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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

DAYTON NATIVE STRIVES TO CHANGE PERCEPTION OF DAYTON POLICE

West side man transforms a shaky past into a career of service

Dayton, OH – As a young man growing up in Cornell Heights, Terry Perdue never expected to go toward the direction that everyone in his age group ran from – the police.

In Perdue's eyes, most citizens of his west side neighborhood viewed the police as an enemy to the community, especially teens and young adults.

"Growing up, you don't have the best perception of police officers," said Perdue. "You are taught that police officers don't like you – especially if you are a young black male."

When Perdue entered Dunbar High School in 1995, Dayton's only historically black high school, his chances at becoming a productive member of society appeared slim to none. Skipping school was a weekly routine throughout his four years at Dunbar and he graduated in the bottom tier of his class, being ranked 171 out of 175 students.

Despite his shaky adolescence, Perdue later attended Sinclair Community College and graduated with a liberal arts degree, with a 3.3 GPA.

In 2009, Purdue decided to continue his education by attending the Credentials for Leadership in Management and Business (CLIMB) program at Wilberforce University, the nation's oldest historically black college.

According to the official website, the CLIMB program is "specifically designed for adults who want to complete their college degree in classes coordinated with their schedules while continuing to work."

As Purdue pursued a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice Administration at Wilberforce, he developed a strong interest in community advancement and realized that police officers were not the enemy he initially perceived them to be. Self-examination and evaluation became a critical part of Purdue's changed thinking.

"I started to believe that if I'm not a part of the solution, then I'm a part of the problem," said Perdue.

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Civic matters in the city of Dayton became an integral part of discussion when Perdue sat down and had conversations with friends who shared similar values of enhancing their neighborhoods and communities. These dialogues set the premise for The Unit, a non-profit organization started by Perdue and friend Lamar Hall Jr. in 2009.

With more than 500 participants in 2009 – 2012, The Unit encompasses free community workouts, community service events, and social events. According to dayton-theunit.com, the mission of the organization is to, “motivate and connect the Dayton Community by pioneering initiatives that will empower citizens to redefine the physical, mental, and social culture of the city.”

The organization has collaborated with the American Heart Association (AHA), Habitat for Humanity, East End Community Center, and local churches to provide activities ranging from fitness education to furniture drives.

Co-founding The Unit was a life-defining moment for Perdue. After its establishment, it endorsed previous thoughts about being an officer.

“At some point in my life I had thoughts about becoming an officer,” said Perdue. “My organization helped me confirm them.”

Before Perdue could become a member of the Dayton Police Department, he first had to take and pass the Civil Service exam, which is a requirement for all applicants. Minority applicants often have difficulty passing the exam. In 2010, 231 African-American candidates took the exam with only 57 out of 490 candidates who successfully passed the exam the first time according to a report released by the Civil Service Exam Board.

For many – whites and minorities –the exam is seen as a barrier to pursuing police work. Despite this “barrier,” Perdue successfully passed the exam by using the resources provided by the department.

Perdue comments that individuals often fail the test due to inadequate preparation.

“It [the Civil Service exam] is a time test; you want to study,” he said. “If you have been out of school for a while, you don’t want to just take it because you are out of study mode. When they [Dayton Police Department] put out study guides, use them to your advantage.”

One of the distinctive benefits of becoming a police officer in Dayton is that a college degree is welcomed but not required to serve in the department. Individuals who do not seek higher education after high school or have been out of school have a lower probability of passing the exam the first time.

After the exam, Perdue describes the six month training at the Police Academy as one of the most challenging experiences of his life. “It’s definitely work,” he said. “It will change your life.” Throughout the training recruits learn the written laws, endure physical fitness strength training, and ultimately see police work “behind the scenes” according to Perdue.

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In the summer of 2012, Perdue became one of twenty-two others who graduated from the police academy. In seven short months since graduation, Perdue has become a leader in recruitment for future officers by becoming one of five faces for the Dayton Police Recruitment campaign, which lasts Feb. 14 – April 19.

Perdue believes that a good officer has a sincere love for their community. “If you don’t care for the community, it’s not a job for you,” he comments. “What we are looking for is a person that can face a problem and see it through – police work is definitely a career of service.”

In the future, Perdue would like to see the Dayton Police Department to become more involved in the school system so that youth can avoid the view of officers that he developed when he was a student.

“You may have one kid out of a class that has a bad interaction with an officer,” said Perdue. “That kid’s story will be the one that is remembered by the class and others won’t have an opportunity to build a relationship with officers based off of someone else’s perception. We can change that.”

For more information about joining the Dayton Police Department, please call Trent Grooms at 937-545-0391. The recruitment period ends April 19, 2013.

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