

Gallup Police Department Captain set to retire

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
Friday, 20 May 2016 09:18



When Gallup Police Department Capt. Rick White used to sit through interviews with the media, it was in his role as public information officer – answering questions about the myriad of crimes and deaths that occur in Gallup. The kind of stuff that swirls in an officer’s mind each day at the office, and can be talked about with some ease.

For about 27 years, the streets of Gallup have been White’s office. Investigating homicides, drug busts, and chasing down slippery criminals are all in a days work. But, when it became White’s turn to be the focus of a story, his approach was humble.

“It has been a pleasure to serve our citizens,” he said.

It seems most of the men and women that wear the badge don’t like being the center of attention, even when it’s well deserved after years of service, like in White’s case.

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But, he doesn't mind sharing a joke and his passion for mentoring his peers.

"Police work is the best job in the whole world," he said, adding that he's enjoyed working with other officers and detectives over the years, which includes training and working together on cases.

After graduating from UNM-Gallup in 1989 with a degree in Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement, White entered the GPD police force. He started as a patrolman, then over the years he advanced to corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, and to his current position of captain in 2009.

After so many years on the force, he's developed areas he's passionate about pursuing. One of his favorite jobs is overseeing the narcotics division.

"I love investigating the crimes and getting the drugs off the streets," he said.

And getting those drugs off the streets can be dangerous and unpredictable, especially raids on homes.

"There's always something that you didn't plan for," he said.

It's not a career for everyone, he said, but it's full of adrenaline-pumping excitement, such as catching a criminal in the act. White anticipated catching crooks back in his patrol days, whether it was pursuit on foot or by car.

"I enjoyed looking for people breaking into commercial businesses and homes ... hoping to catch them," he said.

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But not all of the work feels rewarding at times. As first responders, cops all too often encounter horrific injuries and death.

“There’s a lot of death,” he said.

Whether it’s an exposure-related death, or the death of a baby, it’s never easy. But nothing is tougher than having to tell families their loved one has died.

“Having to notify families, now that’s hard,” he said.

When asked if any death scene stands out above the others, White replied, “All of them.”

So what comes post-retirement for White? Spending time with his grandchildren comes to the top of his mind, next in line is fishing. His wife, an administrator for the department, has less than two years of work left before she can retire, so they can enjoy some fishing and camping trips together.

With White’s retirement looming, Lt. Roseanne Morrisette said she’ll miss the captain, who she said mentored and trained her. She credits his leadership for helping her to reach her current position as lieutenant.

She explained that what contributes to making him a great mentor is his family values and sincerity.

“Very few people have a heart like his; he truly cares about people,” she said.

She said that she’ll miss his morale boosting, morning briefings, where the upbeat White tells everyone: “You guys are doing a great job. Keep it up!”

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His last day of work is May 31.

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