

Professionalism and A Focus on Community

At the 2019 Annual Awards event held March 10, 2020, Chief Kaff applauded both the Woodland Police Department (WPD) and community for recent achievements. The positive narrative repeated throughout the ceremony was due, in part, to the department's efforts to update its policies and training procedures. One of the many marks of success, according to the chief, is that its 68 sworn officers have handled over 66,000 calls for service which yielded no false arrests. The chief thanked the department for its alignment with the WPD's core values: community relations, compassionate service, integrity, and professionalism. He thanked the public for its support and the media, which informs the community about how the department addresses its concerns. The community relations programs, teamwork, and creativity employed by WPD staff and officers reflect professionalism and compassion. Chief Kaff recognized all members of the department: sworn officers, civilian staff, and volunteers. He stated that the 34 volunteers and 7 chaplains donated over 3,000 hours of their time.

Sharon Zinsli's service exemplifies the WPD core values in action, which earned her recognition as the 2019 Volunteer of the Year. Sharon began volunteering informally in 1992, before the Volunteers in Policing (ViPs) program began. In February 2001 she was hired as a community services officer assigned to records, then traffic, and finally administration until her retirement in 2008. As a volunteer, Sharon has worked in warrants, property and evidence, and vehicle abatement, as well as supporting many community events.

When asked how volunteers can employ the department values of professionalism and community focus, Sharon summarized her philosophy in one statement: "If you sign up, show up!" She also noted the importance of a neat uniform to show a readiness to work. Sharon continued to say that when members of the ViPs join the team, reliability is key. If a volunteer does not show up for their shift, then paid staff has to cover for them. So, show up, because someone is counting on you!

Sharon's professionalism is also reflected in the breadth and depth of her skills. After working with warrants, the property and evidence lead requested that she help with purging evidence at the WPD's former location. She learned the statutory regulations regarding the length of time that the department keeps items and the disposal process. For example, if a found item is taken to the WPD, the requirement is to keep it 90 days. However, if evidence is used in a trial, then the department must wait for the district attorney to give notification that items can be purged. The disposal of evidence can be very complex. Currency, weapons, illegal drugs, and e-waste require appropriate paperwork or a court order for disposal. Some items also require a second observer during the process. Drugs and firearms have to be destroyed at specific locations. She has an amusing memory about purging property and evidence at the old location, when a bowling ball fell from a high shelf and nearly ended her volunteer career!

Sharon is always happy to support her colleagues. For example, Gerald Dawson needed a partner to work with him some mornings on vehicle abatement. That assignment requires two partners and procedure training. Sharon's role is to complete the California Highway Patrol

Form 180 Vehicle Report for every vehicle. The team is also required to wait for a tow truck to complete official paperwork on behalf of the WPD. If Sharon and Gerald did not make this job a regular part of their service, an officer would have to be taken from patrol for the task. The city is counting on ViPs to do the job!

Her sense of professionalism has made Sharon an exemplary ViP. Her concern for the community of Woodland brought her to the WPD. She has been rewarded by her time with the department knowing that her work is helping the team. An eager learner, she has also gained expertise with many official procedures. While we all wait to go back to our own roles as ViPs, remember, "If you sign up, show up!" Stay healthy.