

## **December 5, 2008 - BRISTOL GRADUATES TWENTY-SEVEN NEW CERT MEMBERS**

The Bristol Virginia-Tennessee Citizen Corps Council celebrated the graduation of 27 new Community Emergency Response Team members on Thursday, December 4, 2008. The graduation ceremony took place at Office Max's Call Center.



Bristol Virginia Sheriff Jack Weisenburger was the keynote speaker for the graduation. He praised both Office Max and the Bristol Redevelopment and Housing Authority for their dedication to community preparedness by taking the CERT training. He reminded the graduates of the most important word in CERT, "team". He stated "that through team work, you have found you can get things accomplished in an emergency". He also noted that these are the first two businesses in Bristol to complete the training.

The Bristol Redevelopment and Housing Authority had 10 staff members to complete the training. The Housing Authority operates both public and affordable housing units. The properties of the Housing Authority include Rice Terrace, Johnson Court, Stant Hall, Jones Manor and Mosby Apartments and Sapling Grove Townhouses.

Office Max had 17 employees to complete the training. The Office Max facility serves as one of the national incoming call centers for the company and has over 400 employees at the Bristol location. They have an organized emergency team of which the new CERT members will become participants.

David Baldwin, Executive Director of the Housing Authority and Peg O'Connell-Ayers, Manager of Office Max successfully completed the training. Crime Prevention Specialist Kevin France, who coordinates the CERT and Citizen Corps programs, stated "when the leadership of a business or organization takes and completes this training, it speaks volumes not only to their employees, but to the community on the importance of Community Emergency Response Teams".

Instruction for the classes was provided by the Bristol Virginia Fire Department, the Sullivan County Tennessee Health Department, the



Southwest Virginia Emergency Medical Services Council, the Bristol Virginia Police Department and the Bristol Virginia Sheriff's Office.

The event received media coverage from WCYB-TV and was broadcast at 5:30, 6:00 and 11:00 p.m. as well as the next morning. Congratulating the graduates in addition to Sheriff Weisenburger were Deputy Chief Gary Estep of the Bristol Virginia Fire Department, Captain Maynard Ratcliff, Captain Darryl Milligan and Corporal Doug Cooper from the Bristol Virginia Police Department, Nicole Slagle, Crime Prevention Coordinator from the Bristol Virginia Police Department and Patty Tauscher, Director of Disaster Services with the Mountain Empire Chapter of the American Red Cross.