

## Letters from Canyon Hills Junior High students warm hearts of local law enforcement officers

A box full of heartfelt thank you letters was left in the lobby of the Chino Hills station last week, evoking emotions in the deputies at the station that are often not shared by members of the law enforcement community.

“When I read the letters written by these (Canyon Hills) junior high students I was overwhelmed with emotions,” said Chino Hills Lt. Dave Phelps. “I am honored to be in the law enforcement profession and these students summed up the reason why: It is about service and protection of others.”

The letters were delivered anonymously but because the personnel at the Chino Hills Station are trained investigators, it was quickly learned the letters were written by children from a class at Canyon Hills Jr. High in Chino Hills.

“Dear Sheriff, Thank you,” one letter read. “You risk your lives for ordinary citizens. You try your best every day. You aren’t afraid of doing what’s right. You are my inspiration and my hero.”

And other letters encouraged deputies to know people value the job they do:

“I hope you know people appreciate the things you do,” read the letter. “...Even though I don’t know you personally, I know you are great and amazing [people].”

“So if you ever think the world doesn’t need you anymore just know we do need you!” a letter from a 7<sup>th</sup> grader read. “At the end of every day just know you are very much respected.”

Capt. Robert Guillen, who serves as Chief of Police for the Chino Hills contract station, shared the letters with the men and women at the station. The unexpected gift provided encouragement that deputies do not often get. Guillen, and his crew, are grateful to serve a city with future leaders such as these students.

“Together we felt honored to share this community with those students and felt an even stronger obligation to serve,” Guillen said.

Guillen wanted to personally thank the students and organized a visit from Sheriff John McMahon and the members of the Chino Hills station to do just that. Monday morning, Sheriff McMahon, Capt. Guillen and about a dozen members representing all ranks from the Chino Hills Station visited the classroom of Debra Rosen, the teacher who prompted her students to write the letters.

The students asked some very insightful questions about law enforcement, such as the role of psychology in the profession and the requirements to become a deputy. They also asked informal questions about hairstyles and why police drive Ford vehicles. The most poignant question was why do law enforcement professionals do what they do. The answers varied from person to person.

Guillen spoke about the calling to be in law enforcement and the responsibility deputies face in their day to day jobs. Lt. Phelps talked about the freedom of not being stuck behind a desk, getting out into the community and having fun.

When asked what they would be if they were not in law enforcement, Sheriff McMahon and Capt. Guillen both answered the same: there is nothing else they would rather do. Law enforcement is the profession they have the greatest passion for and have always wanted to pursue.

Monday's event was a great way to connect the "anonymous" students with the nameless and faceless deputies they were writing to. And it was a way for the deputies to say thank you for such a simple gesture that had such a great impact.

The letters touched members across all ranks of the Chino Hills station giving a much-needed sense of optimism to members of a profession that has been under such intense scrutiny. Despite the fact more than 99% of all public interaction with law enforcement ends peacefully and with no conflict, stories of alleged misconduct seem to permeate public dialogue.

"I received the well wishes with humility," said Deputy David Lara. "It moves me to know that with all of the daily attacks toward our profession, the youth can still have a positive outlook toward us. I hope we can continue to build a sense of trust and respect for tomorrow, with the youth of today."

***Posted Monday, May 11 by Detective L. Harper of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department***

(The presentation was taped by three local television news crews and aired that day. Sheriffs Department officials delivered goodie bags, beverages and snacks to the students, and had two of their vehicles on display outside the classroom.)