Local law enforcement officials return from exchange trip

By Donald Campbell  
dcampbell@cherokeetribune.com  
Jul 11, 2019

Two local law enforcement officials recently returned from a two-week trip to Israel, receiving specialized training from Israeli police forces while there.

For the past 27 years, the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange has offered law enforcement officers from throughout the state to visit Israel and learn from some of the top police officials in the country. Nearly 800 officers have participated in the program, while thousands more have taken part in various seminars,
workshops and other events sponsored by GILEE. The most recent group to travel to Israel included 12 police chiefs and command staff, two sheriffs, executive officers with the Georgia State Patrol and an inspector with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Among the group was Canton Police Department Chief Mark Mitchell and Maj. William Smith with the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office.

“I am very blessed to have been chosen to attend this delegation exchange to Israel,” Mitchell said. “Their National Police Agency, military and people are extremely passionate, diligent, loyal and resilient each day as they work to protect their country.”

Smith said, “This was an amazing once in a lifetime opportunity to receive executive training from a different vantage point. I commend Dr. Robert Friedmann (GILEE founding director) and this prestigious program. I truly believe this training has given me more tools to think with different perspectives in mind. It was a true honor for me to receive training from the men and women serving in the Israel National Police and Military. These officers are some of the most passionate, dedicated professionals who love what they do and love their country.”
The focus for this year’s program was community policing, defined by Friedmann as being “a policy and a strategy aimed at achieving more effective and efficient crime control, reduced fear of crime, improved quality of life, improved police services and police legitimacy through a proactive reliance on community resources that seeks to change crime-causing conditions.” It also asserts the necessity of higher levels of police accountability and more public input in the decision making process.

Over the course of the two week program, Mitchell said he learned how the Israeli police train their officers to not only succeed at preventing terrorism and crime, but also how they work to communicate and share intelligence across the board, as well as building trusting relationships with the multitude of cultures and faiths they work with to better create a more positive atmosphere for everyone.

Similarly, Smith said that studying topics including community policing, crowd control, recruiting, emergency management and how to best use technology to fight crime was key to his career development, and believed there was no better place for him to learn more about these subjects than from the Israelis, who deal with these kinds of challenges and realities on a daily basis.
“A large part of the program concentrated on the importance of building relationships in the community we serve,” he said. “Trust and transparency is the cornerstone for positive police-community relationships, and I feel the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office has this with our citizens. However, trust can erode quickly, and we must continue to work diligently each day to maintain that trust.”

After returning home, Mitchell and Smith both felt their time spent training overseas will prove invaluable for the future of their respective agencies.

“I feel certain this experience will further strengthen our philosophy, culture and strategies of training our officers toward success, protecting those we serve and building a stronger foundation of trust with the great citizens in our community,” Mitchell said.

“We are very fortunate to have Sheriff Frank Reynolds, who is a progressive forward thinker,” Smith said. “He continually looks for better ways to serve and protect the citizens of Cherokee County by preparing deputies with exceptional training opportunities. This is exactly what Sheriff Reynolds has afforded me to attend — elite training on a very high level.”
During the latest GILEE program, 21 officers from throughout Georgia traveled to Israel to receive special training with Israeli police officials.

Law enforcement officials from throughout Georgia learned a great deal of valuable information from their Israeli counterparts during the most recent GILEE program.

During the most recent GILEE trip to Israel, the participating law enforcement officials also had the opportunity to visit the 9/11 Living Memorial Plaza in Jerusalem.