

## Ohio State Highway Patrol hosts open house, career day

Garrett Looker The Chronicle-Telegram July 18, 2025



At the State Highway Patrol's open house of the Elyria post Thursday, a group of current and previously graduated students from Lorain's ACES — Achievement Through Community Education and Support — gathered around defense vehicles and held equipment as they listened to officers explain what it was like to be in law enforcement.

For many of those students, being around law enforcement was not a new thing, said Michael Ferrer, director of ACES. But Thursday's open house was an opportunity to see the other side of the law and potentially show them that it could be a career option in their future.

"I wanted them to see that there was another side," Ferrer said. "We could change that perspective. They never, ever dreamed ... that they could be in law enforcement."

As the students listened to presentations from members of the State Highway Patrol's crew, Lt. Ray Santiago, commander of the Elyria Highway Patrol Post, stood quietly in the background.

For Santiago, Thursday's open house was a full circle moment.

Before he became a law enforcement officer, Santiago was a student with ACES more than two decades ago.

"We've never had a situation where there was actually one of us — one of our kids — in law enforcement before," Ferrer said.

Santiago said that when he was a kid, Ferrer took a chance on him. Moments like Thursday's open house and presentations with ACES was a moment to repay that debt.

"Not just to people like him or organizations, but to the community that we serve, that we are obligated to take care of," Santiago said. "He took a chance on me and my first job. I was 15 years old. ... Now I can open my doors and repay."

Santiago had invited the students to come and see what it was like to be a law enforcement officer, he said.

Liz Alvarez and Leasya Castro both recently graduated high school and an early college program. As they stood on the front lawn of the Elyria Highway Patrol Post on Thursday, they said seeing a fellow graduate like Santiago become a law enforcement officer with the State Highway Patrol was an inspiration to them.

“It’s honestly very mind-blowing,” Alvarez said. “Maybe one of us might be in his shoes 20 years from now. And seeing how him being in ACES led him here, it makes me feel proud of being apart of ACES. ... We could all follow his footsteps.”

Castro agreed.

“To see how successful he is from coming up from such a small town — I feel like, oftentimes, Lorain is so underestimated,” Castro said. “To see him break barriers, it’s definitely impressive.”

After seeing the potential career opportunities through a department like the State Highway Patrol, Alvarez and Castro said there’s a possibility they could go down that path.

“I could see myself doing it if becoming a lawyer doesn’t work out for me,” Alvarez said.

“It’s more fun than I expected,” Castro said. “It’s really sparking interest.”

Santiago said connecting with the ACES students and showing them possible different futures was what the event was all about.

“It’s more than just a community, it’s more than just a recruitment event,” Santiago said. “It’s true integration — showing people what the opportunities are.”

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