

## The New Normal at the Woodland Police Department

The staff and officers at the Woodland Police Department (WPD) have a message for their Volunteers in Policing (ViPs) colleagues. They miss the ViPs as much as the ViPs miss them! When the Yolo County Public Health Officer, Dr. Ron Chapman, announced the shelter in place order on March, 18, 2020, the WPD began working with all Woodland city departments to plan how to best support the safety of the community and to be in compliance with the order. One critical task was to determine essential and non-essential department services. Another was to implement guidelines, such as social distancing and providing protective gear to employees who have contact with the public. Along with other staff members, the ViPs were asked to not enter the building so that these guidelines could be established.

Today, daily life is very different at the WPD headquarters. Most staff and officers are working different hours and locations. Some are working remotely, or teleworking. They come to the building on a limited basis and a strict schedule to minimize the number of people in the building. As one who leads by example, Chief Kaff set up the tools so that either he or Deputy is in the building each day. This allows for one more essential staff member to work at



headquarters. Each bureau has made accommodations to maintain robust services and keep ample space between people. The Investigations Bureau is able to have detectives telework during some hours. Detectives use technology to be securely connected to any meetings or to provide reports. The Records Division of the Support Services Bureau is working staggered shifts—even the graveyard shift! This division has staff members available 24 hours a day. The Records team said they miss the ViPs who work at the front desk, do warrant cross-checks, and file. Other units, such as the Crime Analysis Unit also said they miss the ViPs and their help.

Despite these changes, the WPD is implementing new ways to continue its mission, to preserve the peace and protect the public through strong community partnerships and effective policing. For example, officers use telephone calls to gather initial information about reported incidents before having a face-to-face meeting. Ample personal protective gear is provided to staff and officers. The WPD, the City of Woodland, and the Yolo County Department of Health and Human Services coordinate communication to provide a single messaging narrative during the 2020 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency. The City of Woodland activated a virtual Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in March, which has strengthened the city's ability to

monitor the pandemic, plan for the needs of the community, provide consistent communication, and increase access to additional resources.

Morgan has been busy adjusting her responsibilities to respond to the COVID-19 emergency. She provides assistance ranging from informing citizens that children are allowed to play outside during the day to notifying residents that they must stop hosting large backyard gatherings of people during the shelter in place order. Morgan also assists the department with their social media campaign. The WPD's Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG), and NextDoor postings are among the most popular according to the data. Sergeant Hyde has organized a diverse team of contributors and Morgan focuses on the stories and messaging which as she says, "provide a smiling face in a storm." Her messages are more important than ever during the emergency, because they help people to remain calm and to be kind. Although we are technically furloughed, the ViPs can contribute by following the WPD on FB, IG, and NextDoor. Don't forget to share the page and your favorite posts on your FB and IG accounts!

Since the countywide shelter in place order was extended through May 31, 2020, volunteer duties have been suspended until further notice. Morgan will soon plan our role within the new WPD procedures. She is working with Trista Kennedy to set up the technology to hold an online meeting of the ViPs. Until the first meeting and our return to duties, consider supporting other volunteer efforts in the county, city, or your neighborhood. Keep in touch with each other with an email, text, or phone call. Ask Morgan if you need someone's contact information. I certainly miss my ViP colleagues and look forward to connecting soon!