

He didn't stay very long; but ~~he~~ made quite an impact nevertheless. I'm talking about Eureka Police Chief Andy Mills who came in November of 2013 and departed July 21st to become Chief of the Santa Cruz Police dept. In his brief 3 + years Chief Mills put everything he had into the job: getting to know the community, showing up for a wide variety of events, shopping for Christmas toys with needy kids, enforcing the just requirements of law with ~~it~~ counterbalancing compassion toward those in genuine need. He listened well, got people involved in the process of ~~keeping~~ ^{policing} our community, ~~safe~~, and brought some much needed reforms. Perhaps his biggest contribution was convincing his officers that the average citizen wants to breathe a sigh of relief when they see a police officer, not feel pangs of fear. His insistence that police officers see themselves as officers of peace, first and foremost, is a theme I hope the next Chief will endorse. In his parting words he also made some poignant comments about the prevailing ~~disrespect~~ ^{disrespect} for law that pervades Humboldt County due to the drug trade. This disrespect for law ~~leads~~ ^{is} to disrespect for people and to much criminal activity. I couldn't agree more!

With the new laws legalizing the growing and selling of pot, it will be interesting to see if the pot growers come under the canopy of law or continue their sordid reign of lawless disregard for everyone and every thing--including the natural environment--which they often destroy on their way to quick money.

You may have seen the pictures of Chief Mills hugging Betty Chinn farewell. He had a lot of respect for the work Betty is doing, and worked hand in hand with her to make our city cleaner, safer and more compassionate. This provides a nice segue to my next topic.

You may also have seen the newscast of the twenty Japanese students and two *senseis* (teachers) down at Betty Chinn's Center. They dropped by to see how she helps those in need by giving them--not a handout, but a hand-UP. While there they sang their school song. They'll be sharing their experiences and singing again at our church this Sunday, then heading back to Tokyo. These girls are part of a Homestay exchange that has been going for 26 years ~~at our~~ ^{between} ~~church~~ ^{Tokyo & Eureka,}. As you might imagine, hosting 20 girls and 2 teachers takes a lot of time and effort. But it's well worth it to establish friendships with these young ladies from Keisen School in Tokyo. The mixing of the Keisen students with students and children from our community creates a catalyst for ^{many} friendships: some of which sustain over many miles and many years. One thing these homestay exchanges have taught me ~~through the years is that~~ ^{is that} while cultures can be very different, the common elements of being human remain much the same. We have laughed and cried and shared our lives together ~~the past two weeks and will be sad to see them go.~~ ^{our Japanese friends} Sunday afternoon. Sayonara, dear friends! ~~we'll be coming your way in about twelve months.~~ ^{friends!}

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment