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Hero To Home-Seeking Cops

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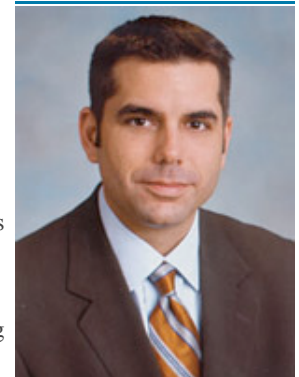
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When Michael Mercurio moved from Cincinnati in 2006, he left snow and Skyline chili behind, but he brought with him a plan to help Realtors and police officers weather the storms of San Diego's volatile housing market.

"When I got here I noticed one of the biggest issues was retaining police officers," says Mercurio, executive vice president of the 11,000-member San Diego Association of Realtors. "These officers are always giving — I saw an opportunity for us to use our real estate skills to give back."

As he did in a similar capacity in the Queen City, Mercurio rallied Realtors to embrace a community-minded agenda that included forming the nonprofit Ambassadors Foundation. Its first program, Everyday Heroes, will provide police officers with the education and financial assistance — either buying down interest rates or paying for their private mortgage insurance — to become homeowners. In 2008, Mercurio projects they will help 10 officers afford a home.

"We're hoping this will be an incentive for them to stay on the force," says Mercurio, whose father was a police officer. "We're targeting officers with two to five years on the force because that's when they decide they love their career but can't afford to stay here and live. They should live in the neighborhoods where they serve, and we are the experts to help them do that."



Michael Mercurio

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