WHO KILLED MR. GHOTSHOT? **DETECTIVE 101**

Understanding the tools used to solve a murder

By Brenna Visser Cannon Beach Gazette

> n Monday evening, April 26, the City Council chamber in Cannon Beach was a hotel room.

Strewn about the floor were shell casings, a fake gun and the crash-dummy body of a fictional "Mr. Ghotshot" punctured with bullet wounds. In the room next door, about 20 people sat in the round to learn how to process a crime scene.

Lt. Chris Wilbur of the Cannon Beach Police Department stood before them to present preliminary information.

We have Mr. Ghotshot's name, his license plate and where he lives. How do you start to solve this crime?" Wilbur asked.

The exercise was a new addition to Clatsop County's 10th annual Citizen Police Academy as a way to show another aspect of law enforcement work, Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn said. In the third session out of 10, the class learned how detectives solve a crime from start to finish.

But before anyone could get out and look at the body, participants were lectured on what makes up a large amount of a detective's job: paperwork. "Do we have probable cause to enter the hotel room?" one person asked.

"How does a search warrant work?'

"Does anyone else who was in the room with him have a right to privacy?'

As the class brainstormed ideas to track down evidence and conduct interviews, Wilbur said the process of cataloging every detail and documenting every action is the lesson to be taken out of the exercise.

"It's not like TV, where you can solve a crime in a matter of days. Sometimes it takes years," he said. "Your best friends are your legal pad, your pen and your recorder. It's about talking to people."



Detectives with the Cannon Beach Police Department instruct participants in how to process a crime scene.



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Participants in a Citizen Police Academy in Cannon Beach sign in with Officer James Jordan, right, before entering a mock crime scene.

Connect with community

Wilbur has been a detective with Cannon Beach since 2011, and said while this work isn't always as glamorous as it is portrayed on TV, it's important to do these types of workshops to connect with the community.

"We're public servants," he said. "We want to be a part of our community and to make the community a part of us. Educating people about what we do upholds that idea."

Back at the crime scene, volunteers started cataloging evidence. Gun? Check. A Red Bull can full of



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A marker is placed next to "evidence" at a mock crime scene.

> drugs? Check. An autopsy that reveals he was murdered? Check.

> But one item stands out as missing: the victim's phone.

Using GPS, the participants discover the phone has been used in other parts of the state. Detective Guy Knight from the Seaside Police Department leads the discussion with the crew about what this could mean, introducing Mr. Ghotshot's girlfriend "Polly Substance" as a character in the narrative.

"You want to let the facts drive the investigation, even if you are hypothesizing who did it," Knight said.

Knight and Wilbur are members of the Clatsop County Major Crime Team, which investigates homicides, kidnappings and other serious offenses.

The team is deployed about 12 times a year, Knight said. The major crime rate in Clatsop County is relatively low compared to a metropolitan area, but the significance of the work is not lessened by that fact, he said.

"These types of crimes are hard to emotionally process," he said. "You have to have good stress outlets. But I love what I do because I get to give voice to kids or other victims who otherwise wouldn't be heard."

Hot topic

Ashaki Boelter, one of the participants, served as the mock crime scene photographer in the exercise. He signed up for the class to learn more about law enforcement in light of police officer-involved shootings of black men that have recently attracted national media attention.

"This is a hot topic in my community," said Boelter, who is black. "Being fully educated is important."

What he found was a possible new career in criminal justice down the road.

"In this process, I learned most of law enforcement, at least around here, are people doing the best of their ability in respectable positions," he said. "I'm looking forward to learning more."

As the participants interrogated Polly Substance about the murder of her fictional boyfriend, Knight told participants about what he thought was the heart of police work: customer service.

"The customer isn't always right, and sometimes we have to arrest them. But you treat everyone with respect," he said. "There are very few truly bad people out there."

So who killed Mr. Ghotshot? It was Polly Substance, the girlfriend.



