

in partnership with

YAHOO!  hotjobs®Over
8,060
jobs online at
chron.com/jobsTo advertise call
713-224-6868

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

Sunday, July 22, 2007

HOUSTON AT WORK

HPD offers options for creative career paths

On horseback or under water, officers can train for special assignments

By **DAVID WAHOME**
Employment Correspondent

People who associate police work with danger and stress may not know how cool and satisfying some police jobs can be.

In the Houston Police Department for instance, cool jobs are found in such programs as Crime Scene Unit (CSU), Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), canine patrol, diving and mounted patrol.

Investigating evidence

CSU focuses on crime scene investigation (forensics) and involves recovery and documentation of trace evidence such as hairs and fibers; ballistics evidence such as fired bullets, casings and trajectories; analysis of DNA-carrying material; video and photography; and scene reconstruction.

HPD senior police officer Mike McCoy has seen an increased interest in crime scene-investigation work from the public and fellow police officers. He attributes this interest to television shows such as "CSI Miami" and "CSI New York" airing on CBS.

"Absolutely, these shows have a big influence. Before these shows came about, we never got asked about these jobs," said McCoy, an HPD recruiter and a 25-year veteran of the department. "Now we get asked all the time about the way to become a crime scene investigator."

Paying attention to details is one of the critical qualities that make someone an ideal candidate for a crime-investigation job.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

UNIQUE CHALLENGES: In addition to traditional patrol work, HPD officers have the option of applying for more specialized jobs that require additional training.

"You have to be a very detail-oriented person," McCoy said.

"Everything has to be done perfectly. No mess-ups. If the case goes to court you don't want a guilty person to get off because you missed some details."

Specialized weapons

SWAT, which has saving lives as its No. 1 goal, is a specialized unit that

deals with circumstances the average patrol officer isn't equipped to handle.

"A lot of people are interested in SWAT. Everybody asks me how to become a SWAT officer, especially the young ex-military guys," McCoy said. "If you were a sniper in the military, you would naturally be interested in SWAT because of the military-type weapons that they use."

McCoy said SWAT is considered a

cool job because officers "have an opportunity to save lives and make a difference in the community."

While attention to details is critical in CSU, strength is considered a virtue in SWAT.

"One has to be physically fit to be a SWAT officer. They do a lot of training and lot of running," McCoy said.

See HPD, page EE2

