

## **Citizens Academy Grad Speech**

I would like to tell you all just a bit about our class' experience from when we toured the APD Dispatch Facility. First, Karen Symonds, the Lead Dispatcher, greeted us and gave us some information about how calls are dispatched once they are received.

Did you know that the area served by the Anchorage Police Department stretches from Potters Marsh all the way to Eklutna and there is only one dispatch facility for this entire area? There, they take all 9-1-1 calls for both the police and the fire departments. Within 24 hours, usually from midnight to midnight, the dispatchers receive about 900 calls per day. One of my classmates told me this week, "It takes a certain type of person to work in dispatch. They address phone calls to send officers to run towards situations that everyone else runs away from."

We also met with Paul Inks, one of the Crime Lab Technicians who works within the Dispatch Facility. At the time, Mr. Inks was working on a case in which about 400 pieces of evidence were collected for this single incident. He is one of 4 technicians who examine photographs, fingerprints from numerous types of surfaces, shoe impressions and more within this one lab.

At the end of our tour, our class gathered in the same room where swing-shift officers were being debriefed for their 3-11pm. patrol hours. As I stood in silence watching these 24 officers get informed about the known dangers for the evening, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude as I looked at each of them sitting in front of me. There were some experienced officers and some fresh out of training in the mix, but one common thing they all shared was the look of determination upon their faces to do their job with bravery and integrity. Another one of you mentioned that,

prior to this class, you would say a quick prayer any time you saw patrol cars or heard any sirens racing by; now, with all of the knowledge we have as of today, you feel as though all of our Anchorage police officers are family to you. Even though we have not met all of the officers that serve our community, all of us do deeply care for each of them. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize all of the people who we have met and observed, not only when we toured the Dispatch Facility, but those who have come to talk to us every week as well, for being self-less in their work. I myself was constantly amazed every week by the real life stories that were shared with our class and so humbled by those we have met who continually put themselves in stressful and life-threatening situations in order to make our city a safer place for the rest of us. On behalf of our entire class, thank you.