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News

Shelby - Utica

Shelby police assign officer to each church in township

Public SA

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — In an effort to establish open communication with more facets of the community, Shelby Town-

ship Police Chief Robert Shelide recently launched an initiative to pair a police officer with each place of worship in the township.

“We’re just making contacts, finding what the issues and problems are, and getting the program up and running,” Shelide said.

“We want churches to know our people and be able to pick the phone up and call them. It’s just all about relationship building.”

Church leaders can now communicate with an officer through email, phone or in person on nonemergency matters. In addi-

tion, the department can now get information to places of worship quickly, such as through an email blast.

Shelide said he was pleasantly surprised when members of the department filled up

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the sign-up sheet for each of the 22 churches, congregations and places of worship in a few days.

"It was crazy," he said. "There were no incentives other than just having pride in your work. Sergeants, lieutenants, officers of all ranks did it."

Detective Ron Weiss helped coordinate the initiative and volunteered to be a liaison to three congregations.

"When you call a police department, you sometimes get bounced around from voicemail to voicemail," Weiss said. "This will cut through the red tape. Most (churches) would probably just give up if they had an issue, or just not handle it at all."

He said that as of late, there have been concerns about the Christian community coming under attack.

"For whoever that may be, this would help with that too, if

they suspect anything, but that's the extreme end of it," he said.

Pat Boik, business manager for St. John Vianney Catholic Church, located between 24 Mile and 25 Mile roads on Schoenherr Road, said the church staff appreciates the cooperation with local police.

"It is really nice to be able to have a personal liaison so we don't have to go through red tape," Boik said. "The fact that this particular liaison is a member of our congregation is a personal touch and, also, he has an investment in this community."

She said the Shelby Township police have been helpful and supportive of St. John Vianney in the past, as far as patrolling the parking lot and controlling traffic before the church got a traffic light at the end of its driveway.

"They've been wonderful with us," she said.

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