

# TRUST HONORED

## A bridge between cops and community

O.C. Human Relations Commission to honor Anaheim police officer Omar Adham for efforts strengthening ties with the Arab-American and Muslim communities.

By ERIK ORTIZ  
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

ANAHEIM – Strengthening rapport with the city's Arab-American and Muslim communities required Anaheim police officer Omar Adham to show his trustworthiness.

Being Egyptian-American and speaking some Arabic were assets for the officer, but in a way, his uniform spoke louder.

"Typically, overseas there's a distrust of police, and that carries on in the culture here," Adham, 36, said Tuesday.

On Anaheim's force for 10 years, Adham was assigned liaison to those communities about three years ago.

With the guidance of Garden Grove police Chaplain Steve LaFond and Shakeel Sayed, executive director of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, Adham started an outreach project between police and community leaders called the Muslim Arab-American Law Enforcement Network.

The Orange County Human Relations Commission, a county agency, is honoring Adham and Sayed for their efforts in a ceremony May 3 at The Grove of Anaheim. LaFond died of cancer in December and will receive a posthumous award.

Since last year, the network has created relationships between six major mosques in Orange County – in Anaheim, Garden Grove, Irvine, Costa Mesa and Mission Viejo – and the cities' law-enforcement agencies.

Adham said they have rotated meetings at the various mosques to discuss concerns and answer questions. The project is the first organized effort in the county between law enforcement and the Arab-American and Muslim communities, he added.

Orange County's Arab-American population is about 100,000, and the Muslim population 170,000, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

"With world events going on the way they are, and increased attention given to the community, it's so vital to have this," Adham said of the project.



**Go-Between:** Anaheim Police Officer Omar Adham, a first generation Egyptian-American and the department's point-man for improving police relations within the Arab-American/Islamic community, stands in front of the Islamic Institute of Orange County.

### BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS:

Anaheim Police Officer Omar Adham chats with Iman Zahran at the Islamic Institute of Orange County.

"I had to say, 'Hey the police are your friends,'" Anaheim officer Omar Adham said.



### 2007 Human Relations Commission honorees

The additional agencies and people to be honored May 3 include:

- Anaheim High School, for its academic achievement programs
- Ralph Sanders, Fullerton Interfaith Emergency Services
- West Fullerton Orange County Congregation Community Organization