



LAGRANGE
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Media Release

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Georgia Police-Community Trust Initiative Held in LaGrange August 17th-18th

LaGrange, Ga. August 19, 2019 – The Georgia Police-Community Trust Initiative was held in LaGrange this weekend, Saturday and Sunday, August 17th–18th.



Pictured from left to right: Austin Callaway Family Representative Debra Tatum, Troup County NAACP President Ernest Callaway & LPD Chief Lou Dekmar

The Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP), with support from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the

National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC), is taking statewide action to build trust among communities and law enforcement agencies in the state of Georgia.

The event was sponsored by the GACP, IACP and NNSC and hosted by the City of LaGrange and LaGrange College.



Georgia State Attorney Chris Carr was keynote speaker

Georgia State Attorney Chris Carr served as the keynote speaker. He said it's imperative the community collectively moves down the path of reconciliation by focusing on four themes – trust, justice, dignity and history.

“History is an important role in reconciliation. Acknowledging that these events took place and the role law enforcement played matters. It leads to reconciliation, healing and trust,” Carr said. “To truly reconcile we must all come to the table from a place of understanding and that doesn't happen overnight.”



Nine Georgia law enforcement agencies/communities committed to this initiative

Law enforcement, research, and community partners met at this public event to work on police-community trust building. Teams from several Georgia communities composed of police department executives as well as representatives from the governing body, faith community, NAACP, local citizens and local business leaders also participated.

“This is an exciting time because at the local level police in a number of communities are recognizing the need to address past harms as an essential step in addressing a variety of issues,” said LPD Chief Lou Dekmar. “Addressing these issues impact a trustful relationship between the police and the citizens they serve.”

The participating agencies include:

- Albany Police Department
- Cobb County Police Department
- Covington Police Department
- Decatur Police Department
- DeKalb County Police Department
- LaGrange Police Department
- Perry Police Department
- Rome Police Department
- Thomasville Police Department

The Trust Initiative is a reconciliation program involving nine local police departments and the communities they serve. The goal is to formally address historical harm to racial minorities and transform relationships between the police departments and their community.

Chief Dekmar created the Trust Initiative when he was the IACP President in 2018.



LPD Chief Lou Dekmar issuing the apology in January 2017

In January 2017, LaGrange Police Chief Lou Dekmar issued an apology to the family of Austin Callaway who died after being lynched in 1940. Dekmar denounced the role of the LaGrange Police Department in the 1940 lynching of Austin Callaway. According to Dekmar the police department did not pursue an investigation into the lynching.

Chief Dekmar is the past president of the IACP and continues to work with law enforcement agencies throughout the world in building community-police trust.

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