

Jodi Symonds is Cannon Beach's newest police officer

Officer promotes safety, outreach

By Dani Palmer
Cannon Beach Gazette

Her career path didn't lead her the way she had originally planned, but Jodi Symonds, 29, eventually found her way back to the field she loves.

Symonds is Cannon Beach's newest police officer. She went on duty for the first time Oct. 6.

"I want people to know I'm here for them," she said. "I'm here to make sure I'm safe, and that they're safe as well. I want to be that education piece for the community. Doing outreach and making them realize we're here for them, we're here to just make sure the community is safe."

Symonds grew up in Seaside and graduated from California's Humboldt State University with a degree in social work in 2010. She had started in criminology at Portland State University before transferring, and because Humboldt had just eliminated its criminology program, switched to social work.

Symonds began as a family service worker in Utah before coming back to work at Seaside Head Start in 2012. She moved to the Department of Human Services in 2013 and while in Child Protective Services, "learned an awful lot in a short amount of time."

She saw much good — "parents get back on track" to get their kids home. But she also witnessed not-so-happy endings. Wanting to hold those accountable for their



CANNON BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Officer Jodi Symonds

actions, she decided to again go for police work.

It was sad for the Human Services crew when Symonds left, but they know where her passion lies. Her friends and family are also supportive.

It was her mother, Shannon, who encouraged Jodi and her twin brother, Joel, to investigate police work. Their father, Scott, was a reserve officer in Seaside, and their older brother, Joseph, had been an officer in Gearhart and Astoria.

"I call him all the time and talk different scenarios," Jodi said. "He is a plethora of information on how to go about doing things."

"The spark for me" was work with the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office as a youth. She also participated in the

law enforcement Explorer program and was a cadet at Fort Stevens State Park.

Joel decided to go the military route. Jodi said her family and friends agree police work fits her personality. There are safety concerns, but they're proud of her.

"I'm a go-getter," Jodi said. "I jump in head first."

And while she may not know all the answers, she's willing to find them. She said she wants people to know they can talk to her — that she believes it's important to be respectful as an authority figure.

Her goal is to ultimately become a detective, and it all starts with "a great foundation."

The Department of Human Services provided Officer Symonds with a strong

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base, but she has dispatch verbiage and a multitude of criminal and traffic codes to learn. She enjoys mountain biking with her dog, Hobbs, hiking, surfing and reading in her downtime. But lately most of her reading has been job-related.

Officer Josh Gregory, a "vault of knowledge," serves as her field training officer, along with his canine Gunner. Symonds will end up working with multiple officers before she heads off to the police academy in February. After she gets back in June 2016, she will be able to go out on her own.

"My favorite thing is actually being in the driver's seat, in uniform, and getting out there," she said.

Symonds made her first traffic stop recently after numerous mock ones and said she's come to not have expectations, but instead be open to learning.

She knows she will have

large crowds to guide in traffic during the summer and countless illegal overnight campers. Cannon Beach is known for being a safe community, but even it experiences drug use, high end thefts and domestic violence. There are also rare serious crimes that occur, like the murder of 2-year-old Isabella Smith and attempted murder of 13-year-old Alana Smith in 2014, allegedly by their mother Jessica Smith.

Many are issues Symonds wants to address not only on a legal level, but a community one. Like her family has done, Jodi wants to engage the community through a variety of avenues, such as The Harbor that provides services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

That community outreach is why she chose to apply to the Cannon Beach Police Department. With DHS she interacted with local law enforcement agencies, including Cannon Beach. "They were a great group," she said.

Symonds was chosen out of 26 applicants. Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn joked DHS was a little upset with the department for taking her. "We're very proud to have her," he said.

Symonds had to go through written and physical testing, an oral board, and an extensive background check and psychological evaluation over a roughly three-month period to get where she is. She had a background interview with Officer Joseph Bowman "which lasted, it seemed, like hours and hours and hours."

She added it was a good process to go through to help her understand how vulnerable those she interacts with as an officer may feel. Symonds already knows she can't "take things personally" and has to adapt to each situation.

"We have a great community here," she said. "Just making sure I'm holding myself to a high standard and continuing is exciting. I hope to be here for a while."

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