

COFFEE WITH SOME COPS

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Cops, Deputies Listen to Public's Concerns

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The Gallup Police Department held its second *Coffee with a Cop* community outreach event Jan. 9 at the Octavia Fellin Main Library.

Coffee with a Cop brings police officers and the citizens they serve together – over a cup of coffee and pastries – to informally discuss issues and learn more about each other, Lt. Roseanne Morrisette, public information officer with the GPD, said.

The most recent event brought out McKinley County Sheriff Ron Silversmith, McKinley County Undersheriff Paul Lucero, Gallup Mayor Jackie McKinney, City Councilwoman Linda Garcia, former University of New Mexico-Gallup instructor Martin Link – and a host of area people who happened to be randomly visiting the library.

“This is something that fosters a relationship between the community and residents,” Morrisette said. “There are no distractions in this kind of setting. In just looking at the numbers, I’d say it’s very successful.”

Morrisette noted that some 99 people walked through the doors of Fellin to attend the event. Most stayed long after the event was over, just to small talk and catch up on community news, Morrisette said.

She explained that most people went right into thanking the police officers on hand for the job they do everyday in protecting the public from crime.

Library Director Mary Ellen Pellington said four dozen donuts were served and several dozen cups of coffee were consumed – notable considering the cold outdoor temperature and early morning hours. The event started at 9 am and ended at 10:30 am.

“This was very successful and I hope we can do it again very soon,” Pellington said. “We had quite a few people. Some were already here and some heard about it through advertising or by word of mouth. Personally, I don’t think I’ve seen that many guns in one place and at one given

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moment.”

Barbara Stanley, a retired Gallup entrepreneur who used to run a 24-hour eatery on the city’s east end, said the event definitely stresses a sense of community. Stanley said cops used to come in to her eatery at all hours – something you don’t see much of in this day and age anywhere.

“I think every municipality, no matter the size, needs something like this,” Stanley said. “You know, this humanizes police officers. And that’s important when you look at what’s happening between communities in the world and police departments. I’m glad Gallup is doing something like this.”

Sgt. Francie Martinez, one of several Gallup officers that attended the event, said questions and comments from those participating ran the gamut. Martinez and Morrisette put together the event and promised more.

Martinez and Morrisette attended a training session last March in Hawthorne, Calif., to see how the event worked over there, the two said. The event started in Hawthorne and has taken off in communities around the U.S.

“It was mostly people thanking the GPD for what they do,” Martinez said. “But there were people with questions about patrol and about all sorts of things that we do.”

Ashtynn Samuels, 15, the reigning Miss Gallup High School, said she heard about the event via the Internet. She said attending it was worthwhile, even though it cut into school hours.

“It’s a chance to get to know the people who work at the police department,” Samuels said. “It’s a way to get to know the officers.”

Morrisette said the last *Coffee with a Cop* event was held at Angela’s Café in October 2016.

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She said the event idea initially took flight with former Gallup police chief Robert Cron and deputy chief John Allen, and was picked up by current police chief Phillip Hart.

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