



Preparing Current and Future Leaders

There is a room in the Caledonia County Courthouse that has photographs of all the prior sheriffs. The photo display documents many decades. Each of these past law enforcement professionals contributed to the department in some way. But they were not the only sheriff and eventually the time came to pass the office on to the next person.

I believe any law enforcement executive would do well to remember that someday there will be another leader that takes over and carries the agency forward. And another after that one. And so on. The leader eventually moves on but the legacy is hopefully a stronger department. So how do we build that stronger department?

One way is employee growth and development. I've talked about my qualifications at length (two masters degrees, 1000+ criminal arrests, 125+ people evaluated for drug impairment as a drug recognition expert, instructor certifications in several topics, Field Training Officer, Death Investigator, Certified Fraud Examiner, various awards and recognitions, etc), but what good is any of that if my knowledge and experience are not transferred on? In law enforcement, every member of the team (all the way to the bottom of the organizational chart) has the ability to be a leader in something. One of my goals as the agency head would be to help all the employees find where or what they could take a leadership role in and help them build something.

Employees need to be built and given room to grow. A good agency executive would hold regular training meetings, even informally, explaining to people how to do their jobs more efficiently or passing along lessons learned from

experience or new information received. Experts or leaders from neighboring departments could be asked to come in and talk about what works well and what does not. Some employees can serve as emissaries to other organizations or constituencies, giving them leadership as department representatives. Others may find value in attending a course at the police academy or other places, that they can then come back and demonstrate the material to their peers.

A leader is also accessible, present and empathetic. This career presents unique challenges that can impact an employees personal life. An agency head should be able to help if these issues crop up.

In my last post I talked about how I'd like to see the Sheriff's Department be seen as a peer competitor for applicants to other agencies. We can't compete in monetary compensation with the larger agencies like VSP or the Federal Government. But what I would tell a person considering a law enforcement career is this: if you choose this agency, you will be part of a team. Your work here will matter. You will regularly learn something new here. You will broaden your skills. Eventually, you will lead in something. This career is a calling, it is hard, it never stops but it is worth it. You will change lives even if you don't realize it for years down the road.

I never stop learning. Every week I have done this job I learn something new. My hope is that if I am elected and returned to office as long as the voters see fit, that some day years in the future I learn on my last day in office that I left a stronger department for the next leader and employees ready to help that person be successful.

I'm always interested in speaking with Caledonia County residents about their Law Enforcement concerns. Want to ask a question? [Contact me](#)! Thank you.