

FROM SURFING TO SERVING



Cody Dietel

Surf instructor becomes Cannon Beach Police Department's newest officer

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

Before becoming Cannon Beach's newest police officer, Cody Dietel could be found at the Cannon Beach Surf Shop teaching surf lessons.

Summer after summer, Dietel remembers coming to Cannon Beach with his family to surf. Each time he would get his rentals from the surf shop, until about five years ago when asked the shop's owner, Mark Mekenas, about a job.

"I met him when we he was a kid, known him most of his life," Mekenas said. "We're going to

miss him around the shop, but we encouraged him to go. We're proud of him."

What brought Dietel to Cannon Beach was his love for the water and the sport. But as his fondness for the community grew, so did his desire to serve it. His opportunity to do so came when the police officer position came open last year.

"It may not be the most desired profession right now. But it's a job where you have to be willing to put others before yourself," Dietel said. "That's something everywhere needs and deserves."

Dietel was sworn in at Tuesday's City Council meeting. He

will be sent to a police academy in March before starting his training period with the department. He is replacing Josh Gregory, who left the position last spring to become a sergeant with Seaside Police Department.

"He's down to earth, he has a good head on his shoulders and understands the community," said Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn.

Dietel grew up in Hawkinson, Washington. His initial interest in first responder work started in high school when a friend's father encouraged him to apply for the firefighter cadet program. He took interest, and briefly studied fire science at Lower Columbia College and general studies at Washington State University. He currently

lives in Seaside, and when he's not working, can be found on his surfboard or in his garage doing some woodworking.

With this being his first job in policing, he said he expects there to be challenges. He expects to be facing difficult situations he has yet to encounter so far in his 30-year-old life.

"It'll be different. But they are similar in that they are both community-oriented," Dietel said.

Overall, he said he's excited for this new chapter in the relationship between himself and Cannon Beach.

"I've been coming to Cannon Beach for more than 25 years. Getting to work with the community like this means a great deal to me," Dietel said.

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—Cody Dietel

Volunteer firefighter stays close to home in Cannon Beach

Avila is also a student

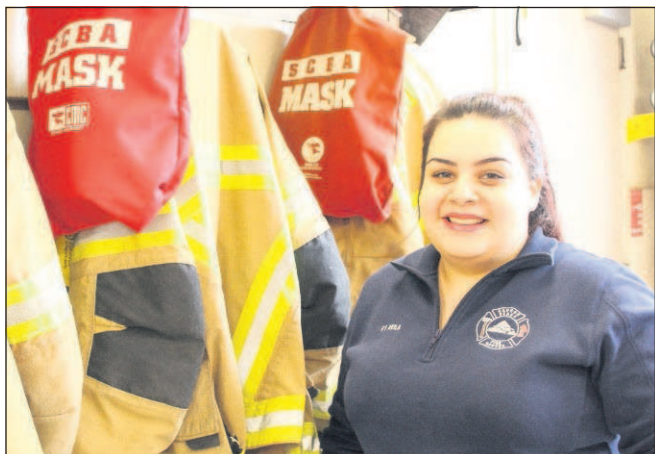
By Brenna Visser
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Firefighters have always had a steady presence in Silvia Avila's life.

Born and raised in Cannon Beach, she would get to know them as they would stop in for coffee at her job at Cheri's Cafe & Cannon Beach Cookie. She even remembers putting on firefighting gear herself as a kindergartner during a school field trip to the fire station.

But perhaps where she was most intimately familiar was at her aunt's house, when firefighters and paramedics responded when her cousin's seizures would get out of hand.

"I felt very helpless. I wanted to change that feeling, because I wanted to be able to help," Avila, 19, said. "That's



BRENNA VISSER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Silvia Avila at the Cannon Beach fire station.

where my passion progressed from."

Moments like these inspired her senior Pacifica project at Seaside High School, where she chose to volunteer at the fire station and enroll in Community Emergency Response Team training.

Even as her project came to a close, her passion for

medicine and the desire to help led to her eventually becoming a Cannon Beach volunteer firefighter herself the spring of 2016.

"I guess they just couldn't get rid of me," she laughed.

A year later, Avila now splits her time between volunteer firefighting and studying EMT and paramedic

'We grew up with emergency planning.... I feel like I should be scared. But growing up we did all the drills. You can't live in fear of what happens next.'

—Silvia Avila

studies at Lane Community College in Eugene with her brother, who also is a volunteer firefighter.

Avila said one of her favorite aspects of the work is the camaraderie. She craves learning new skills like preparing IV fluids and injury prevention techniques.

But working in a community where she has such close ties has also presented personal challenges.

"My biggest challenge was definitely going on scene to my cousin's car accident. That was a traumatic moment," Avila said.

Avila remembers being asked to do traffic control — a task she had done multiple times before since she is not yet qualified to conduct some of the emergency tactics necessary in a major car accident.

"At the end of the call we're debriefing, another member of the team was describing her, and it immediately started to click. I asked if anyone recognized her name, and it was her," she said. "She was in the hospital for about three months. It was all very hard to process."

If anything, the accident only emboldened her desire to protect the community she grew up loving, she said.

"Growing up in Cannon Beach felt very safe. It was kind of surreal. My cousins and I would play on the beach,

pretend we're tourists out on the town, going back to our hotel," she said. "Cannon Beach is special. I can't think of any other place I'd rather be."

If there's one thing she doesn't love about Cannon Beach, she said it would be "the impending tsunami, I guess." As a child in a beach town, the value of emergency preparedness was taught early in her family, and something that has guided her life.

"We grew up with emergency planning. We have gone through many warnings," she said. "Whenever we'd hear about a warning we'd stay up, drinking coffee and watching the news with our go-bags ready to go. It was almost like a family activity."

"I feel like I should be scared," she continued. "But growing up we did all the drills. You can't live in fear of what happens next."

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