

Local deputy turned entrepreneur retires

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
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McKinley County Sheriff's Department is set to lose one of their finest. Lt. Matt Hughbanks, 42, retires at the end of January.

Hughbanks has spent his entire law enforcement career of 20 years with the MCSO, responding to the usual garden variety of calls over the years. Getting through years of routine, and often enough those tough calls, Hughbanks depends on his wry sense of humor to get by.

"We take our job seriously, but we try not to live in the negative," he said. "I am going to miss the camaraderie."

Hughbanks first job in the first responders realm was that of a "communications specialist" – in other words a 911 operator – a job that he feels is one of the toughest as in this position the operator has to walk someone in distress through a situation without being on the scene.

Being on the other of side of that career fence for two decades, he admits that his role as a deputy is a tough gig, or as he puts it, "takes a different kind of breed."

Especially responding to homicide scenes. Calls involving children are particularly tough as well. But of all the homicides he's come across over the years, one that occurred in the mid-2000s hits a little too close to home.

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“I personally knew three of the four subjects [suspects],” he said. “I knew the victim and the suspects.”

Hughbanks said he grew up with the men which made the tragic situation “more personal.”

But there’s also rewarding experiences, such the time he headed the civil division – the Sheriff’s reserve program.

“We went to the ‘Head Start’ school and passed out Christmas toys to the kids,” he said. “That’s being on the positive side of law enforcement.”

Forty-two may seem like a young age to retire, but not for Hughbanks. He’s the owner and operator of Red Rock Security & Patrol and Guardian Training Academy. In addition to the business ventures, he’s the father of four-year-old twin boys and an eight-year-old son.

Red Rock Security was launched about five years ago with a handful of employees. It quickly grew into a sizable business of 80 employees. It’s Gallup-based, but requests for security detail come from Albuquerque and Grants.

On the other hand, Guardian Training Academy trains students defensive tactics skills. Hughbanks said he’s licensed to train New Mexicans looking for a conceal and carry permit.

Hughbanks lauds his clients for selecting his security firm. And to keep his clients, he requires that security guards behave politely toward clients and to their clients customers.

Notwithstanding, he’s thankful for his wife, who is the anchor of the business, keeping it afloat when he’s at work as a deputy.

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“Without her I wouldn’t have been able to do it,” he said.

Hughbanks hails from the Denver, Colo. area. His family moved to Gallup in 1991. Over the years he has been involved with the Gallup Lions Club and Elks Lodge, and he currently serves as the secretary on the Gallup-McKinley Chamber of Commerce board.

By Babette Herrmann

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