

# Citizens' Law Enforcement Academy

**Gilmer County Sheriff's Office**

As part of Sheriff Stacy Nicholson's continuing efforts to make the Gilmer County Sheriff's Office more transparent and responsive to the community, the Citizens' Law Enforcement Academy was created June 23, 2011. Since its implementation, this free program has graduated a total of six classes.

The program was originally developed in England as a means of bringing the community and the police closer together. The first Citizens' Law Enforcement Academy in the United States was conducted by the Orlando, Fla., Police Department in 1985. These programs are now common in law enforcement agencies throughout the

country.

The primary goal of the Gilmer County Sheriff's Office Citizens' Law Enforcement Academy is to enhance the relationship between the citizens and the law enforcement community. Graduates of the program will have a better understanding of law enforcement and many misconceptions of "what we do, how we do it, and why we do it."

To an individual citizen, it may sometimes appear that we, in law enforcement, are not doing our jobs or are exceeding our authority. Citizens obtain the vast majority of their knowledge of law enforcement through the media; especially television shows such as "CSI," "Cops" and other similar programs. These shows do not accurately portray

the way law enforcement really functions. By allowing citizens a first-hand look at what laws, rules, regulations and procedures we must follow, a culture of mutual understanding will be developed and many myths about law enforcement will be replaced with facts.

The program is not designed to train individuals to become law enforcement officers, but to produce informed citizens.

This personal interaction will develop a sense of "partnership" between the community and the sheriff's office. Ultimately, as the citizens and law enforcement personnel interact during this program, a bond based in trust and knowledge will develop between the community and mem-

bers of the sheriff's office.

The program is 15 weeks long and meets one evening a week for three hours each night (Tuesdays from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.). Each session is limited to approximately 15 students that are selected on a "first-come, first-serve" basis. The Gilmer County Sheriff's Office anticipates offering this program two to three times each year. It is open to all Gilmer County residents, employees and business owners age 21 and over. A criminal background check is required prior to selection as a student.

The Citizens' Law Enforcement Academy provides students with hands-on training and law enforcement knowledge in a friendly, non-confrontational environment.

The course is conducted by the Gilmer County Sheriff's Office and all instructors in this program are sheriff's office employees. Topics include Constitutional law, criminal investigations, patrol procedures, traffic enforcement and use of force. Students will observe K-9 and S.W.A.T. demonstrations, ride with deputies on actual patrol, and participate in mock scenarios such as domestic disturbance calls and traffic stops. Tours of agency

facilities are also included.

The next CLEA class begins Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2013. For further information regarding this very informative and fun program, contact the program coordinator, Deputy George Ellis, at (706) 515-2654 or [gellis@gilmercountysheriff.com](mailto:gellis@gilmercountysheriff.com).

Applications may be downloaded at: <http://gilmercountysheriff.com/sheriff/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/CitizensLawEnforcement.pdf>.

## Bear crossing



*Contributed photo*

While driving through town recently, Margaret Farist spotted a mother bear and her three cubs crossing South Main Street about one-tenth of a mile from the roundabout in downtown Ellijay.

## Soil sampling: Lawn and garden

by **Eddie Ayers**

County Extension Agents

Taking a soil sample of your lawn and garden can be one of the most beneficial activities you can do for your landscape. Soil sample results will tell you a wealth of information, including the pH of your soil, if you need lime and how much you need. The report will also tell you how much fertilizer you need for proper growth of your plants. By maintaining the proper pH and nutrient levels of your lawn, garden, field, vineyard, or orchard many plant disorders can be averted and you maximize production. The fall is the perfect time to sample because if lime is needed, it takes a few months for it to get into the ground and correct pH problems.

The key to reliable results is proper soil sampling technique. The idea behind soil sampling is to take soil from an area of the landscape that is representative of the area you are interested in. In other words, take a sample of an area where the plants require similar nutrient levels and pH. Go through your area and decide how many different areas you have. For example, vegetable garden, azalea bed, annual flower bed, fruit trees, and/or lawn, then take a

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representative sample of each of these different areas.

The idea of a representative sample may be different to different people, but to me it means getting soil from a minimum of 10 random locations and mix the soil together in a "soil sample bag" or clean plastic container. If there are any areas that plant growth is abnormal, then that area should be sampled separately. The more random samples you obtain from an area, the more accurate the soil test results will be. Using this technique will make you have more soil than you need, but that will be fine. Once you get a representative sample, mix the soil up thoroughly and fill up the soil sample bag to the fill line. Soil sample bags can be obtained from the Extension office on Progress Road in Ellijay, or you can bring the sample in your container and we'll transfer it to the soil sample bag at the office.

We collect soil samples all week and send them to the lab in Athens every Friday morning. The results will return in about a week. The cost

of a soil sample is \$9 per bag. Sampling your lawns or gardens has the potential to save you money by taking the guesswork out of how much fertilizer or lime you need to buy. Once you get your garden in shape, then you know when to stop adding more nutrients that you don't need. By adding the amount of nutrients needed and not more not only saves you money, but prevents nutrients from moving into our lakes and rivers. If you have your soil tested every couple of years, then you will be less likely to be a cause of this inadvertent pollution.

Also, the Gilmer County Farmers Market spon-

sored by the Gilmer County Master Gardeners and the Gilmer County Cooperative Extension office for the University of Georgia will be ending Labor Day weekend for the 2013 summer season. It's been open Saturday mornings since Memorial Day weekend so don't miss out on one of your last opportunities to shop locally and buy from the artisans and produce growers in this area. The market is on Broad Street in Ellijay, adjacent to the Gilmer County courthouse. Hours are 8 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

If there are any questions about soil sampling, feel free to give me a call at (706) 635-4426.

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