https://www.firstarriving.com/building-community-equity-a-proven-best-practice/>