LATINO INITIATIVE
LAW ENFORCEMENT - 2016

Enriching North Carolinians’ understanding of their new neighbors
Officer from Mecklenburg and Union Counties traveled to Mexico in September 2016 for the first Latino Initiative program focused on law enforcement. The 24 officers from all ranks traveled with the goal of better understanding the Hispanic and Latino communities they serve in North Carolina. In addition to traveling in Mexico City to learn about the culture and history of Mexico, the group visited a correctional facility in San Miguel de Allende and a state surveillance and command center in Silao. The delegation also visited families in the community of San Nicolás del Carmen. Participants returned to the United States with a belief that cross-cultural understanding is key to effective community policing.

Since 1998, the Latino Initiative has led delegations from across North Carolina on transformative experiences in Mexico, creating a statewide network of more than 800 alumni who are leaders on issues of immigrants and community integration.

“I think collectively, as a group, we gained a personal connection to this country, to these people, and we’re forever changed by this experience. To be able to experience something like this and to come back a changed person as a result is very powerful.”

Major Rodney Collins
Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office
Top government officials from the State of Guanajuato welcomed the visiting North Carolina delegation to underscore the importance of binational understanding and exchange of ideas. The group had the honor of meeting Guanajuato Governor Miguel Márquez Márquez and several of his top public safety officials.

Pictured standing in front of Teatro Juárez in downtown Guanajuato (left to right) are Guanajuato Secretary of Public Safety Álvar Cabeza de Vaca Appendini, Sergeant William Kilgo and Officer Cristobal Carrión from the Monroe City Police Department, and Governor Márquez Márquez. On the last day of the program, the delegation had breakfast with the governor and talks are underway for Governor Márquez Márquez and members of his administration to visit North Carolina in 2017.

During a follow-up workshop held after their return to the United States, program participants identified short- and long-term goals for their departments to build on what they learned in Mexico. All of the officers planned to apply their experience to their professional life.

- Delegates identified local and national resources to cross language barriers and encouraged increasing the number of Spanish-speaking officers.

- Through concerted efforts to reach out to Hispanic and Latino individuals, officers wanted to increase participation in community events and educate individuals about opportunities that would benefit them and their families.

- In order to build trust in their departments, the delegates identified the need to boost the involvement of community members in their efforts.

“I will assume more responsibility for seeking out Mexican families in my community...[I plan to] organize a program that places an emphasis on building a good community relationship between police and our Hispanic population.”
Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world with a population of 21.2 million people. It is an important hub of commerce, history, and government, and is bustling with traditional music, food, dance, and other culture. Time in Mexico City was spent viewing Diego Rivera’s murals at the National Palace, walking around the downtown main square, the Zócalo, and visiting the Anthropology Museum to provide the delegation with a grounding in the country’s rich heritage. Seeing Mexico City clearly removed any doubt that it’s a modern, vibrant, and important urban center of the Americas.

Officers got to experience an Independence Day celebration in the city where Mexico’s independence began - the city of Dolores Hidalgo. September 16 marks the anniversary of the Grito de Dolores (Cry of Dolores) that began the Mexican War of Independence from Spain. That battle cry came from Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a parish priest in Dolores, Guanajuato. The city is now named Dolores Hidalgo after him.
I think one thing to take away from here, for me, is whether you’re black, white, brown, if you just take the time, traveling abroad or even in communities back home, we all have something to teach each other.

Detective Sergeant Benjamin Baker
Union County Sheriff’s Office

GUANAJUATO - SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

The delegation visited a correctional facility in San Miguel de Allende and spoke with its director, Víctor Hugo Resendes Macías. After a prison riot 20 years ago, Guanajuato made a conscious decision to focus on the rehabilitation of prisoners. The correctional facility is seeing a drop in recidivism rates through its pioneering rehabilitation model. All prisoners are assessed and a plan is developed to address individual needs related to education, mental health, and physical health. Prisoners are expected to develop job skills and/or learn a trade while incarcerated. This work allows them to generate an income, which is often shared with their families.
Silao’s State Surveillance and Command Center C5i (Centro de Comando y Comunicaciones C5i) is a state-of-the-art facility that allows for coordination of efforts among relief, response, and public safety organizations. The outcome is consistent communication and more efficient response efforts among services including 911 dispatch, traffic monitoring, National Guard and police response services, and emergency management. While touring the facility with Guanajuato Secretary of Public Safety Álvar Cabeza de Vaca Appendini, the delegation were able to speak with officers and see the difference between Mexican and American police vehicles.

“This program is extremely important. I think every law enforcement officer should have to go through a program like this.”

Officer Michelle Archer
Matthews Police Department
[Lorena] asked us ‘if you were the police here, tell me how would you get to [this house]’. There were no street numbers, there was nothing, and that really hit home with me.

Administrative Lieutenant Corey Copley
Pineville Police Department

While in the rural community of San Nicolás del Carmen, the delegation visited with families, who hosted them with generosity. Several host families shared personal stories of friends and relatives who had immigrated to the United States. During the open dialogue, experiences on both sides of the border were shared. As a gesture of thanks for the community’s willingness to share so much about themselves and their country, Go Global NC presented community leaders and their children with soccer jerseys sporting the organization’s logo.
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PARTICIPATING OFFICES
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