



THE GRADUATION

After weeks of hard work, there were five graduates at the graduation of the Twentieth Academy of the Volunteers in Protection. The proud graduates are Louis Higdon, Danny Speights, Joshua Schmidt, Robert Walters, Jr., and Kevin O'Neil. They are pictured, left to right, below, as they are sworn in.



The ceremony started with a welcome speech by Ken Ashby, current Chairman, followed by an invocation by Kevin O'Neil, a new VIP who is also a pastor. Sheriff Steve Waugh gave a short speech on the history and his input into the program. This was followed by the presentation of badges and certificates, and swearing in ceremony.

The spouses were on hand to pin badges on their

newly sworn counterparts. There was also a presentation of the three VIPs that didn't have a graduation ceremony. This makes three "old" and five "new" VIPs hitting the streets to patrol the various areas in Yavapai County.

We welcome the new VIPs and hope you enjoy your patrol time. It is certainly a different world out there.

VIP SHORT HISTORY

The first class graduated in 1995 with just a few people trying to make a difference in their neighborhoods. These numbers swelled until there were more than One Hundred Fifty VIPs patrolling throughout Yavapai County.

With over 8,000 square miles of area, it was impossible to have deputies in every location when an incident occurred. The presence of the VIPs in a neighborhood was a great deterrent of petty crimes and allowed the deputies time to handle the larger and more dangerous calls.

One of the biggest time savers for deputies was the transport of apprehended individuals by VIPs, particularly those in remote areas as Black Canyon City to Verde jail. This could take about three hours round trip. Handing these time-consuming jobs to the VIPs put the deputy back on the street immediately.

MORE GRADUATION PICTURES

Above - **Ken Ashby** addresses the group

At right are three VIPs that didn't get a graduation so they were recognized at this ceremony. They are: **Michael Lewis, David O'Brien, and Mike Connolly.**



Sheriff **Steve Waugh** tells of the program



Board Members **Tom Boelts, Tom Nicol, Paul Dickerson and Ken Ashby.**



A VISIT TO DISPATCH

The Voice with a Heart - The voice with a smile -
When you're on patrol, they're there all the while.

Dispatch must run 24/7. Ever wonder how they change shifts without any interruption? The person on duty keeps working the board, or computer console, while the person coming on stands by. A run-down of the action of the previous shift is given so the oncoming dispatcher is fully aware of what has transpired, who is where, and what to watch for. Only then do they switch places and the on-duty dispatcher is released to go home. This can be done quickly, if things are quiet, or can take some time if there is a lot going on.

Dispatchers cover the radio, the phones, 911 calls, silent witness, the administrative phones when no one is there and whatever other similar jobs that are tossed their way. And yes, they still have time to answer the VIP or deputy calling in for any reason. Is it any wonder that they ask you to be brief and concise when you call them?

There are a few new things that were incorporated in the past few years. Amber Alert Protocol is fully operable. Criminal Investigations Section interfaces with the Department of Public Safety to place notification on road signs. So now you know that Dispatch knew it first.

The Emergency Notification System is like a reverse 911. If something happens in a specific area, they are able to "build" boundaries and program the computerized telephone to call the phones in that area to alert the people of what is happening. It keeps track of whether it was answered by an answering machine, no answer, or if a person answered. Pretty smart computer!

Don't know if you are on the ENS? Log on to the Yavapai County Sheriff's web site and follow the prompts to put in your personal preferences. There are five methods of notification and you can sign up for e-mail, telephone, etc. You can also list your personal information, such as if a disabled or wheelchair bound person lives at that address. Or you can

list if you have a pet that is not friendly toward strangers or a list of living pets or people in case of fire. This information can be life saving, depending on the emergency.

Silent Witness is another thing handled by Dispatch and while most people have heard about it, not many know how it works. It is anonymous and it is preferred that you stay anonymous. Information can be left, and with time permitting, but no later than the end of the day, the calls are reviewed. These are written up, and if a warrant is involved, its validity is verified. They are then forwarded to the Silent Witness Director. Each call is investigated. If you are interested in the reward, you can call back in 30 days for the status of the case. Rewards are based on the severity of the crime.



Matthew Kirk works the console.

But let's get back to the "Day in the Life of." A new Dispatcher is placed on a 16 week training program - yep, that's about four months. During this time they learn about liability, stress, techniques, phone etiquette, agency specific information for more than just their agency. They need to learn the boundaries so they won't assign a Yavapai deputy to an area just over into bordering counties, where other County law enforcement must be notified. They also need to know the boundaries in the county for various cities so the city police can be called, versus county domain. They need to know which group of deputies work in which area, and which VIP is on duty in which area to

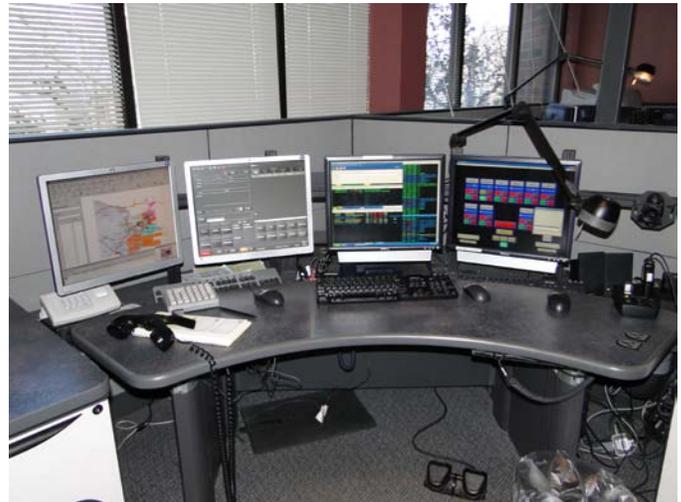
cover calls. And guess whose doing the training? There are three Dispatch Training Officers, and they are also dispatchers doing their regular jobs.

And just what is "their regular jobs?" About 12,000 to 16,000 calls per month; 1,500 to 1,600 911 calls per month. That averages out to about 162,000 calls per year. In 2009, it was actually 220,00 total calls. And then there are the service calls that require deputy response, another 52,000 calls per year. And who does this? The fourteen (This number fluctuates as people transfer, leave, or are hired.) dispatchers, including the two in training. There are usually two dispatchers handling the radio and one to cover the telephone. There are only three supervisors who take turns on shifts. Remember, this is 24/7, so when do they get a day off?

The stations (computer console) have been modernized and there are six stations available. The (not so) new computer aided dispatch program is a great asset. The screen is split into three sections. One is "input" where the calls are in the process of being logged in. The time is recorded and the minutes it takes to input all information from the caller. The second is "in work" where a deputy is attending to a service request. Again the clock is ticking for how long it takes to get there and how long it takes to clear the call. The third lists all that are on duty, including VIPs, and their location. It shows if they are temporarily out of service, grabbing a bite to eat, servicing the vehicle, etc. Everyone is accounted for and their areas listed.

These modern stations really are several stations placed in a circle where the dispatchers can sit side-by-side and back-to-back. This is for efficiency in one covering all of the radio calls in case an emergency situation occurs. The dispatcher must remain calm and deflate the stress level on the other end of the radio. This is covered in their training and they are very capable of handling stressful situations calmly.

Opposite column shows the four computers comprising the console.



But how do they handle their own stress? They are literally thrown together during their shift. They have learned how to get along, have learned their co-workers likes and dislikes, what they can do to keep a calm and pleasant atmosphere, which certainly helps because of all of the other distractions they have during their day. That part of their training is something we should all attend.



Photo Courtesy of the Prescott Courier

No wonder they got the Telecommunication award on April 6th. This was presented to Yavapai County Sheriff's Office by the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors, as April 11 through 17 was declared National Public Safety Telecommunications Week. Congratulations dispatchers. You certainly earned it.

Shown are The Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Monday proclaimed April 11-17 National Public Safety Telecommunications Week to recognize the work of 911 dispatchers. Supervisor Tom Thurman called them the "quiet heroes of public safety." Front row, left to right: Lt. Brian Hunt, Communications Supervisor Michelle

Lassila, Communications Specialist Sally Day, Communications Specialist (Trainer) Stephanie Surak. Back row, left to right: Chairman Chip Davis, Sheriff Steve Waugh, Communications Specialist Casey Strong, Communications Supervisor Lauren Newell, Supervisors Carol Springer and Thurman.

And what happens if someone is sick or unable to come to work for their shift? The supervisor works the board. A dispatcher that thought they had the day off finds their plans have changed. Knowing the situation, could you say no if called?

Dispatch is the lifeline with a heart. Let them know you appreciate their efforts.

MORE GRADUATION PICTURES



Kevin O'Neil (sorry about the blur, Kevin)



Louis Higdon



Above is **Danny Speights**; Below **Joshua Schmidt**

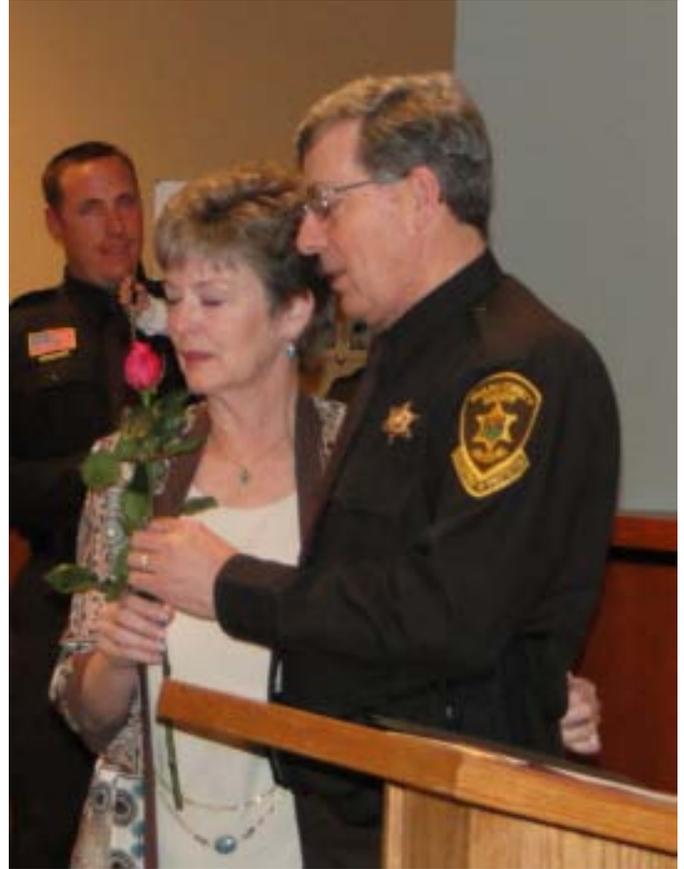


Robert Walters, Jr.





Friends and Family



Kevin O'Neil presents rose to spouse



Above **Danny Speights** Below, **Terra, Dakota,**
Joshua Schmidt



Louis Higdon presents rose to spouse.



Thanks to Dennyse Loll for coordinating a great graduation ceremony.