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## Moraga Police Department celebrates 40th anniversary

By Vera Kochan



From left, Moraga Police Department Lt. Brian South and Chief Jon King hold mayor's proclamation. Photo Vera Kochan

Congratulations are in order to the Moraga Police Department for keeping the town one of the safest cities in California.

While the town was incorporated in 1974, it had no police department of its own. Any law enforcement was provided contractually by the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office. Five years later, on Dec. 17, 1979, the Moraga Police Department was officially founded.

According to MPD's website, Larry Olsen was the first chief of the East Bay Regional Parks Police Department, albeit on a part-time basis, overseeing 10 officers. Within a few years, Chief Tom Simms began serving the town full-time. Current police chief, Jon King, took over the helm in 2016, now overseeing a staff of 13 officers, six reserve officers and two support personnel.

During the Dec. 11 town council meeting, where the anniversary milestone was recognized, King stated, "I am blessed to be your police chief and to lead this group of incredible men and women, who work harder than any group I've ever been with, to keep our community safe."

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King added, "I also want to recognize Lt. Brian South who is my second-in-command and who I couldn't do this without." South has been with the MPD for 18 years.

Initially the police department offered generalist services, but has grown to include specialties involving detective and traffic duties, along with an ever changing uniform. The original uniform was a tan shirt with green pants as shared with EBRPD. The late 1980s brought blue colored uniforms to Moraga. For a brief moment in the 1990s, a white shirt with blue pants made an appearance before returning to the all blue uniform of today.

MPD also has a kinder, gentler presence within town. Outreach programs held in local schools are meant to show students of all ages that police officers aren't just someone wearing a badge and carrying a gun. Officers and police cars are also in attendance during family-oriented events such as the Spring Egg Hunt or Moraga Community Fair. Residents of all ages are encouraged to meet the officers and ask questions.

In Mayor Roger Wykle's proclamation, he recognized "the achievements of the Moraga Police Department throughout its 40 year history and commend all members of the Moraga Police Department, past and present, for their hard work and dedication in keeping Moraga a safe and desirable place to live and work."

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