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Course offers police chiefs new methods of leadership

School focuses on community policing

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Two Campbell County police chiefs have graduated from the School for Strategic Leadership at Eastern Kentucky University.

Chief Mike Ward of Alexandria and Chief William Cole of Bellevue spent one weekend a month for the past year on the Eastern campus. The school's focus was to explore the concept of community policing through leadership.

"It offered a community management perspective. Law enforcement and the community should be intertwined and in a lot of places it's not. We've gone from simply taking reports to now 60 percent of our job is doing social service work," Ward said.

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"It focused on leadership techniques and that's important for a chief to have. The thing that I thought was interesting was that it was geared toward community leadership. I have the mindset I work for the city of Bellevue, not an individual department," said Cole.

Eight other officers from around the state, each with at least 10 years of experience, attended the program. Students were from small- to medium-sized departments. The largest city represented was Owensboro.

"There was a lot of reading, studying and putting ideas on paper. What was so unique, unlike sitting in a university with college students where you have various levels of life experiences, the students were all cops. From lieutenant to chief - guys who have been on the street," said Ward. "That allowed us to go very deep into topics that we wouldn't have otherwise."

Rather than focusing on technical skills, the school addressed theory and concepts of policing.

"Hopefully the SSL students get a useful framework for thinking about police effectiveness, and they learn what's known from research about what is effective and what is not," said Dr. Gary Cordner, who taught

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The Enquirer/ernest Coleman

Polices Chiefs Mike Ward of Alexandria (left) and William Cole of Bellevue studied at Eastern Kentucky University's School for Strategic Leadership. "Law enforcement and the community should be intertwined," Ward said.



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Analysis of Police Operations.

The school was a chance for the officers to hear from disciplines other than criminal justice. It was also a chance for professors to learn from their students. Dr. Jerry Palmer, a psychology professor, taught a class called Organizational Change and Development.

"I didn't know what to expect when I first started teaching the course, but found the students to be awesome and probably the most motivated students I've had in 11 years of teaching, and that the issues that apply to non-police organizations apply equally well to police organizations," said Palmer.

In addition to learning the forefront of community policing, the school provided a chance for developing relationships with leaders from other departments.

"We'd sit in the dorm and the conversations from class would just continue. I have nine best friends from around the state right now that I can pick up the phone and hash out issues," said Ward.

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