



Attendees of the Police Community Outreach event visit the various tables set up to interact with law enforcement officials, and to win prizes at stands set up by fast-food chains. April 26. Jennesh Agagas / The Telescope

Public outreach event draws crowd from community

JENNESH AGAGAS
THE TELESCOPE

Hundreds of people from the community came out to interact with first responders on a personal level in the second annual community outreach event hosted by Palomar campus police.

The Public Safety Community Outreach, on April 26 event was put together by Officer Gerard Perez of the Palomar Police Department and was located by their newly built police station.

The mission of the event was to promote police-community relationships and create a positive environment by enhancing the connection between students, staff and law enforcement organizers, in building goals of trust and mutual respect.

In the past, Officer Perez has expressed that the goal of the event is to foster positive police-community relations. "We're not on a car stop or a field interview, Here we are taking [time] to get to know each other," Perez said.

Attendees were able to socialize with police departments all over San Diego County while being surrounded by live music, informative booths, and vendors from local business such as Grocery Outlet and Sprouts Market who donated snack bags to visitors.

"Local law enforcement kind of supports us, so we just wanted to support them, said Zach Sheppard, representing Sprouts. "Officer Perez reached out to us to supply some fruit or anything we could really."

In addition to all of the volunteers who supported the event by supplying food and prizes such as WinCo, Chick Fil A, and Jerseys Mike's, visitors had the chance to observe a K-9 demonstration in the police station parking lot. They also had the opportunity to gaze to the sky to watch a helicopter land on the student 12 parking lot.

This intimate and positive environment even attracted those who did not know about the event, but still curiously checked out the different booths and participated in open dialogue with first responders.

"We didn't know anything about it, but everyone was so nice, really cool, giving us free stuff," said Juan Villa, nursing program student. "For one it's important, there's a lot of bad stereotypes and stuff like that with law enforcement," Ingal said.

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But being able to be here and talk with them, act like normal people like us makes you more connected to them.

Juan Villa • STUDENT

During the event, visitors were also able to take a tour of the new police station periodically.

The former Police Chief Mark DiMaggio, who helped orchestrate the design of the structure explained how it is a mirror image of California State San Marcos University's facility and how it has doubled in size from the current police station to combat the increase of officers.

"The old EOC (emergency operations center), it's used for their briefing, it's used for report writing, it's used as their dining area for their staff to eat at, it's used to hold any new books or any new arrestees," DiMaggio said. "It's part of the EOC, so It's literally one little tiny area used for seven different functions, which this is independently done."

The features of the department crown jewel included bulletproof windows, a reception area, dispatch office, locker rooms, evidence room, secure interview room, conference/emergency



Gerard Perez speaking to the community members in attendance at Police Community Outreach event. April 26. Jennesh Agagas / The Telescope

gency operations room, armory, report-writing room, and live scan room.

Current Police Chief Chris Moore expressed how the structure will act as a future hub as it is the center of where students are going back and forth from the parking structure, Student Union, and the Learning Resource Center.

"It's a building where we work so we want that to be inviting for them," Moore said. "For us to be partners to them and for when people need help, this is the place to come and that we will provide them with world-class police service."

According to Perez, the idea

of the outreach event came to him three years ago when he personally felt like the department was not meeting the relationship it wanted with the school, so he wanted to utilize the alumni to share their story of joining the police program.

"I thought it would be nice for them to come back and interact with criminal justice students, students of the school and just kind of explain their journey and how they got into law enforcement cause I thought people need to be kind of educated in that aspect," Perez said.

Perez collaborated with Palomar's GEAR UP program, which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program who brought hundreds of students from high school interested in the field to interact with first responders.

He has also invited ESL (English as a Second language) students to attend so they could address anxiety, questions, concerns, exposure, an interaction between police.

Perez vocalized how thankful he was for the endless amount of support from the Community and hoped once there's a relationship between police and civilians the support will be stronger than it was before and the trust will be present.

"Ultimately, the goal is for these kids, our future, to not be afraid of law enforcement," Perez said. He noted the theory is if the police department is supporting the community and they enjoy their environment, they will take care of it, instead of abusing it.

"They are not going to do crimes against it, because we are all one group, one family."



Chief Chris Moore interacting with community members during the Police Outreach Event. April 26. Linus Smith / The Telescope

JAGAGAS@THE-TELESCOPE.COM