



Charleston County News Release

Release Number: 2902

Date: July 10, 2008

Register Now for Citizens' Academy Fall Session

Learn how your tax dollars are spent -- free course offers public insight into county government

Charleston County Government is inviting residents into the classroom, and the subject is local government.

For residents who want to know where their tax dollars go, the Charleston County Citizens' Academy offers a free, in-depth course that provides an understanding of county government.

The Citizens' Academy is a series of 12 classes taught by Charleston County Government employees and county elected officials.

The fall 2008 Citizens' Academy will be offered from 2-5 p.m. on Tuesday afternoons from Tuesday, Aug. 12 through Tuesday, Oct. 28. Classes are held in county government facilities.

The course ends with an optional all-day "field trip" to government facilities on Monday, Nov. 3. A graduation ceremony will be held during the County Council meeting scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 6, at 7 p.m.

"The purpose of the academy is to introduce our citizens to the services and operations provided by Charleston County Government and to help citizens understand the issues that drive decisions related to those services," said Christine DeStefano, a Charleston County Project Officer who oversees the academy. "The 12-week-long program provides participants with a forum to learn, ask questions and give comments to those responsible for spending their tax dollars."

Charleston County has been offering Citizens' Academy courses twice a year for the last five years. Since its inception in 2003, over 270 Charleston County citizens have graduated from the class.

"The course is of value to neighborhood association leaders, business people, teachers, members of the media, and any citizens who are interested in learning more about their local government," DeStefano said.

Topics include the county budgeting process, the voting system, waste and recycling, paving roads, law enforcement, the court system, emergency services, planning and zoning, and much more.

Citizens' Academy graduates are eligible for Continuing Education Units from the College of Charleston. Applicants accepted into the program will be expected to attend all 12 sessions. For those not able to attend an afternoon class, the spring 2009 course will be held on Monday evenings.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, and live or work in Charleston County. The class is limited to 35 participants, and the deadline to submit an application for the fall 2008 Citizens Academy session is Friday, Aug. 1.

An application may be obtained through the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org, and faxed to (843) 958-4023. For more information, contact Christine DeStefano by phone at (843) 958-4081 or by e-mail at cdestefano@charlestoncounty.org.