

Multnomah County: 'Your Reputation is Important'

Lisa Loving
Of *The Skanner News*

Recently promoted Multnomah County Sheriff's Office Captain Derrick Peterson has been assigned as the Facility Commander for the Multnomah County Detention Center. We spoke with him about his career and how more local youth can find employment with the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

The Skanner News: Did you start out thinking that this is what you wanted to do with your career? When you were graduating from high school, what was the vision for what you wanted to do with your life?

Capt. Derrick Peterson: I actually wanted to go into the ministry, that was my original focus. When I had some issues with my parents — my Dad passed away — I ended up staying home and going to Portland State. This line of work came into being via some counselors I met who were an integral part of my collegiate experience. They made sure I was

getting focused and looking at possible jobs out there. I received my degree in Administration of Justice (now known as Criminology & Criminal Justice), and went through a practicum with Washington County as a probation and parole officer — I really fell in love with that. When I graduated I put an application for corrections as well as the Washington County probation and parole.

What's interesting is I found out about the probation and parole job the very day that it was going to close. I got the application filled out and went down to the post office to get it time-stamped, but they wouldn't do it, so I got a reject letter.

The other job I applied for was with the sheriff's office. I went through that process, and became a corrections officer. And 27, going on 28 years later, I'm still here.

A lot of times when we're growing up, kids don't think about whether they want to be a corrections officer— it's usually a police officer, a fireman or something like that. I've come to find out what a great career it can be



PHOTO COURTESY OF MULTNOMAH COUNTY

Multnomah County Sheriff's Office Captain Derrick Peterson

for someone, especially in our community— I was born and raised here in Portland, went to Holy Redeemer and Central Catholic High School, part of the black community. And so it's fantastic to be a homegrown product.

TSN: There are so many

corrections jobs that outsiders have no idea exist. In virtually every area going forward there are expected to be massive job openings because people are retiring out.

Peterson: Yes, you're right.

TSN: What advice would you give to high school students? What should they be thinking about for the future?

Peterson: I think the first thing is protecting their reputation. That's the biggest thing. You don't ever want to cut off avenues that may be available to you in the future. And so the things that you do, the people you hang out with, interaction with social media, it's very important to get a clearer understanding of that. That's the first thing.

I think a lot of youths don't think about that, and the consequences of some of the things you might participate in or do an early age that might disqualify you in a lot of different areas. It shortens your field of reference of work and where you might be able to work should that present an opportunity for you.

TSN: And that's true even if someone does not want to get a career in law enforcement or medicine or something like that.

Peterson: I also see that there are not enough people in the community — even in our profession — getting out to some of the younger kids. We walk into neighborhoods and do good community outreach, but to actually get youths to start understanding some of those jobs that are available out there, at an earlier age — I'm talking eighth grade, sometimes this intervention needs to come into play before high school. They're at such a high risk, even before high school, in elementary school and on into middle school.

TSN: In past years I have gone to the Christmas party held at the Inverness Jail by the Multnomah County Sheriff's Department, for

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