

Keeping Eyes out for signs of terror

Program lessons
on lingo, profiling

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LONG BEACH TOWNSHIP — Ten years ago, a neighbor saw a moving van at a house across the street in Barnegat Light.

She thought it looked suspicious and called the

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— Lt. Paul Vereb, Long Beach police officer

police with its license plate number. Long Beach police, who patrol Barnegat Light, tracked down the van and caught the man who had robbed the home of its antiques before he sold

them at an auction in the South.

Lt. Paul Vereb told the story yesterday at the St. Francis Community Center to a group of counselors he was training on Community Anti-Terrorism. Vereb said people need to be more observant

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of their surroundings and call their local police departments whenever they feel something is wrong.

"If we are able to tune our senses to what's around us, we will really be able to help each other out," he said. "We can't do anything without the eyes and ears of the community. It's more of like, don't take anything for granted; if you see something, report it."

Vereb was trained by the Community Anti-terrorism Training Institute to teach residents about terrorism and to be more observant under a program nicknamed CAT Eyes.

The session yesterday opened with images and sound bites of the Sept. 11 attacks and had slides that defined terrorism and aimed to dispel the myths about it and what people need to be concerned about.

People should be less concerned about hoarding gas masks and more concerned with having an escape plan in case an evacuation is ordered,

according to the presentation. People shouldn't be on the lookout for an Arab in a trench coat when it's as likely that a construction worker with squeaky clean boots, helmet and work clothes is a terrorist disguised for surveillance, the counselors were told.

The program asks residents to stop, observe and write down detailed accounts of suspicious things to give the police or the FBI.

The program started in November 2001 to help prevent racial profiling of those of Arab descent, said the program founder, retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Licata of East Windsor.

"Our biggest fear after 9/11 is that people would run around and target Arabs and we didn't want that," Licata said.



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