

Two officers outreach through Muslim Community Affairs unit

By IFN Staff

LOS ANGELES – They wear uniforms and drive cars that traditionally may have evoked anger or fear among southern California's Muslim community.

But the moment Sergeant Mike Abdeen or Deputy Sheriff Morsi step out of their police cruisers, passersby realize they're friendly Muslim officers who speak Arabic and are just looking out for everyone's well-being.

Abdeen and Morsi are part of the Muslim Community Affairs unit of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, an outreach program established in August 2007 to address issues currently facing the Muslim community, such as hate crimes and discrimination.



Morsi

"We're from the community," Morsi says. "So we understand the issues that matter to the community, and we provide a voice for the community."

The Muslim Community Affairs unit now includes a training program for the Muslim community on law enforcement issues, including domestic violence, gangs and identity theft.

The unit also trains department members about Islam and Muslims, touching on issues such as beliefs and customs. Academy recruits also receive a two-hour class on Muslim cultures and background as part of the cultural awareness training program, Abdeen says. "It's become an informational tool where the community can educate law enforcement as well."

"The Muslim American community plays a vital role in protecting the people of the United States," says Sheriff Leroy D. Baca, under whose direction the unit was established.

The unit also developed a Young Muslim American Leaders Group to engage and educate young Muslim professionals in the Los Angeles Area. The group meets on a monthly basis and discusses issues that concern Muslim youth and professionals.

Morsi says members of the Muslim Community Affairs unit are available for the community. "We're here if you need us," he says. "Having this partnership with the community diffuses the stigma that surrounds immigrant communities," Morsi says.

Abdeen advises community members to get involved. "This is our home," he says. "Take the good this country has to offer and be a part of the system."

Morsi agrees. "When the city does a cleanup day, get out there and show everyone we're part of mainstream society," he says. "Or when there's a drive for the needy, how great would it be if a semi pulls in with items donated from the Muslim community?"

December's YMALG meeting was held at ACCESS California Services and hosted by Attorney Akram Abusharar. It focused on the immigration and naturalization process and featured a representative from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

For more information, please contact Sergeant Abdeen at (323) 243-9762 or mmabdeen@lasd.org or Deputy Morsi at (323) 980-2291 or ssmorsi@lasd.org. Visit www.lasd.org/sites/MuslimOutreach for more information.



Abdeen