

Thank you 9-1-1 Community Comment Mike Goldsby: March 28, 2013

During her Monday evening shift for the Fortuna police, an emergency dispatcher picked up the line to hear a different kind of 9-1-1 call. This was not someone needing help. It was a six year old child who just wanted to say "thanks" to her local police department. The News Channel 3 website has a cute story and the episode is recorded on You Tube as well.

Law enforcement agencies don't get many thank you calls, I imagine. And for the record, 9-1-1 is not the way to thank them. When I see a letter to the editor about law enforcement or a blog posting, it is very often a complaint. It seems to me that half of those complain that law enforcement should have been there quicker or should have tracked down the criminals sooner or should have prevented something from happening in the first place. The other half seem to complain that law enforcement should leave people alone. There are some compliments mixed in there as well but a lot of the feedback is negative.

A law enforcement career would be hard work even if you had total community support. City police deal with stuff the rest of us don't want to think about. California Highway Patrol officers see things the rest of us don't want to see. Sheriff's Deputies do all of that and cover a huge geographic area.

The sheer volume of cases overwhelms me. Check out the Lost Coast Outpost website for a few days and look at the number of booking photos that accumulate in the average week. If you are thinking about getting a facial tattoo or a full neck tattoo, a look at some booking photos will dissuade you from that idea. Listen to a couple of days worth of KINS News casts. There is some new car chase or assault in the news every day.

The seriousness of some crimes overwhelms me as well. I know people are innocent until proven guilty. But we have people in jail accused of intentionally killing people with a car and others who attempted to run people over. Someone apparently stabbed a stranger on the Highway 101 overpass at Weott. There are high speed chases and a couple of low speed chases every week. Law enforcement does not get to pick and choose what they respond to. They have to wade in. It is their sworn duty.

There are also a large number of big commercial drug busts. The sheer size and scope of some of the commercial operations is overwhelming. Where do all of those guns come from? People believe that the threat of violence will decrease if marijuana is legalized. Perhaps. But the threat of violence is very real right now and law enforcement is very aware of this.

I work across the street from the courthouse and I had the opportunity to see the Eureka Police a lot during the Occupy movement. From what I saw, they were consistently fair and even compassionate in some challenging situations.

There are a number of public safety officers in many different agencies of course including fire departments. Likely, many times their jobs are thankless too.

College of the Redwoods Police Academy is graduating another class of 24 cadets and two of those graduates will stay local. Students in this program come from around the state and it is clear that the police academy serves an important community need.

Law enforcement is an honorable career. They deserve respect, which includes appropriate compensation and appropriate retirement benefits.

So let's all take a cue from the 6 year old Fortuna girl and figure out a way to express our gratitude to local law enforcement. But don't use 9-1-1.

This has been Mike Goldsby for Community Comment