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### Headline Archives

#### FBI CITIZENS' ACADEMIES An Eye-Opening Experience

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A member of the El Paso Citizens' Academy takes aim during target practice. Citizens' Academy classes generally meet 10 times for three hours each session and are taught by Special Agents in Charge of a field office and by their senior managers and senior agent experts.

*"My exposure to the FBI was very limited, just what I saw on TV," said Shannan Menya, Minneapolis.*

*"[The FBI] couldn't be trusted," believed Rev. Dr. Rocky Brown, Philadelphia.*

*"The agency was little more than interstate police," explained Azra Hussain, Phoenix.*

This was what three community leaders thought they knew about the FBI **before** they completed our Citizens' Academy Program.



And **after** the program?

*"I learned so many things!" says Menya.*

*"FBI employees are decent, down-to-earth, regular people concerned about the well-being of America and the world," says Rev. Dr. Brown.*

*"Its job is so much more than just policing...it's involved in so many different areas," adds Hussain.*



Phoenix Citizens' Academy participants learn the ins and outs of evidence collection

**For more than 15 years, our local Citizens' Academies have given some 10,000 community leaders an up-close and personal look at the mission and capabilities of the FBI—and changed plenty of hearts and minds along the way. Why is that so important to us? Because by building stronger partnerships with civic leaders, we are better able to do our jobs. The graduates of our Citizens' Academies enable us stay better attuned to the needs and issues of our communities, are more willing to pick up the phone and call us with information that could help solve or prevent crimes, become "ambassadors" of the FBI who dispel myths and misunderstandings about the Bureau, and often go on to join alumni chapters that work directly with us on all kinds of public safety initiatives.**

We asked some of the graduates about their experiences...

**What was your favorite part of the program?**

*Chuck Matthews, Phoenix: "Investigating a mock kidnapping case. We got to go out into the field and work on a simulated crime scene under the guidance of the Evidence Response Team and several agents. We collected and processed evidence...interviewed likely suspects...and after analyzing the data, determined the likely perpetrator."*

*Suzanne Koeplinger, Minneapolis: "Meeting my classmates—people I might not have had a chance to meet otherwise—and establishing really good relationships with them."*

*Sarjit Bains, Minneapolis: "Learning about some of the FBI's behind-the-scenes work, like how they provide assistance to local law enforcement agencies."*



Joseph Perschini, head of the Washington Field Office, talks with a Citizens' Academy class

**What did you learn that you didn't know before?**

*Dr. Saeed Fahia, Minneapolis: "The fact that you have a civil rights department that follows up on hate crimes. (Dr. Fahia noted that he grew up in Somalia, "where people had a somewhat negative view of police.")"*

*Cathy Mick, Philadelphia: "The FBI is involved in a lot more danger than I realized. Also, they want to interact more with the public as a friend, not a foe."*

*Zafar Siddiqui, Minneapolis: "How the FBI handles the threats of espionage, white-collar crime, and hate crimes."*

**Knowing what you know now, how confident are you in the FBI's ability to protect the nation from a terrorist attack or other threats to public safety?**

*Jerry Fogel, Kansas City: "No doubt in my mind that except for the FBI being on duty 24/7, who knows what terrible situation we might find ourselves in...I know we're in good hands."*

*Stacy Irving, Philadelphia: "I'm more confident than ever that the FBI, working in partnership with the private sector and other law enforcement agencies, keeps our nation and our communities safe from those who wish to do us harm."*

*Charles Jean Baptiste, Kansas City: "I'm 100 percent confident...although we can't totally depend on the agency, the support of the community is also important."*



Like many other graduating classes, members of a recent Minneapolis Citizens' Academy traveled to the FBI Academy in rural Virginia for a tour of our training facility. They also visited FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

If you're interested in applying to attend a Citizens' Academy, contact your local field office.

**Resources:**

- [More on the Citizens' Academy Program](#)
- [More on FBI Community Outreach efforts](#)

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