

Tualatin Police Chief Kent Barker to Retire



When Tualatin Police Chief Kent Barker retires at the end of June, our city will lose more than a Chief, but rather an extraordinary community member who has integrated our police force with our community in a way very few Chiefs do. This was made possible by his desire to be hands-on within our community, participating in our neighborhood events, our 5K's, our schools, our lives. He could just have easily been behind the scenes, orchestrating the workings of our Police Department, but that's simply not his style. Chief Barker will be missed for the connections he made, bringing our community together with each step along the way. Best of luck and thank you, Chief Barker.

Jonathan Crane
Past Publisher

SO WHY ARE YOU RETIRING?

Basically for personal reasons...I have two grandsons now who will be 21 months and 9 months old when I retire. These little guys have really tugged at my heart. My 89 year-old father-in-law has lived with my wife and I for over three years now and it has been a daily reminder that I haven't been able to spend very much quality time with my own father who is 83 years old. My excuse has always been that I'm too busy with work. I have had the privilege to serve the public for over 34 years and I would like to serve in a different capacity after I retire. I am going to intentionally take the summer off to decompress and then I'll explore other opportunities to serve on a part-time basis.



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER IN THE FIRST PLACE?

I grew up hearing police stories about my great uncle, Tony Neufeldt, who was the Chief of Police in Dallas, Oregon and the Sheriff of Polk County until he died in 1963. I also had two uncles who were in law enforcement. One worked for Portland Police Bureau and the other was an Oregon State Trooper. I remember family reunions used to be a bunch of us sitting around and hearing cop stories. But when I graduated from high school, I immediately went to work for my dad who was a home builder in the Salem, Oregon area. I framed houses until 1981 when the economy went bust. Interest rates for a residential home was at 18% and my dad had to close his business. I was looking for work and my uncles talked me into applying for a police job. Once I started the Reserve Academy, I was hooked. I have absolutely loved being a law enforcement officer from the first day I started.

I started as a volunteer Reserve Deputy with Marion County Sheriff's Office in 1981 and was hired full-time in 1982. I worked with MCSO as a Deputy Sheriff until May 19, 1984. At that time the City of Keizer created their own police department. At midnight, May 19th, I changed out of my brown county uniform and put on

my new blue Keizer PD uniform. I was one of eleven sworn officers who started the Keizer Police Department. I still remember being the officer who took the first police call and made the first arrest for the City of Keizer by arresting a guy for drunk driving. I was also the last of the original eleven officers to leave the Keizer Police Department.

While at Keizer PD, I was a patrol officer, narcotics officer (when I had hair), detective, patrol sergeant, detective sergeant, lieutenant, and captain. I worked at Keizer until the end of September 2003 and started as the Tualatin Chief of Police on October 1, 2003.

So by the time I retire on June 24th, I will have worked for over 34 years in law enforcement.

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A STRONG ADVOCATE FOR COMMUNITY POLICING. HOW HAS THE TUALATIN RESPONDED TO THIS AND HAS IT BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

I would like to think that our police department has been very successful in community policing, but the term community policing is a philosophy and has had different names throughout my career. I'm a firm believer in the importance of engaging our community members face-to-face, in non-enforcement situations, and treating everyone with dignity and respect. Our officers are trained and armed with resources to help people get the help they need, especially if it's something that isn't police related. Our officers and supervisors are assigned to specific districts in the City and they take ownership of their respective districts to solve problems in their areas.

We do our very best to get involved with events throughout the city and throughout the year. Just to name a few, we engage folks at the Crawfish Festival, hand out candy in the neighborhoods on

Halloween, give away stuffed toys to children in underprivileged neighborhoods, paddle giant carved-out pumpkins in the Lake at the Commons during the Giant Pumpkin Regatta. We race in a variety of 5K races or cheer others on. We read books to children at school, coach a variety of youth sports, host a summer camp for middle school students, offer free child seat inspections, and hold Drug Take-Back Days

for folks to drop off expired drugs so they can be disposed of safely. We give safety tips to businesses and neighborhood groups, provide resources to our Citizen Involvement Organizations, and give tours of our police department. We do much more to stay engaged with our community so they can see us and interact with us when we aren't enforcing the laws we are sworn to enforce.

I'm the most proud of how we have expanded our National



Night-Out Event. Our first year, we only had one local restaurant host us in their parking lot. We now go to over 20 neighborhoods and talk with more than 1,000 community members in one night. We have also put together a Citizen's Academy known as the Tualatin Police Experience.

We just completed our 6th year teaching community members about how we do our work and how we work together as a team. We get rave reviews about this academy and our officers absolutely love to teach citizen's about our profession.

I get so many compliments and positive comments from our public and very rarely do I hear complaints. We are human and make mistakes, but our mistakes are minimal

and we are humble enough to apologize and make things right when we do make mistakes. I honestly believe that the Tualatin Police Department has a positive reputation in our community and that the community trusts us to do the job right. This has been a complete team effort from every member of our department.

YOU'VE EXPERIENCED QUITE A BIT OF SUCCESS IN YOUR CAREER BOTH LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF LOOKING BACK AT YOUR CAREER?

I would like to contribute a lot of my success to being lucky and being at the right place at the right time. I'm so proud that I was selected to be Tualatin's second chief of police and even more proud of the men and women who work at our department.

I was fortunate enough to serve the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) as a Past President and Serve as a General Chair and Vice President At-Large for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) for five years. Both organizations allowed me to network with other law enforcement leaders throughout the state, nation, and internationally. I had the opportunity to teach other police leaders around the world about how law enforcement works in the United States and most specifically how police departments operate in communities such as Tualatin. My biggest challenge was teaching other police leaders how to pronounce "Tualatin". And talking while someone was interpreting for me in another language. My most cherished experience was when I was in Israel.

I've been recognized for different awards, but I'm more proud and thankful that I'm able to retire with my health and sanity.



5) BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT LOSING YOU AND CAPTAIN BRAAKSMA WITHIN A COUPLE MONTHS, HOW DO YOU SEE THE DEPARTMENT TRANSITIONING IN THE SHORT TERM?

Losing Captain Braaksma was a big loss as it was my plan and agenda to develop him to be my replacement when I retired. When I informed Capt. Braaksma that I was going to retire, he confided in me that he was actually planning to retire before me. But even though we lost a great guy, we have been developing and preparing others within our department to take the next step. I promoted Lieutenant Greg Pickering to Captain and I have six sergeants lined-up and ready to compete for the Lieutenant position. I'm intentionally leaving the lieutenant position open for the new chief to take a look at the organization and decide what he/she wants to do for future promotions and organization structure. Either way, we have internal members of our department who are ready to compete and will fill the gaps as needed. They are more than prepared to take the next step.

When I announced my retirement in January, I revealed the six-month plan on things we needed to accomplish and stay focused on until the new chief takes office. Without going into great detail, I can say with confidence that the department won't skip a beat when I leave. We are a team-oriented agency and every member steps-up when needed. I believe I have pointed the department in the right direction and they will continue to go in the right direction in the future.

WHAT WAS THE MOST STRESSFUL POLICE SITUATION YOU'VE FACED AS CHIEF?

Stress? Being a chief of police isn't stressful... I guess the most stressful is when you or someone else from the media interviews me, but I'm just kidding about that too. I'd like to fool myself and think that

I don't get stressed, but I know I carry a lot of weight on my shoulders. I would say that the most stressful thing to me as a chief is getting the phone calls in the middle of the night. I know our officers are well trained, but I continually worry about our members getting hurt or worse. When I get the call in the middle of the night, I just pray it's not a call that one of our officers was injured or killed.

Promotion processes aren't fun either. A couple months ago we did a promotion process for two sergeant positions. Eleven officers competed for the position, which means at the end of the day, I made two officers very happy when I promoted them and I disappointed nine other officers. I know I have to make those tough decisions, although difficult at times, but I'm proud of each and every promotion I've made. I just hate to disappoint people.

WHAT WOULD BE THE FIRST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE A ROOKIE OFFICER?

Your questions are getting tougher Jonathan...I actually have a one-on-one meeting with each officer I hire and give them a four page letter with a list of my expectations, which is subsequently advice to make them successful. The bottom line is that integrity means everything



Photos courtesy of Eric Hermann

and treating people with dignity and respect is a must. As a police officer we have to have the courage to confront our peers and hold each other accountable. We must be trusted by our community!

As an "enforcer" of laws, our profession isn't always viewed in a positive manner, but I tell our officers that every encounter they have with someone may be the first and only time that person ever had a dealing with a police officer. How our officers treat that person impacts the officer's reputation and the department's reputation. So if you have to give someone a citation, be professional and polite. If you have to fight a combative subject, get them under control, then dust them off and treat them with dignity and respect. If you're taking a report from a victim, show compassion for the person who is suffering a loss. Ultimately, you need to be a good person and never stop learning. Every day is a training day regardless of how many years you're in this profession.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

I'm going to intentionally take the summer off and get some things done around my house. I have some retired buddies that I plan to golf with and a fly rod I need to learn to fish with. We have a vacation planned with our daughter's and their families, and my wife and I have a Panama Canal Cruise planned later in the year. I'm not the type of person who can sit still, so I'm sure by the fall or winter I'll explore other opportunities to serve. That may be with our church or it may be in some other part-time capacity just to challenge me further. Who knows, maybe I'll give Segway tours of the City parks and trails. I think I could do that!

But ultimately, it's all about my family. They sacrificed a lot while I've been in this profession. I have a lot of making-up to do and look forward to doing just that.

Thanks for taking the time to interview me Jonathan. It's been an honor serving Tualatin and I'll never forget the friends I've made while serving this great city.

