

DEKALB NEIGHBOR

DeKalb assistant police chief brings back lessons from training experience in Israel

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DeKalb County Police Assistant Chief Michael Yarbrough

Special Photo

A member of the DeKalb County police department has returned home after spending two weeks in Israel training in the latest counter terrorism technologies and techniques and interacting with communities across the nation.

DeKalb County Police Assistant Chief Michael Yarbrough was selected as a member of the 24th annual peer-to-peer public safety program, organized by the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange, or GILEE. Yarbrough was one of fifteen individuals working in Georgia law enforcement selected, joining other delegates from Tennessee, Alabama, Washington and New York.

The group traveled around many areas of Israel, according to Yarbrough. At each scheduled stop, they took part in training with local police, exchanged ideas and saw how they interacted with their local communities, he said.

“The police and communities around Israel opened their doors to us and were so open and welcoming and willing to share with us their practices, their challenges and how to overcome them,” Yarbrough said. “For the two-week intensive program, we were immersed in the country — their challenges, history and public safety — and saw how all that relates to form a comprehensive system which keeps their nation safe.”

Yarbrough said with that knowledge gained, it was important to come back home and see how it could be applied locally.

“Israel’s police have developed an effective unity of effort [...] with great cooperation and communication, and by doing so they are able to work very closely and effectively with very diverse communities and provide great public safety,” Yarbrough said. “That really translates well into DeKalb County, as we are an extremely diverse community, from religion to race to economics.”

Yarbrough said their example could almost be put down as an overlay in DeKalb in terms of how the practices of Israel’s police force could be applied here.

“The experience reinforced to me that a unified DeKalb County is a stronger and safer one,” he said. “If we continue our own efforts of community policing and increase our communications, I think we will be more successful.”

Going beyond conversations and participating in community engagement meetings and partnerships to solve problems is one way Yarbrough sees those lessons being applied. He said the county has already made great strides, especially with community policing, but those efforts can be enhanced further.

GILEE is a joint partnership between Georgia State University and local, state, federal and international law enforcement agencies. They host a variety of public safety exchanges and conferences to introduce best practices in law enforcement and more than 1,300 individuals have graduated from their programs since beginning in 1992, according to a press release.

“As the world gets ever smaller, [our] focus on international public safety partnerships is critically important,” said GILEE Founding Director Robert Friedmann.. “Our delegates are trained to recognize the challenges and deal with them in accordance with the best practices in 21st century policing.