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A look at life inside

Youngsters eyeing criminal justice careers get jail tour

By SARAH GARDNER
For the Gazette

NORTHAMPTON — A group of teenagers got a first-hand introduction to the criminal justice system Wednesday morning, thanks to a tour that took them right inside an empty cell at the Hampshire County House of Corrections.

"Don't worry," the corrections officer leading the tour said when the group was hesitant to walk inside. "I won't lock you in."

The jail tour was part of "Cops, Crime Scenes and Careers," a week-long camp at Holyoke Community College for middle and high school students interested in law enforcement and criminal justice careers.

"The idea is to get kids who might care about criminal justice to start thinking about their future career," said Lou Barry, director of the camp. "It's good to just get them exposed to things like this so they can see what these jobs are really like."

Barry, a retired Granby police chief, is also an adjunct professor at HCC. This is the fourth year he has run the program, which takes students on different trips and activities each year.

At the start of the jail tour, Caitlin Padeck, 12, Noemi Vega, 14, and Anthea Kaplan, 12, crowded around correctional officer Phil Syriac at his desk in the lobby of the jail.

"Do you ever get yelled at?" Padeck asked.

"Oh, no," Syriac said. "This right here is pretty tame."

The tour, led by Lt. David Mur-



GAZETTE STAFF/CAROL LOLO

Hampshire County Sheriff's Lt. David Murphy talks to middle school students in a "Cops, Crime Scenes and Careers" class offered through Holyoke Community College during a visit Wednesday to the Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction. Below left, the students look into the jail's special management cell. Below right, from left, Caitlin Padeck, Kristopher Boutin, Jordan Detmers, Rachelle Gaudreau and Anthea Kaplan walk through a cell.



SEE TOUR A4

Tour gives students time in jail

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phy, took the students through the regional lockup facility, one of the jail's housing blocks and the library and past the recreation center and the special management unit.

"This gym is nicer than the one at my school," Vega whispered when they walked past the recreation center.

The tour of the jail was surprising to Vega, she said later. She said she had expected things to be more chaotic or out of control.

Instead, the officers and other employees at the jail tried to emphasize their love of their work and opportunities to help people.

"You guys can relax a little," Murphy said as he walked the tour group down a narrow hall. "This isn't a 'scare you straight' sort of thing, this is supposed to be educational."

The students heard from caseworkers, teachers and officers on the tour. Padeck, whose father is an officer, said she was still not sure what to expect on the tour.

"It wasn't as confined as I thought it would be," Padeck said. "I definitely expected things to be more intense than



GAZETTE STAFF/CAROL LOLLIS

Hampshire County Sheriff Patrick Cahillane talks to Rachel Gaudreau, left, and Sierra Palazzi, both students in a "Cops, Crime Scenes and Careers" class offered through Holyoke Community College during a visit Wednesday to the Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction.

they were."

Other events during this year's program include speakers on forensics and other criminal justice careers, mock crime scenes and a field day featuring a state police helicopter, a bomb truck and a police canine unit.

Many of the students come back to the camp several years in a row, Barry said. He

said that makes him hopeful the exposure to different careers will help them stay interested in criminal justice in the future.

"There are maybe some bad characteristics about working at a place like a correctional facility," Murphy said. "But the ability to help people as they move through this system is something I'm