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Office of University
Communications

April 4, 2018

Law Enforcement Agents, ATF K-9 Officer 'Camden' Share Insights, Training with Students

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Students at Gardner-Webb University are learning about the important connection between science and criminal investigations after a special visit from ATF officers and “Camden the Wonder Dog” recently during the University’s chemistry classes.

Senior Special Agent Darren Solomon with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives’ (ATF) Charlotte Field Division joined forces with Union County Fire Marshal Kevin Rigoli, and ATF K-9 Officer Camden for the presentation. Camden is an Accelerant Detection Canine specially trained to sniff out scents of various liquids that arsonists use to start fires.

During the visit, Camden demonstrated his skills by correctly detecting which canisters contained evidence of an accelerant. He is rewarded for his work with food. Solomon and Rigoli also talked to students about the importance of a strong science foundation within many aspects of law enforcement, particularly within arson investigations.

Dr. Stefka Eddins, professor of chemistry at GWU, believes in offering hands-on learning opportunities in which classroom concepts are connected to real-world scenarios.

Union County Fire Marshal Kevin Rigoli and K9 Officer Camden present information to GWU chemistry, criminal justice classes.

“For us, it’s vitally important to provide these opportunities for the students, because in the classroom, there is a limited amount of knowledge we can teach them,” she offered. “When they see how this knowledge is applied, they get new ideas. They get inspired. And they have opportunities to network.”

Senior Lauren Mahoney is a criminal justice and sociology double major, and she enjoyed seeing Camden showcase his training. She plans to enter Basic Law Enforcement Training in August, and hopes to work as an agent with the State Bureau of Investigation.

“There are so many different kinds of science that are involved in solving these cases,” she reflected. “They have different types of scientists for blood, alcohol or drugs, or firearms, you name it. They have a specialty for everything. It’s not just law enforcement and guns, there’s science behind it and a social aspect, and you have to put it all together. It’s so much more complex than people realize.”

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.