

Life, part two

Tribal member Kevin Schultz retires after 30 years with the Marion County Sheriff's Office

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

In a world that is constantly changing, spending 30 years with one employer has become the exception, not the rule.

But that is exactly what Tribal member Kevin Schultz has accomplished.

Schultz, 53, will retire as jail division commander in January after three decades with the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

He also served on the Tribal Fish and Wildlife Committee for seven years and is currently a member of the Grand Ronde Gaming Commission.

The lifelong Salem resident says he considers his biggest career success to be serving the community that he grew up in.

"I know it might sound sappy, but I don't know if there is a greater honor than to say I served the community where I lived and raised my family. ... It is a tough, challenging, stressful job at times, but all that aside, there is a lot you can get out of it," Schultz says.

Schultz first became interested in a law enforcement career when he was in high school, inspired by his older brother, Melvin.

"He was my biggest mentor," Schultz says. "I thought a lot about it after high school. I wanted to do something rewarding where I could serve my community, I could be humbled and make a difference. Public safety was a natural fit."

After attending Chemeketa Community College's criminal justice program didn't pan out, Schultz decided on-the-job training was more his style. When he found out the Salem Police Department was looking for reserve officers, he jumped at the opportunity.

A year later in 1987, his brother, who was employed by the Polk County Sheriff's Office, took a job as a deputy at the newly opened Marion County Jail. He suggested his younger brother do the same.

"He convinced me to give it a whirl and was a big inspiration," Schultz says.

Schultz worked his way up through the ranks until he was promoted to sergeant in 2003, a post he thought he would retire in.

"Once I promoted to sergeant, I was really happy, but my career just kind of took off from there," Schultz says.

Within five years, he had jumped through the ranks from sergeant to lieutenant and then operations



Kevin Schultz

division commander.

"It was a steep learning curve," he says. "I was only a lieutenant for five months and had to go from basically being a sergeant to being a commander."

Although work kept Schultz busy, he still found time to do outreach in local schools, where he has participated in reading programs for students, career presentations for high schoolers and Sheriff's Office liaison to the Salem NAACP.

In his position as division commander, Schultz is responsible for overseeing 143 people.

"A majority of my job is leading and mentoring staff," he says. "My job is to make sure my staff have what they need for success. If you do a good job taking care of your people, you will be successful."

Marion County Sheriff Jason Myers has known Schultz since the two first began their careers. However, his first interaction was when he stopped Schultz for a traffic violation.

"Through this encounter I was able to see Kevin's character as he admitted to committing the violation, made no excuses for what he had done and accepted the consequences for his action," Myers says.

In 2008, when it came time to promote someone to a newly created position as operations division commander, the then-undersheriff recommended Schultz.

"In this role, Kevin was key to the creation of our Community Response Team, which addresses livability concerns in the county, our in-house Sheriff's Academy that all new and existing employees attend, and he helped to revamp our office's business and budgeting practices," Myers says.

In 2014, Schultz expressed interest in returning to the jail as the

commander.

"He has worked diligently to ensure the best practices for direct supervision jail are in place, ensuring that we are developing our most important resource, our employees, and caring for those who are entrusted to our custody," Myers says. "Kevin's passion for all of these areas has come shining through each and every day. I would like to commend him for his commitment and dedication to our office and community."

Schultz says the biggest challenge during his career is how public safety and the very nature of communication has changed since the late 1980s.

"It is much more scrutinized now and you need to be able to manage those perceptions," he says. "That is always a challenge."

Another challenge is effectively managing three different generations in the workplace, and the subsequent varying communication styles.

"Millennials see things very differently," Schultz says. "For example, they are used to communicating with text, e-mail or Snapchat, and someone in my generation would usually rather pick up the phone and call."

However, with social media, the entire manner of communication for everyone has changed, he adds.

"It is so important in our job, and the manner in how you do it," Schultz says.

He cited the example of someone who may be very skilled in communicating via e-mail or text, but has difficulty conversing in person.

"When we pull someone over for a traffic stop, that is the main contact they have with us," he says. "Their experience sets the tone for the entire Sheriff's Office. That can work very well for us or very poorly."

After he retires in January,

Schultz says he plans to take about six months to decompress before starting any new projects.

"A lot of counselors have said when you get out of public safety to wait until you make any big life decisions because you need to get some things out of your system first," he says.

However, Schultz plans to continue serving on the Gaming Commission.

"As long as the Tribe will have me, I would love to continue," Schultz says. "Coming from a public safety background, it's a very good fit."

He also is planning long weekends in Seattle with wife, Julie, after Mariners' baseball starts in the spring, as well as attending the Indianapolis 500 held Memorial Day weekend.

"It's always been one of my dreams to watch that," Schultz says.

He also wants to get his family together, which includes his wife and their three children, Jordan, 29, Spencer, 25, and Olivia, 17, for one last, big family vacation.

"I owe everything to them," Schultz says. "They have made more sacrifices than I have made. When you are a young public safety professional, you have very little seniority. Early on, I missed school functions, birthdays and holidays because of work. There were lots of sacrifices."

Although he will miss the camaraderie of his workplace, Schultz says he is looking forward to the next chapter of his life.

"I'm at a point where there are less years in front of me than what I have behind me," he says. "I want to make the absolute most of those years. ... It is like I get to hit the reset button, and I am excited to see what happens." ■

Polk County seeking Tribal veterans for photographs

Polk County Veterans Service Officer Marie McCandless is seeking Tribal veterans for a project that is taking photos of area veterans.

Veterans who would like to participate should call the Veterans Service Office to schedule an appointment with the photographer at 503-623-9188. ■

Adult Foster Program

"A Place To Call Home"



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