

Retiring Chief Boyd leaves a legacy to build on

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
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The most important thing newly retired Chief Franklin Boyd learned in his nearly 25 years with the Gallup Police Department isn't something you can teach in a classroom: Compassion.

Boyd, who had been chief since April 19, 2019, joined the department in 1998 after attending the police academy in Gallup. He'd grown up and gone to school in Fort Defiance, Ariz., and spent seven years in the U.S. Marine Corps before that.

He started out on patrol and worked his way up from there. But those early experiences on the street taught him that the world isn't black and white, even if your car is.

"When I was a very young officer, knowing the basics in terms of dealing with the public, I thought I had to enforce the law in the strictest manner possible...I didn't care, I didn't know any better," he said in an interview with the *Sun*.

Back then, he might have given a speeder a ticket without considering mitigating circumstances, like someone racing to a hospital when a family member had an emergency.

"Cops have a lot of discretion in dealing with things like that," Boyd said. "Was it justice? Did I give someone justice that day? No, I didn't do justice. I should have been more compassionate. Obviously experience and maturity tells you otherwise now."

In an increasingly contentious environment, it's not just the civilians who need compassion. Boyd is adamant that young officers need leadership that takes care of their mental health and

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helps them cope with a tough job, and constant training to do that job better and advance.

“One of my greatest joys was concentrating on investing in human capital. When I took over as chief I wanted to increase our accountability and professionalism, giving officers everything they need to do their jobs,” he said.

That was part of restructuring the department to be more proactive, an effort that took years to bring about.

“We were very heavily reactive. To have a successful police department you have to have a proactive component to your policing,” he said. “You need a special unit in the department that will go out there and answer the community’s needs.”

One thing he developed is a team that can go after “hot spots” when citizens report problems with things like drugs or speeders creating a dangerous environment. But that’s a challenge for officers already on duty; his successor’s biggest challenge will be staffing.

In an Oct. 21 issue, the *Sun* reported that the GPD had 10 vacancies they needed to fill. Boyd commented on the national police shortage, saying that a department is nothing without some manpower.

“You can have a great blueprint, you can have a great structure, but if you don’t have the manpower it’s all for naught,” he said. You’re just going to go back to being reactive. Unfortunately that’s what happens to a lot of PDs.”

It’s not all about money. The department tries to offer competitive salaries, but a key to its cohesion is making employees feel supported.

“It’s their mental health and well being, their need for training and equipment,” Boyd explained. “That’s how you start building the culture. Then they realize after a while, ‘Wow this PD really

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cares about me, my professional development and my well being.”

Boyd won't be around to enjoy one of his crowning achievements, but he's proud that construction has begun on the John Arviso Public Safety building.

“Every chief wants to leave his profession when things are going in a positive direction and I'm so happy for that,” Boyd said. “The officers need a new public safety building.”

City Manager Maryann Ustick worked with Boyd throughout his career, from lieutenant all the way up to chief. She did nothing but praise him at the end of his career.

“He took over the department when it was really challenged after his boss was terminated...he really built the bench. He really put together a succession plan so the department is in really good shape all the way down to the sergeants,” Ustick said.

Reflecting on his career, Boyd said one of his most memorable moments was a chance encounter at the post office while he was still on patrol.

“This young lady approached me. At this point in my career I had responded to thousands and thousands of calls. She called me by my name but I didn't recognize her,” he said.

She reminded him he'd been to a past domestic violence call at her home, where he made an arrest and helped the woman get shelter and resources. “She said, ‘If it weren't for you, I'd have been stuck in that cycle of violence.’ That meant a lot to me. I'll never forget it,” Boyd said.

Boyd's future plans include attending to his own business rehabbing rental units, charity work, catching up on reading and hitching a camper to his pickup truck to see the southwest.

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He's not sure if he'll stay in Gallup or move to another community, but he's sure of one thing: "I'm looking for something that's very rural-oriented," he said. "I want my closest neighbor to be a few miles away. I want a little solitude."

Boyd's last day on the job was Jan. 20. The city is actively searching for a new chief, but in the meantime Capt. Erin Toadlena-Pablo will be acting chief and Capt. Billy Padavich will serve as acting deputy chief.

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