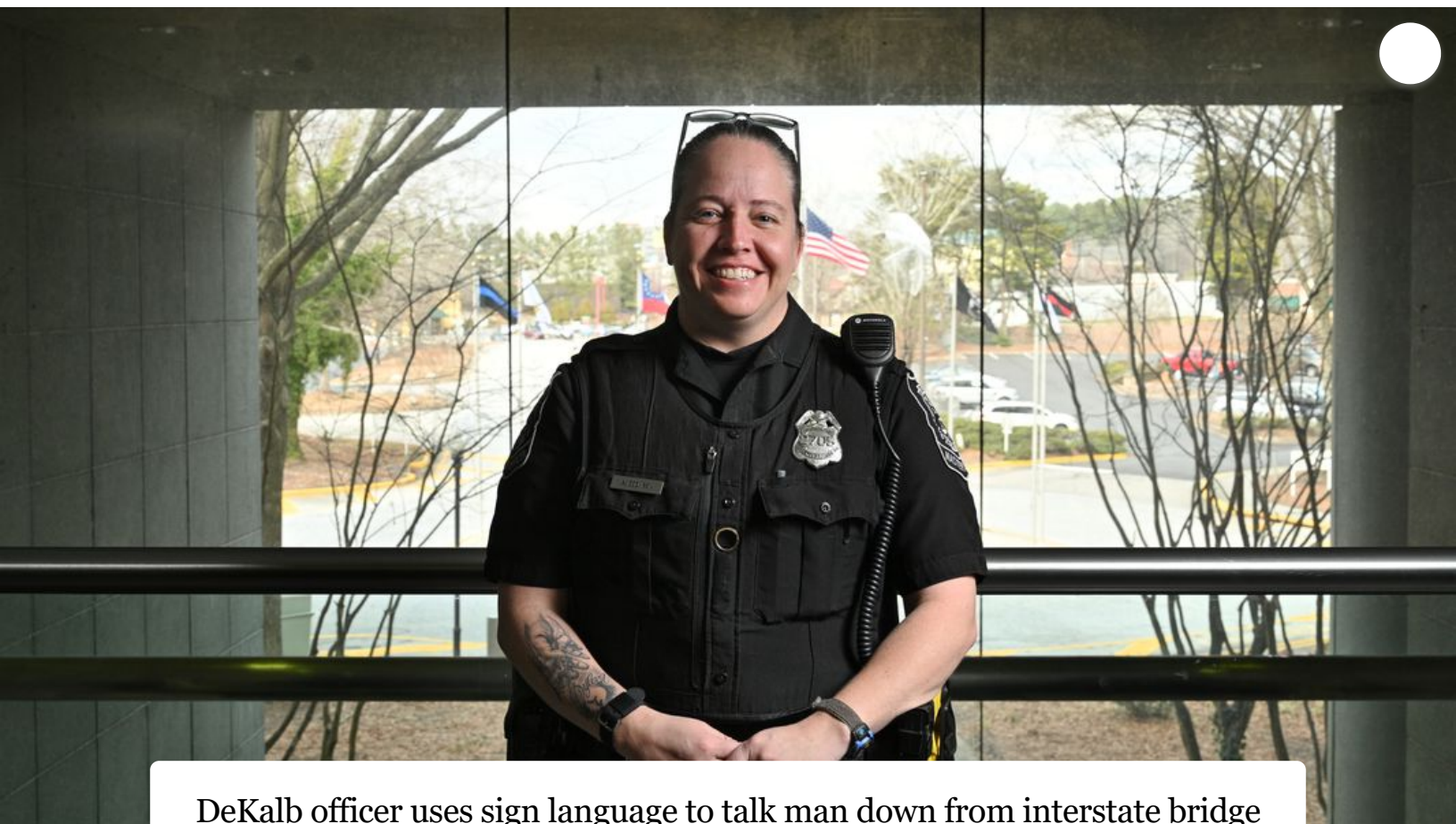




BREAKING NEWS

Boy, 14, sought in abduction of DeKalb 1-year-old girl

AJC
Atlanta. News. Now.



DeKalb officer uses sign language to talk man down from interstate bridge

DEKALB COUNTY | Feb 11, 2021

By Chelsea Prince, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



It was a relationship forged over food that sparked a DeKalb County officer's interest in sign language.

Advertisement



Officer A. Cochran picked up the basics of American Sign Language from her hearing-impaired friend over middle school lunch periods and continued her education later in life through a series of Google searches and library books. It's a skill she has not called upon often in her 13 years with the DeKalb County Police Department.

That was until a few weeks ago, when a 45-year-old deaf man climbed over the railing from I-285 to I-85 at Spaghetti Junction and threatened to jump. On that day, it was a relationship forged by common ground that Cochran thinks saved the man's life.

Article continues below



By Emory Healthcare

Advertiser Content

Emory's varicose vein treatments are major advancement over past options



AJC

Credit: HYOSUB SHIN / AJC

The Conyers native had just begun her afternoon shift Jan. 12 when a call came over her police radio about the man on the interstate ramp. DeKalb's North Central Precinct in Tucker is only a few miles from the interchange.

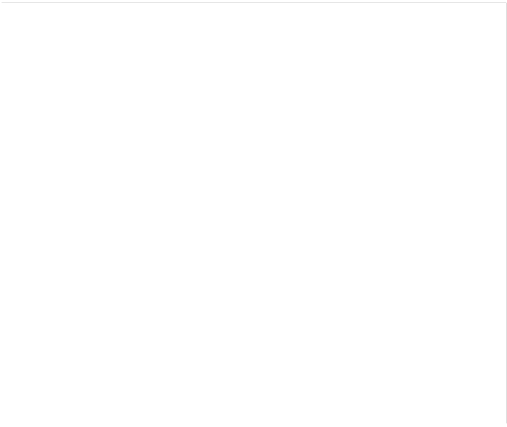
Your donation helps The Atlanta Journal-Constitution provide essential public health journalism during the COVID-19 pandemic. We press on together. Donate today.



shortly after 2:30 p.m. She put her hands in the air so as not to spook him and introduced herself.

He pointed to his ears.

Advertisement



“I asked him, ‘Are you OK?’ And he pointed to his ears again,” Cochran said. “I was like, OK, he’s deaf.”

Cochran continued their conversation in sign language. She asked again about his well-being, and he put his hands together like he was praying to God, she said.

“I signed for him to sit back in the car because at this point I needed for him to be safe,” she said. She asked again if he was OK, and if he was about to jump.

“He said he wanted to give his life to the Lord,” Cochran said. “I just replied by saying, ‘Sweetie, no. Your life matters.’ He put his hand over his heart.”

By then, fire and medical crews had arrived to evaluate the man. Cochran said she helped him answer their questions by interpreting and got him into the back of an ambulance for transport to Wellstar North Fulton Hospital.

“I did the ‘I love you’ sign in sign language and he did it back and put his hand over his heart, and that was it,” she said.



AIC



Credit: HYOSUB SHIN / AJC

The police department has a call line that connects officers with translators in the event of a communication barrier. But there are no translators for sign language. Those interactions are often scribbled transmissions on the officer's notepad.

It can make for missed connections, Cochran said.

There's no way to know the outcome if another officer had answered the call that day, but Cochran feels she was able to relate to the man on a deeper level. She hopes she at least put him at ease.

"I'm a cop," she said. "This is what I signed up to do, to help people."

In Other News

AJC

DEKALB COUNTY | 1h ago

Amazon 'last-mile' distribution warehouse poised to come to Chamblee

AJC

DEKALB COUNTY | 3h ago

Doraville celebrates sesquicentennial anniversary this year

AJC

DEKALB COUNTY

Stone Mountain expands grant program to help 22 more businesses

AJC

DEKALB COUNTY

Venture capital firm purchases Stonecrest mall, announces wide variety of plans

AJC

DEKALB COUNTY

Clarkston elects new councilman in special election

AJC

DEKALB COUNTY

'Completely different worlds': Chamblee grapples with local representation, diversity

AJC

DEKALB COUNTY

DeKalb County hosts workshop on student stress, trauma

CONTENT BY

Finance Wealth Post | Sponsored

NFL Veteran Michael Strahan Is Happily Married To His Partner

definition.org | Sponsored

These Legendary NFL Players Went Broke In Retirement

maternityweek.com | Sponsored

Pregnant Mom Confused After Unusual Ultrasound Checkup

Definition | Sponsored

This Is The Deepest Hole On Earth, And Here's The First Look

Unify Health Labs | Sponsored

Randy Jackson: This 3 Minute Routine Transformed My Health

AJC

Atlanta. News. Now.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Sign up for our newsletters [▶](#)

About [▼](#)

Contact Us [▼](#)

Subscriptions [▼](#)

Our Products [▼](#)



