NEW SAN DIEGO COUNTY REGIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE DEBUTS

By Matthew O’Deane, Ph.D.

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE THE NEW SAN DIEGO COUNTY REGIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE, OR SDCRLI FOR SHORT. IT’S A FIRST-CLASS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE CREATED SPECIFICALLY FOR SAN DIEGO COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES WHICH DEBUTED THIS SUMMER WITH A PILOT IN AN EFFORT TO DEVELOP LEADERS THROUGH A DISTINCT PROGRAM THAT FOCUSES ON SELF-AWARENESS, LEADERSHIP THEORY AND PREPARATION. THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE, FOUNDED BY THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S OFFICE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, IN COLLABORATION WITH 21 DIFFERENT LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, IS MADE UP OF THREE TRACKS DESIGNED TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND FUNCTIONAL SKILLS.
It’s unlike anything I’ve seen in my 25 years as a police officer in San Diego and I’m proud to say I played a role in conceptualizing, planning and rolling out the institute. Shortly after drafting the initial proposal for the institute, I was joined by Anne Calle, our in-house leadership coach for the DA’s Office. Anne was on board to assist and quickly took charge and has dedicated herself to the development and success of the institute.

In my opinion, this leadership institute is exceptional in every way when compared to existing schools on the subject. For example, the courses are specifically designed to get to the core leadership in each individual focusing on our regional issues. In addition, the training institute will enhance local leaders; will build bridges between law enforcement and the communities they serve, and it will address the current state
of affairs of law enforcement. The first track provides participants with five self-assessments that target key leadership characteristics we must know before we can be great leaders. The participants then apply the knowledge from those assessments and correlate training in the classes offered in the second track, which is based on the San Diego County Leadership Development Model. Topics in track II focus on developing six key leadership competencies: initiative, results orientation, interpersonal relationships, problem solving, development of others and organizational acumen. The final track is made up of functional skills courses, such as media and PIO’s, finding solutions for the effects of racial profiling, civil liability, organizational cultures, etc.

A series of three courses called “Let’s Be Real” are included in the institute. This series is designed to focus on current, regional issues affecting law enforcement. For the pilot, the participants discussed such topics as Black Lives Matter, and the how our local law enforcement agencies are viewed by their communities. The institute invited leaders from the Iranian-American, Chaldean Middle Eastern, and African American communities to speak
to our law enforcement leaders. Guests included the president of NAACP and leaders and activists from community newspaper Voice and Viewpoint. These courses generated healthy and open discussions on how to improve relations and build bridges with all of our neighboring cultural communities. The series was powerful and resulted in several connections being made between the agencies and their local communities.

The leadership institute is designed for all levels of supervisors, such as sergeants, lieutenants and captains. There are many talented and articulate leaders in San Diego County law enforcement. By sharing knowledge on a regional level, we can all learn from each other in ways that will reduce conflict and improve supervision. Eventually, the institute will create a standard baseline for police leadership and management in our county. Our vision is to ensure that we collectively learn from each other, improve leadership and improve service to San Diego County citizens.

Any police department’s culture and leadership starts with the Chief and senior executives and works its way down the ranks. They establish direction and standards for our agencies. Regional leaders set the tone for their departments and develop their people to be the best they can be. We are very fortunate to have presented the outline for this institute to all SD County Chiefs, the Sheriff and the District Attorney and we have received unanimous support from every agency.
in the county. A special thanks to District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis and Probation Chief Adolfo Gonzales for their support. The institute would not exist without them. The DA, Sheriff, and Chiefs understand that providing a local leadership institute, dramatically cuts training costs, eliminates the need for travel, hotels, rental cars, and it avoids existing limitations on attending some of the current schools. In addition, the training content can be focused on issues affecting San Diego County.

The Leadership Institute pilot consisted of over 35 trainers from 12 agencies, ranging from sergeants to chiefs. The participants of the pilot consisted of an equal mix of sergeants, lieutenants and captains or commanders from most local agencies including CHP, and included supervising special agents from the FBI, DEA, and the Department of Homeland Security. The collaboration didn’t end there. Retired Undersheriff, Ed Prendergast, joined our efforts as a leadership/law enforcement consultant and trainer, and the San Diego County Medical Examiner’s Office is providing training facilities. Core staff is made up of DA employees, Anne Calle, Claudia Delgadillo, Emalee Bowles, Roxanne Grooms and I. Also, the Probation Department provided a student worker to help operate the institute.

---

**BOOKS AND ASSESSMENTS USED IN THE PILOT INCLUDE:**

- The Leader’s Compass for Law Enforcement Professional by Roy E. Alston, Ph.D. and Dennis F. Haley
- The Front-Line Leader by Chris Van Gorder
- Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves
- Strength Based Leadership by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie
- DISC Communication/Work Style Assessment

**GUEST PRESENTERS AND SPEAKERS INCLUDE:**

- Robert Vernon, retired LAPD Assistant Chief and founder of Pointman Leadership Institute
- Roy E. Alston, former patrol supervisor of the Dallas Police Department and author of The Leader’s Compass
- Chris Van Gorder, former police officer, CEO of Scripps Health and author of The Front-Line Leader

The pilot launched on July 18, 2016. The institute is a three-week course, one week per month for three consecutive months. It
features more than 40 classes on a variety of topics. The institute is academic and involves a significant amount of critical thinking and assignments to test our leaders.

I am working with our regional POST representative, Val Wilson, to get the San Diego County Regional Leadership Institute POST certified. We also partnered with National University, to give credit for their Master of Science in Organizational Leadership Program. The full program launches in February of 2017. Registration information will be provided to every law enforcement agency in the county and will include dates, times and location. Keep in mind; we will always need instructors, back up instructors, and ideas for content to keep the institute current and relevant.

Arguably one of the most significant issues facing law enforcement is the need for quality leaders to take our organizations to the highest level of excellence possible. We must continue to focus on accountability, integrity, discipline, and professionalism to maintain public trust. By working together, helping each other, learning from each other and building relationships between our agencies and the communities, we all benefit.

If you are interested in attending the SDCRLI please contact Claudia Delgadillo at Claudia.delgadillo@sdcda.org.

Matthew O’Deane is a DA Commander assigned to the Gang Prosecution Unit and developed the initial proposal for this institute. Matthew has a Ph.D. in Public Policy and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration.