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Removing Barriers, Building Bridges: Camacho eager to join HPD

HARRISONBURG, Va. – Connecting with neighborhoods and creating lasting bonds with residents has been an integral part of Harrisonburg Police Department (HPD) Chief Eric English's mission since arriving in the Friendly City in 2018. So it's no wonder the department's new deputy chief has a track record of uniting officers with the communities they serve.

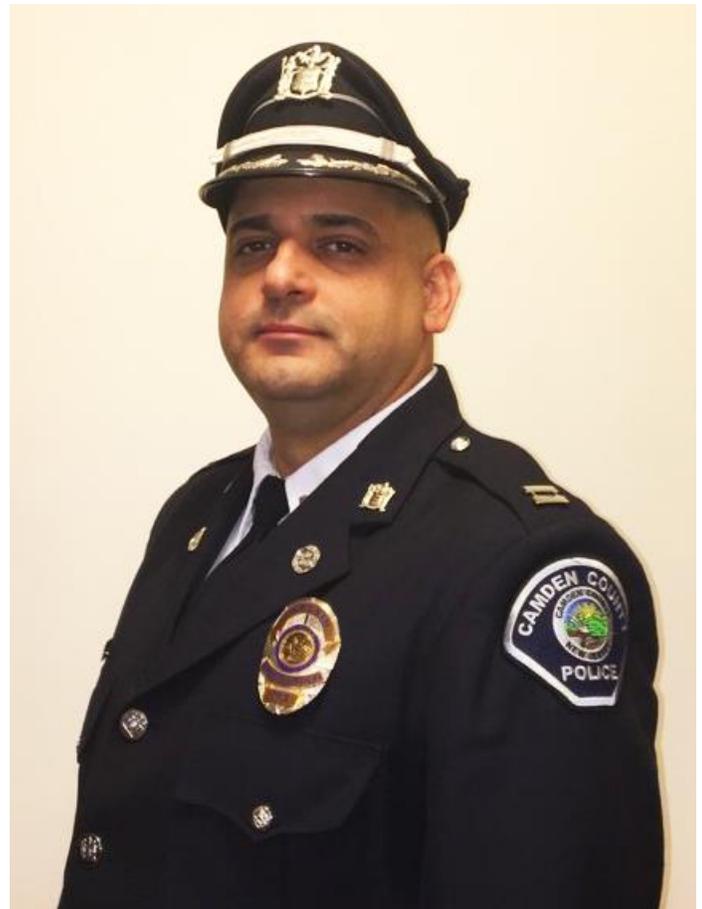
Gabriel Camacho, who most recently served as captain of operations for the Camden County Police Department in New Jersey, has been selected for the newly created deputy chief position. He will officially begin duty on Dec. 16, bringing his 25 years of experience to Harrisonburg.

"I'm humbled and honored to have been selected as the deputy chief for the Harrisonburg Police Department," Camacho said. "I'm excited to have the opportunity to bring to the city my policing experience, which has contributed to changing the culture in policing by focusing on community and creating opportunities for positive police-citizen engagement."

Camacho's lifetime of service illustrates an individual committed to emphasizing how a police force should best relate with its community. He worked in Camden to get officers out of their cruisers and into one-on-one interactions with those they serve, culminating in a visit from then President Barack Obama, who touted the crucial bonds between law enforcement officers and residents that Camacho's department was able to achieve.

"We as an organization began to change the culture in policing from the 'warrior' to the 'guardian' mindset," Camacho said. "This involved building bridges with the community and removing barriers. It created huge dividends in building trust within a community that historically did not trust law enforcement. Community policing was no longer seen as an assignment of one officer or specialized unit but as the founding philosophy of the entire organization."

Growing that trust between HPD and the Harrisonburg community has been at the forefront of Chief English's efforts. He's eager for his new deputy chief to join the cause.



Gabriel Camacho (pictured) is the Harrisonburg Police Department's new deputy chief. He starts Dec. 16.

“Deputy Chief Camacho comes to our agency with different ideas from his experience in Camden, but also he brings a lot of knowledge being involved in different aspects of policing,” English said. “His vision regarding policing in Harrisonburg will be an asset to our agency and we welcome the energy and focus that he brings to HPD.”

Camacho is excited to arrive in Harrisonburg and begin interacting with its diverse community. Having spent much of his life in Camden, which is itself a very diverse city, Camacho is eager to focus on increased connections with all neighborhoods.

“I am Hispanic of Puerto Rican descent, and have seen how those of different cultures can feel like outsiders within a community,” the new deputy chief said. “Law enforcement not only has a duty but obligation to reach out and create opportunities for positive engagements with all of our residents, which are building blocks to foster trust.”

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 54,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is available online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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