

## Local artist paints law enforcement in a positive light

Written by By Dee Velasco Sun Correspondent  
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In a time of turmoil and police shootings, law enforcement has recently been portrayed in a dark light. But a portrait created by Gallup artist Ric Sarracino paints a fresh perspective of the men and women who enforce the law.

Sarracino's painting, "Thin Blue Line," tells a unique story.

Within the painting, Sarracino says, "There are three lines, the middle line is blue and the top and bottom are black. The top black line represents the civilians, the middle blue line represents the police, the bottom line represents the criminals. So in order for the criminals to vandalized the civilians, they have to pass thru the police."

The artist says the idea for the painting came from his church pastor, Jonathan Heimborg of the Door Christian Fellowship Church.

"My pastor was a missionary in India at one time, and he needed the police, as he and his family's lives were in jeopardy—[the police] weren't that responsive," Sarracino said. "Here in America, we sleep good every night because of them; we live a secure life because of the police department; they deserve to be respected, and to be honored for their service. In fact, we always pray for them at every service."

Sarracino, who in the past had his own negative dealing with police officers, was commissioned by the Door to paint the mural.

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“I myself was in prison, thrown in by the police department,” Sarracino said. “During that time of my insanity, I was able to regain sensibility. The Door came to jail and gave services, and it was that time I gave my life to Jesus Christ, and I have never been back to jail since. My outlook on law enforcement has changed tremendously.”

On Aug. 16, a special service was held for local law enforcement in honor of the men and women who serve their community. New Gallup Police Department Chief Phillip Hart attended the service, along with several GPD officers.

“I thought it was exceptional, this town is very supportive of its law enforcement, and has been very supportive of me,” Hart said. “It’s a wonderful thing to see, and this is just another way of supporting the police department. The whole congregation was very warm. To see that much support — visible support — made us feel welcome.”

Sarracino, who gave a speech at the unveiling of his painting said, “The police are having a bad rap right now, it’s [an artistic] appreciation for the law enforcement right now, because it’s unheard of right now.

The painting, he said, honors both fallen officers and the officers who continue to protect the public and one another.

Hart also gave a speech at the presentation.

“It’s exceptional,” the police chief said. “It’s a beautiful painting — really tells a great story within the painting itself. This community support lets us know that we are not alone out there doing it by ourselves.”

Hart said GPD officers are approachable, professional, and respectable in their dealings with the public.

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“Everyone is treated the same,” he said. “We care about the citizens and they care about us.”

“Thin Blue Line” currently awaits just the right hanging place, and will be hung by Hart.

Sarracino is currently working on murals for the Southwest Indian Foundation, the new Marriott Hotel in Gallup, and Jerry’s Cafe, among other projects.

***By Dee Velasco***

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