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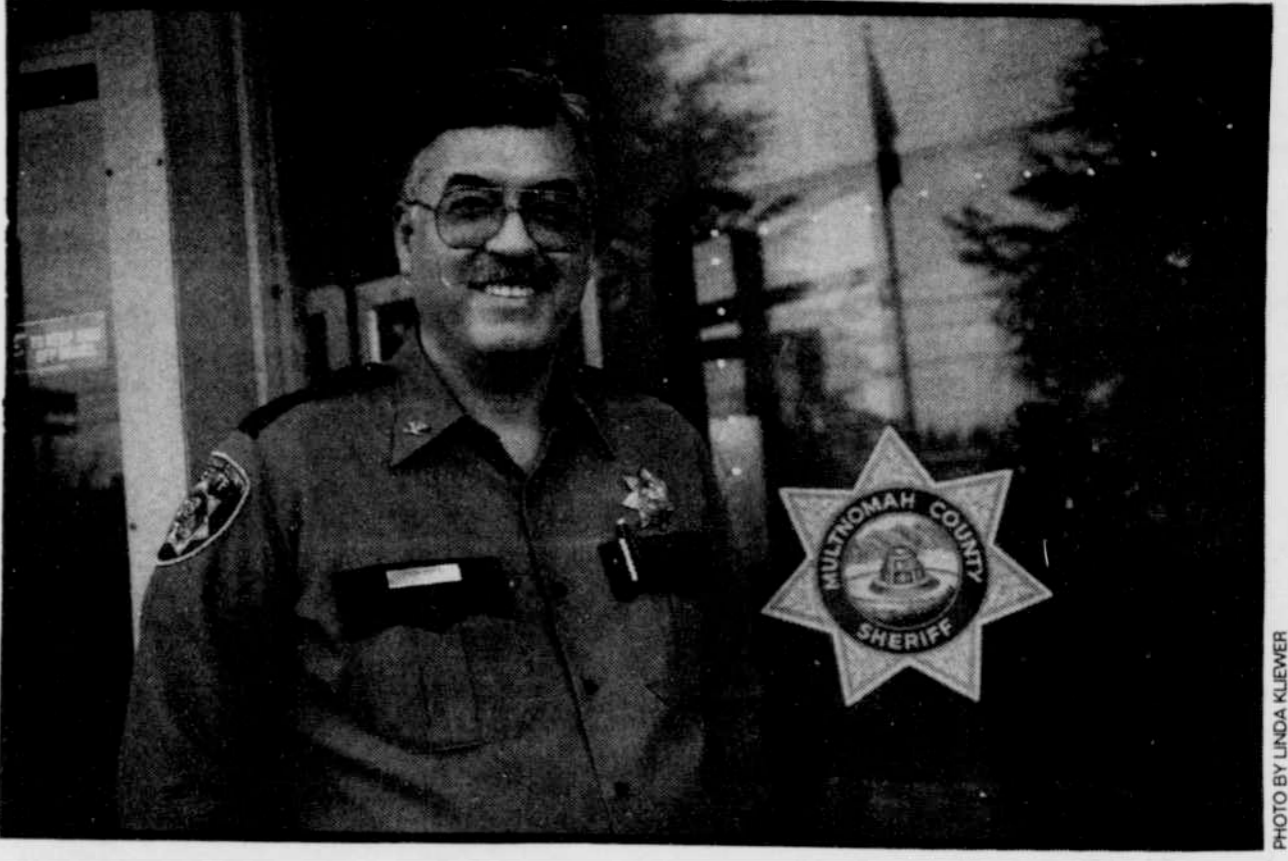
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local news

Here to help

Haug looks forward to working with the sexual minorities community of Multnomah County

by Inga Sorensen



Cmdr. Rich Haug

Cmdr. Rich Haug will be the first to admit that he didn't know what to expect.

"That's true," says Haug, who serves as commander of the Corrections Facilities Division for the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

The 47-year-old, born-and-bred Portlander was recently tapped by Sheriff Dan Noelle to be the office's liaison to the sexual minorities community. In addition to Haug, liaisons were designated for four other targeted communities—Native American, Latino/a, Asian and African American.

"I'm still pretty new to this," says Haug, who is the Sheriff's Office's first liaison to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities. "I don't know a whole lot about the gay and lesbian community, but I'm learning...and I feel very welcomed already."

Haug attended a recent Sexual Minority Roundtable gathering, an ongoing dialogue among members of the sexual minorities community and law enforcement officials, particularly the Portland Police Bureau, to make himself more familiar with the community's concerns.

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office oversees 700 employees, operates five jails, and patrols the unincorporated parts of the county.

"I have to admit I was a little nervous, because I didn't know how people were feeling about Multnomah County issues and the Sheriff's Office in particular," says Haug, adding, "People

were really supportive. A few even came up to me afterward and said they were happy to see me there. It felt good."

Haug says his liaison role has not been "highly defined," but adds accessibility is the key: "I see my primary role as simply letting the gay and lesbian community know that I'm here and that they have access to me and the Sheriff's Office. We're here to serve the community as best we can."

Haug was born and schooled in Portland. He joined the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office in 1975 and says it is a job he has always approached with a sense of compassion.

"When I first started in corrections, some of my colleagues would talk about social workers in a derogatory way. Their attitude was that people in jail were basically animals and garbage," he says. "I would hear that and wonder what they were talking about, because I always felt my work in corrections was social work—it was about helping people who needed it.... What it really came down to is that these [colleagues] were people who simply didn't like people. Period. Anyone who thinks like that shouldn't be in this line of work."

Haug lives in Southeast Portland with his wife and two grown children. "I look forward to working with the community...all I ask is for people to give me a chance and to accept me."

Anyone wishing to discuss an issue involving the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office may call Haug at 251-2514.

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