

New deputy in town comes from Washington

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

After months of short staffing, the deputies of the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office can breathe a little easier after hiring a new, full-time patrol deputy, Austin Violette. The county hired Violette on Jan. 30, selecting him from a number of candidates for the position.

"We've been short-handed for so long, having Austin is just going to take a lot of heat off everybody else," Wallowa County Sheriff, Steve Rogers said. "We're happy to have him because he's a great kid, and he's going to do an awesome job for us."

Deputy Violette comes to Wallowa County from Anatone, Washington, where he served as a law enforcement ranger with the state's parks and recreation commission.

The new deputy said that he's always gravitated toward working with a team while helping people through precarious and difficult situations.

"I enjoy being part of a team responding to those kinds of situations," he said. "I also like working in a rural setting in an environment where there's mountains and lots of recreational opportunities. I think I've found that here."

He said his specific interest in law enforcement stemmed from working in the woods fighting fires with the Bureau of Land Management out of Reno,



Deputy Austin Violette

Steve Tool/Chieftain

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Nevada, where he also worked with a lot of BLM law enforcement.

"That drove me into becoming a law enforcement ranger, and as I did that, I realized I wanted to go into a primary agency, especially a primary agency

like this where in my mind, it's the ideal position with all the mountains over into Hells Canyon and all the rural setting."

Part of Violette's duties will include patrols of Joseph, which had gone months without extra patrol

from the Sheriff's Office as the city and the county tussled over payment of the sheriff's services and hours of patrol.

"[The Sheriff's Office] talked to me about the new city of Joseph contract and spending time there while

making it a priority for us as well as county-wide issues," Violette said. "Spending time in Joseph will be good, and that's what the people want."

Already having attended an 18-week law enforcement academy while work-

ing in Washington, Violette will not attend the intensive training of the Oregon Public Safety Academy. He is, however, slated to attend a two-week course in Salem that is required for all laterals and out-of-state transfers.

The new deputy already comes with some knowledge of the area as he and his wife were regular visitors to the valley when they resided in Anatone.

"We would recreate down here, go swimming at the lake, kayaking out at the lake and the south fork of the Imnaha," he said. "Now that we're calling it home, it's just awesome."

After a week on the job, Violette said that the deputy position is a little faster paced than ranger work, with a wider range of calls and situations to respond to. He also noted the similarities, which include covering a large swath of territory and traveling long distances to respond to situations.

"Being able to work as a team player here, not only with the other deputies, but also Enterprise [Police Department] and even Oregon State Patrol is great," he said. "I didn't really have that as a ranger."

For now, Violette is enjoying his time as the new deputy on the sheriff's team.

"I enjoy being here, and I look forward to being here through all the different seasons," he said. "Wintertime has its own challenges, but I'll be here in the spring and summertime as well."

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Where are today's civics lessons

I wonder why so many people in the present United States of America know so little about their own country. What has happened in nearly 250 years to bring about a population of Americans who actually believe they have no responsibility as citizens other than to vote every two or four years? And why do so many neglect to even vote?

Around 75 percent of Americans who are 18 years old or older have graduated from high school or have passed a civics test to become American citizens. High schools generally require juniors or seniors to study and take a test in American government, while people from other countries who seek U.S. citizenship must show an understanding of the way our government was designed by the forefathers. Yet, far too few Americans are able to answer a simple question about the U.S. Constitution. For instance, what are the three branches of

our government? What is the function of each branch of government? Who is the head of each branch of government? Name them. What is the Bill of Rights?

If you can easily roll the answers to those questions off the tip of your tongue, you are probably ahead of half of your fellow citizens. But there is more to being a citizen of a government "of the people, by the people and for the people." We need to be informed about the present, as well.

As a retired educator, I wonder whether it is a failure of the schools that Americans have so little knowledge of our government. Or is there something about the American psyche that says the things we were taught in school do not matter once we graduate from twelfth grade? Some adults disparage both involvement and discussion of the workings of our government as 'politics'. Whenever mention of a government activity is made in conversation, too many people will declare that they are not interested in 'politics'. With this kind of attitude so prevalent, no

wonder we have people in government who are dishonest and self-serving. Do you remember the cartoon character, Pogo, who said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us"?

Presently, regardless of laws on the books, whether the school is public, or private or home school or no school, there is no universally enforced requirement of any curriculum that teaches the U.S. Constitution and important Supreme Court decisions. In the 1960s a popular cry arose that parents should have freedom to educate their children in a school of their choice or at home. Whether the impetus of this movement was that school taxes were considered burdensome, or a

sense that the government might shape the minds of children a certain way, or that some schools were not performing well, it changed the educational system across the country. Without a common understanding of our country's values, we have become so divided that even the meaning of "freedom" is controversial.

Like the school playground, we adults choose sides and refuse to consider anything that is a reflection of the opposing side. Each side does its best to limit the freedom of the opponent. If we could put aside the game of choosing sides and playing only for our side to win, we could possibly work together to solve the issues we face.

One of our politicians said recently, "America is a great country, and we need more great Americans." We need American citizens who are steeped in the values of the founding fathers of our country and who put them in action every day.

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

'Tax cuts' not benefiting us

We do not know who

President Trump's "tax cut" was intended to benefit, but it certainly was not us, our daughter, or several of our friends and colleagues. For the past few years, we have received roughly a refund from the IRS of \$500. This year we learned we have a tax bill of over \$1,700!

We will most definitely be taking this into consideration as we vote in future elections. This is unacceptable.

Lynn and Gina Perkins
Baker City

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