

COMMUNITY COLLEGES PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN HOMELAND SECURITY



**By John Perrone, Director
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The recent FBI arrest of Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari, a Saudi student in Texas who was allegedly amassing bomb components for a string of attacks on various sites across the U.S., including New York, should be a reminder to all of us that we must remain vigilant about the security of our homeland and remain current in our emergency preparedness training.

In the aftermath of 9/11, many U.S. community colleges, including Monroe Community College, are dedicated to delivering domestic preparedness education and training to their respective communities. Community colleges now credential through training and education more than 80 percent of our traditional first responders, and more than 400 community colleges provide public safety training. Since 2003, MCC's Homeland Security Management Institute (HSMI) and its Public Safety Training Center – a partnership involving Monroe County, the City of Rochester and MCC – have played a critical role in preparing our local communities to become safer places to work and live.

HSMI's mission is to provide communities with quality training and education to prevent, respond to and recover from manmade and natural catastrophic events. We do so by tailoring our curricula to meet the unique needs of each community and to address regional training gaps as they emerge. People who receive our training are not

only traditional first responders but include schools, businesses, private security, hospitals, individuals with functional needs and citizens who may play a role in an emergency. Last year alone, HSMI provided programs to more than 300 agencies.

Through HSMI's partnership with the Monroe County Office of Emergency Management, the Institute has provided Community Emergency Response Team training to more than 600 citizens in the past seven years so they are able to assist our traditional first responders their families, neighbors and communities in times of disaster. The Institute is also one of the first in the nation to offer emergency response training to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. As a result, some of our program graduates responding to the Katrina disaster in New Orleans helped locate over 400 missing people with functional needs. More recently, the Institute has been selected by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as one of five lead community colleges with exemplary homeland security programs to develop and deliver a three-year national program on citizen preparedness through 2012.

As the Aldawsari case demonstrates, the threat of another terrorist attack on American soil is real and ever-growing. In today's world, the importance of educating our communities about remaining vigilant cannot be underestimated. ■

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