



Thurston County Sheriff's Office

"Creating a Safer Community Together."

Volume 2, Issue 6

QUARTERLY NEWS

June 30, 2009



Sheriff Dan Kimball

Once again summer is upon us. We have had some wonderful spring weather which at times makes one think summer has already arrived. Though this weather has been great for outdoor activities, as school lets out and summer officially arrives I thought this may be

an opportune time to provide a brief reminder about summer safety. At the Sheriff's Office we desire a wonderful summer for all of our citizens and dread the thought of having to deal with any tragic events that could have been avoided.

In our county we are fortunate to have numerous bodies of water, to include lakes, rivers and the sound. This is one of the features that makes our county such a wonderful place to live. When enjoying the water this summer, please be **sure** that you and your family utilize personal floatation devices (PFDs). Many tragic water-related accidents could be avoided if only a PFD had been utilized. In some ways, since bodies of water are so plen-

tiful around our community, we probably take our safety for granted in this area. Please take the time to acquire the necessary PFDs for your family. They are not expensive and there is a reason they are referred to as "lifesavers."

Some other prevalent outdoor activities for children (and adults) during the summer are bicycling, skateboarding and riding off-road vehicles. When the weather becomes warm there can be a tendency to ignore a proven piece of safety equipment for these activities – an approved helmet. Please remind your children of the need to **always** wear an approved safety helmet for any of these activities, even if the duration of the ride is short.

Head injuries can be traumatic and they can occur anywhere, even in your own driveway.

Soon the 4th of July will be upon us once again. Please remember to only use legal fireworks in areas where they are allowed. **Never** allow children to use fireworks without adult supervision. Also, please be mindful of the surrounding environment where you may be using legal fireworks, as there may be hazards you are not overtly aware of.

Lastly, have fun this summer. It never hurts to have general safety talks with our children and grandchildren. Take advantage of the opportunity to make sure that a summer filled with memories is a summer filled with positive and not tragic remembrances.

THURSTON COUNTY PARTICIPATES IN THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS TORCH RUN

By John Snaza

It's that time of year again; the Thurston County Sheriffs Office participated in the Special Olympics Torch Run. This year we had participants from our Operations and Corrections Bureaus. Other participants in the Torch Run included: The Department of Corrections (DOC) as well as the Yelm, Olympia and Lacey Police Departments.

The Department of Corrections team took the torch at the Safeway store on Cleveland Ave. DOC made their way into the city of Olympia to the State Capitol.

Thurston County Sheriff Dan Kimball and Olympia Police Chief Gary Michel were handed the torch and led the pack through downtown Olympia to the intersection of Martin Way and

College St. Sheriff Kimball showed what a runner he truly is by leading all others, especially up the 4th Ave hill.

The torch was turned over to Lacey Police Commander John Suessman. Commander Suessman and his Officers carried the torch to Martin Way and River Ridge Dr. (River Ridge High School).

The Sheriffs Office completed the

Thurston County phase, carrying the torch from River Ridge onto I-5 and turning it over at Mounts Road at the Thurston/Pierce county line.

Kudos to all of those who participated in the Special Olympics Torch Run. A special thanks to Deputy Tom Tinsley for coordinating this event and Legal Assistant Julie Gillis, who helped organize the Tip a Cop for the Special Olym-

pics and coordinated getting the shirts for the run. Another thanks goes to Rotter's Auto Dealership for providing lunch and beverages for the event

Special Olympics is a great cause. All who participated should be proud of their efforts.

Check out our website for photos.

Thurston County Sheriff's Office Ski-to-Sea Race

By Jim Esslinger

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the first ever Thurston County Sheriff's Office Ski-to-Sea Race Team successfully completed this historical race on May 24th, 2009 (Memorial Day Weekend). I should first explain a little background of this race and what it entailed. This epic race dates back to 1911. It is currently a 90 mile relay race, consisting of seven legs with eight team members, starting from the snow covered slopes of Mt. Baker and ending in the waters of Bellingham Bay. Forming a Thurston County Sheriff's Office Team started out as a discussion between Kevin Slease and myself over a year and a half ago. Since then I was able to form an eight member team. Carla Carter was an original member, but she had to step down due to her recent pregnancy. Steve Hamilton stepped up to the challenge and filled the vacancy admirably.

With the support and blessings from Sheriff Kimball, I entered the team in the Corporate Division and used the Office name for the team. There were a total of 414 teams competing in the race overall, with a total of 40 teams in the Corporate Division. Our team came in 264th place overall with a total time of 09:05:41 (that's 9 hours folks...a very long day!) and 26th place in our division. Keep in mind, this is our first time ever competing in this race with most of the team members never competing in anything at this level before. In comparison, the *Washington State Patrol Iron Bears*, an elite team and veterans of this race, came in 37th place over-

all, and 1st place in the Corporate Division with a total time of 07:17:11! I would like to say that we plan on beating the WSP team, but that would not be realistic. Their standing is well deserved with their hard work, skill, and experience. I will say that we plan on keeping them looking over their shoulders in the coming years!

The race was broken down in the following legs:

Leg One - Cross Country Ski: Dave Claridge

The course is approximately 4 miles long. Dave's total time was 48:44, placing him 29th in our division and 322th place overall.

Leg Two - Downhill Ski: Bryan Goheen

The course is approximately 2.5 miles, including an estimated 800 ft. vertical climb up the ski slope. Bryan's total time was 47:48, placing him 34th in our division and 371st place overall.

Leg Three - Run: Kevin Slease

The course is approximately 8 miles long with an estimated 2200 ft drop in elevation. Kevin's total time was 01:01:05, placing him 31st in our division and 295th place overall.

Leg Four - Road Bike: Jason Casebolt

The course is approximately 38 miles long. Jason's total time was 01:40:17, placing



time was 01:05:33, placing him 26th in our division and 235th place overall.

Leg Seven - Sea Kayak: Jim Esslinger (Team Captain)
Course is approximately 5

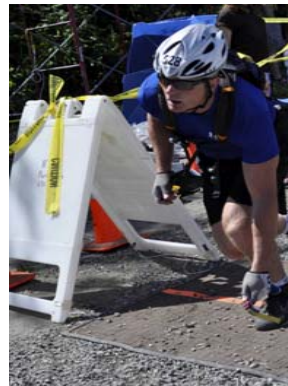
him 10th in our division and 130th place overall.

Leg Five - Canoe: Cameron Simper and Bryant Finch.
The course is approximately 18 miles long. Cameron and Bryant's total time was 02:41:20, placing them 33rd in our division and 319th place overall.



miles long. My total time was 01:00:54, placing me 13th in our division and 129th place overall.

This was an incredible journey and a milestone in many of our lives. We are already discussing how we intend on improving our time for next year's race. I'd like to personally thank all of the team members for their hard work and dedication, as well as Sheriff Kimball, our family members, and our friends for their support.



Leg Six - Mountain Bike: Steve Hamilton

The course is approximately 14 miles long. Steve's total



Bottom Row: Jim Esslinger, Dave Claridge, Bryan Goheen, and Bryant Finch
Top Row: Cameron Simper, Jason Casebolt, Kevin Slease, and Steve Hamilton

Second Quarter Awards Ceremony

Certificate of Appreciation and Volunteer Recognition

Sheriff Kimball recognized Harold Vassar for his contributions to the community and the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Vassar has gone above and beyond in order to help create a safer community. In recognition of this, Sheriff Kimball bestowed upon Harold the following award:

Certificate of Appreciation and Volunteer Recognition.

Harold's association with the Thurston County Sheriff's Office began in 1979 when he was appointed to the Civil Service Commission. He served as Commission Chairman for five years. It was then that he became acquainted with Sheriff Dan Montgomery.

Harold owned and flew an airplane and it was a small step to offer his aerial services to the S.O. Over the next several years he was accompanied by a deputy and flew missions involving drug patrols to locate marijuana fields in Capital Forest, the Vale area, and several locations in Lewis County. He recalls using heat seeking equipment for nighttime apprehension of game poachers near Vale. In the air he could see poachers lights and was able to lead deputies directly to the miscreants. Harold also flew the Sheriff and the State DEM folks around Mt. St. Helens during its 1980 eruption.

Several episodes stand out during his years of volunteer flying for the S.O. One involved locating bank robbery suspects and their truck near Grand Mound. Unfortunately, the radio he had been issued malfunctioned, and by the time he landed to replace the radio the crooks had abandoned the truck.

Another incident occurred right after he and Gary Edwards transported a prisoner to California. Having completed their assignment they returned home by way of Reno where they stopped for the night. It was there they met Christine Pomeroy who had just been elected Superior Court Judge in Olympia. Edwards introduced Harold to Christine whom

Edwards had known for some time. It was then Christine offered to teach Gary and Harold how to play "craps" in the casino. Harold's recollection was "it did not work."**

During his years of flying he worked with both Thurston and Lewis Counties, the latter when their airplane was down for repairs. Throughout that time all his work was as a volunteer never being reimbursed for his time, airplane, fuel or repairs.

After selling his airplane Harold continued his volunteer service by joining the Jeep Patrol in April 2004 and in late 2008 retired from the unit. As a Jeep Patrol volunteer he served as Sergeant-at-Arms Officer, participated in many searches and events, and freely offered his valued experience to new members.

It is for Harold Vassar's 30 year history of volunteer service to the Citizens of Thurston County through the Thurston County Sheriff's Office that we recognize him here now.

**story independently verified by Retired Sheriff Gary Edwards.

Lifesaving Award Pin

Awarded to office members who take specific action(s) at the scene of an event resulting in the saving of a human life.

The Lifesaving Award goes to:

Corrections Deputy Tyler Graham

On February 24, 2009, while Sgt. Matthews was fingerprinting an inmate, the inmate began having trouble breathing and stated he was feeling dizzy. He was seated in a chair but then stated he needed to lie down. He was assisted to the floor and positioned on his right side. The on-duty nurse was called and responded to the intake area.

Prior to the nurse arriving, the inmate stopped answering questions from the deputies who were assessing him. He was still breathing but began sweating profusely. As the nurse began taking vitals, he stopped breathing.

Sgt. Matthews directed staff to

call 911 while he ran to get the defibrillator. Corrections Deputies Tyler Graham and Matt Webberding and the nurse stayed with the inmate. The nurse instructed the deputies to position the inmate on his back to open up his airway. This was accomplished but he was still not breathing and his pulse had stopped.

Deputy Graham began chest compressions while Deputy Webberding gave life saving breaths. Deputy Graham gave another round of compressions and the inmate began to breath and his pulse returned. The inmate was then placed back onto his side in the recovery position. The nurse continued to monitor the inmate's vitals until the Medics arrived.

The nurse later complimented all the staff that assisted in saving the inmate's life. She commented that she had seldom seen such teamwork and calm demeanor even in a hospital emergency room. Because of this teamwork and specifically the actions of Deputies Graham and Webberding, a life was saved. Therefore, it is my pleasure to award Corrections Deputies Tyler Graham with the Sheriff's Office Life Saving Award. Well done!

(Corrections Deputy will receive his award at our 3rd Quarter Awards Ceremony)

20 Years of Service

This is awarded to those individuals who have dedicated themselves to serving the citizens of Thurston County.

The recipients are:

UnderSheriff Brad Watkins

Please sign up for
COMMUNITY ALERTS. These provide
information pertinent to your
neighborhood.

You can sign up at:

www.co.thurston.wa.us/sheriff

or

www.thurstonsheriff.org

The Nisqually River

By: Greg Elwin

The recent fatal boating accident on the Nisqually River is yet one more reminder of how dangerous our rivers can be. It has only been one year since we dealt with a triple fatality boating accident on the same river, albeit in a different stretch of river and under different circumstances. That said, there have been numerous drowning deaths on this river over the years; some fishermen, some swimmers, and some boaters and rafters. The bottom line is this: rivers are relentless and carry with them a multitude of hazards, both seen and unseen.

Recreating on the Nisqually River can be an enjoyable experience for many, and by far most people do it safely. When we look at the fatalities over the years, however there is one

thing that is seen in most instances: no lifejackets. Personal flotation devices (PFDs) or life jackets save lives! This has been proven over and over again, but still people are lulled into a false sense of security on the water. They think they're good swimmers. They think the river isn't as dangerous as everyone thinks. They think "It'll never happen to me."

Another commonality is the use of poorly built inflatable rafts. The rafts most commonly seen on the river are not made for that environment. They are thin-walled low grade rubber meant for a lake or swimming pool. They are not meant to bump into logs, sticks, rocks and whatever else the river has. These rafts regularly get punctured and deflate, leaving the occupants in the water fighting for survival. And

when there are three or more adults in one of these, disaster awaits.

These incidents are increasing in frequency as the population grows and access to the river becomes easier. Add good weather and the prevalence of improper and unused equipment and you create a recipe for disaster. Our most recent incident highlights this: an inexpensive raft, meant to be used as a toy, overloaded with occupants who are not wearing PFDs.

The human errors mentioned above will win

only part of the battle. The rest of the fight is with Mother Nature. The Nisqually River is known for its multitude of log jams, strainers, and hazards more so than most rivers in the region. We cannot control this; we can only plan for it, and planning is sketchy at best since these log jams regularly break up and reform elsewhere, sometimes in as little as a month or two. This makes the face of the river ever-changing.

To brave the Nisqually River as safely as possible, follow these rules and suggestions:

Only use a heavy duty raft designed and built for white-water rafting.

All occupants must wear PFD's.

Do not overload the vessel.

Do not consume alcoholic beverages or drugs.

Corrections Deputy Rick Steffen receives award

By: Lenna Davis-Dhuyvetter

On January 27, 2009, it was announced that Corrections Deputy Rick Steffen was selected as the American Jail Association's Correctional Training Officer of the Year, a very prestigious national award.

Deputy Steffen began his career with the Thurston County Sheriffs Office on April 1, 1997, and since that time he has had numerous work assignments and has attended several training classes, accumulating over 1200 hours of instruction over his 12 years of service.

His training and willingness to learn and lead has allowed Deputy Steffen to become the "go-to" instructor in the Corrections Bureau. Deputy Steffen always exhibits a high level of enthusiasm for his chosen career. His enthusiasm is contagious and reverberates through the staff who attend his training.

Deputy Steffen currently maintains his Field Training Officer Certification, has been selected twice for Employee of the Month, and was the recipient of the TCSO Life Saving Award on May 23, 2008.

In April of 2009 Deputy Steffen received an all expense paid trip to Louisville, Kentucky, to attend the annual American Jail Association Conference and receive his award in front of correctional professionals from all over the country.

Deputy Rick Steffen is commended for his high ethics, his passion for instructing, his willingness to always take that extra step to get the job done, and for his dedication to his chosen profession. In the opinion of his supervisors and his peers, there is no finer candidate for the AJA Training Officer of the Year than Deputy Rick Steffen.



Incarcerated Veteran's Reintegration Services (IVRS) Program

By: Chief Todd Thoma

In January 2009 the Thurston County Sheriff's Office/Corrections Facility initiated the Incarcerated Veteran's Reintegration Services (IVRS) Program in a joint effort and funding through the Thurston County Veteran's Program/Assistance Fund and the Washington Department of Veteran's Affairs. The program was implemented to address the needs of veterans incarcerated in the Thurston County Corrections Facility and has previously been established and proven to be successful in other county facilities in; King, Pierce and Clark. The program offers alternatives to jail and referrals to housing and employment services along with mental health and/or chemical

dependency treatment. Many of the veterans have come to jail due to untreated drug and alcohol issues, poverty, homelessness, mental health issues, and/or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The program provides:

- Transitional housing for veterans upon release from jail.
- Assessment and referral to the American Lake VA Medical Center for treatment of alcohol, drugs, and mental health counseling.
- Job referral and placement services.
- Assistance with court appearances and early release requirements.
- Case management to in-

clude family members to assure success.

Program eligibility is as follows:

- Must have been discharged under the following conditions: Honorable, Medical or Under Honorable Conditions.
- At least 181 days of active duty service.
- Must not have criminal convictions for the following: arson, sex offenses or violent crimes against a person.

Thurston County IVRS Program Facilitator Travis Savers

– is an Army Veteran with 13 years of service with a tour of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. To date Travis has

assessed over 40 veterans and enrolled five inmates in the program. With the team work of the Jail Mental Health Diversion/Re-Entry Program Specialist, Lisa Kurtzman, and Travis, our incarcerated veterans have a chance to seek the assistance needed to turn their lives around and become a functional part of society and our communities. Enrollment is not the only measure for the success of IVRS. Assisting veterans in accessing VA benefits, in which they had no prior knowledge of, can be a life change. Our belief is that because they once honored us with service and sacrifice to our country, we should be honored to provide them the necessary help and assistance to improve their lives.

Celebrate Independence Day

By: John Snaza

It's that time of year again to celebrate our Independence Day. While we celebrate our Nation's birthday, please remember to use fireworks in a safe responsible way. Parents, remember to speak with your children about using fireworks in a safe manner and in a designated area. Select a safe location for discharging your fireworks. Check for weather conditions and ensure that the surrounding area is clear of dry grasses and other vegetation.

When purchasing fireworks make sure that they are legal to possess and discharge. Although it is legal to purchase fireworks on native lands (Tribal), this does not mean that they are legal to possess and discharge anywhere else in the state. Make sure that all fireworks used are: Safe and Sane.

Safety Tips: Use legal fireworks. Discharge in a safe area with water close by. Use outdoors only. Do not re-use or attempt to ignite "duds."

Considerations: Keep pets safe. Be considerate of your neighbors and their pets. Clean up your used fireworks and dispose properly.

Fireworks can be discharged: July 3rd and July 4th 9:00 AM to 11:00 PM



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Support the **Thurston County Explorer Post #734** as they sell safe and sane fireworks for all ages at their non-profit fireworks stand. The stand is located on Old Hwy 99 and 79th Ave across from the Olympia Regional Airport. The stand is open from 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM July 1st through July 4th. (All proceeds benefit post functions directly.)