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Orinda's New Police Chief, Mark Nagel

Using neighborliness and technology to beat the bad guys

By Laurie Snyder



Lieutenant Mark Nagel
Photo Ohlen Alexander

“There hasn't been a day I've said I don't like my job,” says Orinda's new police chief, Mark Nagel. A 14-year police veteran who worked his way up through the Contra Costa Sheriff's Department to his present rank of lieutenant, he has lived in the Lamorinda area for roughly 20 years, the last three of

which have been in Orinda. His role model is his dad whom he describes as “very much a family man ... a good business man who did well for his family.” One of the strengths he sees in Orinda's police force is that many of the serving officers have children of their own, and can relate to the challenges faced by both kids and parents today.

As a chief who has already conducted a number of meetings with community groups, he confidently states that Orinda's “strength is our community; it's the eyes and ears everywhere.... The people in this town know their neighbors,” and look out for each other. While he never wants residents or business owners to attempt to take on a bad guy face-to-face, he does want Orindans to be on the lookout for any unusual behavior by unfamiliar faces – and to immediately call that behavior in to police, providing as much detail as possible. If a suspicious car is involved, use your smart phone camera to capture the car's license plate number – if you

can do so safely and without being spotted by the potential offender.

Since Nagel's arrival just over a month ago, the Orinda Police Department has instituted an email tip line (orindatip@cityoforinda.org) to enable Orindans to report criminal or suspicious behavior, and has also begun using the Nixle system employed by neighboring communities to alert citizens to accidents and other traffic advisories, criminal activity, and emergency situations.

The tech savvy Nagel also brings an impressive resume to the job. A graduate of Saint Mary's College, he has been the lead for the Contra Costa Sheriff's Office Automated Regional Information Exchange System (ARIES) – a project launched in 2003 to help public safety agencies in Contra Costa County share jail-related data. Since that time, the network has spread to more than 75 agencies across Contra Costa, Alameda, Solano, Santa Clara, and San Joaquin counties.

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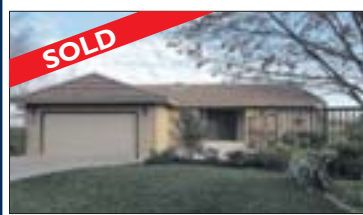
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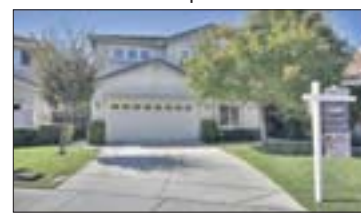
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