

Hennepin County Sheriff's Office expands community outreach efforts

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The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office has created a new Community Engagement Team to expand outreach efforts in diverse communities and directly address public safety concerns of the residents.

The Community Engagement Team will enhance the community policing program that was launched several years ago. The team is comprised of three Sheriff's Office personnel who will meet with community groups and provide public safety instruction. Team members also provide training to members of law enforcement about working with diverse communities.

"I am extremely proud of what we have already accomplished at the Sheriff's Office in an effort to build trust among diverse communities," said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek, "I am confident that we will create new partnerships and positive results now that additional personnel will conduct outreach to more residents throughout the county."

In recent months, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Somali Elders Council was created as a result of the community outreach program. In addition, One Day Citizen Academies were organized for several different multicultural communities. During the academies, residents are invited to meet with deputies and tour Sheriff's Office facilities in order to provide insight into the daily work of law enforcement.

The work performed by the Community Engagement Team is known as "community oriented policing," which is a law enforcement philosophy that has been proven to be a highly-effective way to promote crime prevention. Collaborative partnerships between law enforcement and the residents help to develop proactive solutions to problems and increase trust. With a focus on diverse communities, the Community Engagement Team will address the concerns of residents, nonprofit groups, service providers, private businesses, educators, and others.

The Community Engagement Team includes:

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Sergeant Derwin Ellis leads the Sheriff's Office Community Engagement Team and has worked in community outreach for the past three years at the Sheriff's Office. In recognition for his community work, he was recognized with service awards from the Cedar Riverside Youth Council and Ka Joog, a Somali youth group. Also, he has provided instruction on best practices in community outreach to several international law enforcement delegations including groups from Canada, Norway, Denmark, and Italy.

Abdi Mohamed grew up in Somalia and he now works as a Community Outreach Liaison on the Sheriff's Office Community Engagement Team. He is passionate about serving the needs of the Somali-American community in Hennepin County.

Deputy Betsy Aune is enthusiastic about teaching youth groups about the topics of crime prevention and career opportunities in law enforcement. In addition, Deputy Aune will lead the Sheriff's Office outreach efforts in the Latino community.