

# Lafayette's New Police Chief Focuses on Customer Service

By Lee Borrowman

**F**ourteen years ago, Mike Hubbard was a Lafayette traffic cop who wished he could do more to help the community than issue speeding tickets. Timing is everything, and now he is back; this time, he is the boss. Arriving just in time to be one of the forces behind the Slow Down, Lamorinda! campaign, Hubbard has completed his first three months as Lafayette's new Chief of Police, and he is delighted to be here.

"I plan to give to the citizens of Lafayette as much time and energy as I give to the bad guys," says Hubbard, adding sincerely, "How often do we get a chance to really help people?" Being Chief is a wonderful opportunity, he explains, "Because I can implement philosophies that I've held for years."

Hubbard's first priority is to make the Lafayette Police Department a more customer-service oriented entity. "We have two responsibilities," says Hubbard, "The first, obviously, is to ensure public safety, and the other is to respond to the needs of the community. It's bad service to tell the public what it wants; you have to ask people what their concerns are, and listen to what they have to say."

Hubbard has been a very visible presence in the city since his arrival this spring, attending meetings and mixers at every opportunity, and is considering ways to find out exactly what residents of Lafayette hope their police department can do for them. A large part of this effort is the hiring of a new Public Service Officer. "The PSO will go with our officers to crime scenes, collect evidence and spend time with the citizen to gather more complete information. The PSO can also be proactive, offering suggestions for how people can be safer in the future," explains Hubbard. Spending time with residents is not only good customer service, but Hubbard expects that the careful evidence and information collecting of the PSO will also result in more convictions.

**There are two issues in Lafayette right now that concern Hubbard:**

Bonfires set by teenagers using bad judgment during or after parties pose a serious risk during this severe fire season. Fires have been set off the reservoir trail on East Bay Municipal Utility District land, and in the open space in Burton Valley, putting surrounding homes and communities in harm's way.

Hubbard is reinstating and revamping the city's old Youth Diversion program, with a dedicated Youth Services Officer, providing what he calls, "A way for young people to learn citizenship right here in Lafayette." With the cooperation



Chief Mike Hubbard and his wife at a Welcome reception Photo by Andy Scheck

of the community, young first-time offenders who have committed a non-violent crime, such as shop-lifting, would find themselves on work-details, perhaps cleaning graffiti, or even washing patrol cars. Hubbard says he would also support a well-crafted Social Host Liability Ordinance, which would hold homeowners responsible if teenagers consume alcohol in their homes during a party, but adds that the one currently being circulated needs some revisions to make it viable.

The other issue is theft, which remains Lafayette's most rampant crime. Hubbard would like to remind everyone to lock the doors of their homes and cars. "We are still seeing thefts occurring from unlocked cars in which valuables have been left out in the open. This is very safe community for anyone walking down the street, but that doesn't mean your possessions are safe. Don't give anyone the opportunity to make you a victim."



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