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## Meet Orinda's New Police Chief - Scott S. Haggard

By Laurie Snyder



Chief Scott S. Haggard Photo Ohlen Alexander

"Being a police officer is much more than just arresting people or writing tickets," says Orinda's new Chief of Police Scott S. Haggard. "An officer can really affect change in people's lives on multiple levels."

Haggard took the rudder of the Orinda Police Department on May 16, following a rigorous process involving written testing and reviews before professional and community panels, as well as multiple interviews with city manager Janet Keeter.

Although he is still getting up to speed with his new role, a task made more challenging because he is starting as the city is finalizing its budget for the coming year, he is already thinking about one of his first priorities - "enhancing communications across the board." Haggard, whose background includes work as an Emergency Response commander, plans to do more with CERT and Neighborhood Watch - and also wants to get to know Orindans one-on-one because keeping any community safe is a team effort. "Never hesitate to call for anything suspicious," he says.

Haggard is a second generation law enforcement professional whose father was a sergeant with the California Highway Patrol. "As a young man, I started off with aspirations to be a firefighter." But, as so often happens in life, fate intervened. He met his spouse while in college; they married after graduation and he never went back to firefighting.

After earning his bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University, Sacramento and working with Sacramento County Probation and in retail loss prevention

management for a time, he began his tenure with the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department (CCSD). "I jumped in with both feet and I've been able to help so many people with real problems. It has been extremely rewarding."

He has enabled business owners to weed out dishonesty and resolve issues of employee theft, and nailed lowlifes who were taking advantage of others through financial crimes. During his time in field operations, he served as a county patrol officer and member of the J Team before being promoted to sergeant - and on up through various supervisory positions. "As a lieutenant, I worked as the patrol watch commander and as the facility commander for the West County Jail."

Leaving the jail for the job in Orinda was hard, he says, because he had established such solid working relationships. "I learned many aspects of managing a \$20 million budget, maintaining the morale of about 100 staff members, working with partners from various agencies, community groups, and programs that all have unique needs. It really is a huge operation."

One of his best law enforcement moments - an incident he says he will always remember - arose from an encounter with a woman who had approached him with a question about divorce paperwork. Something about the interaction, though, weighed on his heart and mind. An approachable guy, he was able to persuade the woman to unburden herself when they reconnected. Details from years of domestic violence poured out. The woman's husband was arrested, and Haggard was able to help the woman and her young daughters to connect with life-changing services.

"About a year later in a completely different area, she approached me. I did not recognize her at first because she looked totally different and healthy. She had a job and lived on her own. She had gained her independence away from the cycle of violence. People can escape these situations and gain personal freedom."

And that is what it's all about - inspiring neighbors to be there for one another in good times and bad.  
Keeping House and Kids Safe

One of the things that struck police chief Scott Haggard when he first started work in Orinda was the city's "party consequences ordinance." Because homeowners can end up in a world of hurt if partying kids get out of control on their property, he suggests being proactive rather than reactive.

"Vacation house checks can be for more than just vacations. If, for example, adults are leaving for a weekend and have a teenaged person staying home, we would be more than happy to stop or just drive by (your preference) just to make sure things are okay."

It is important to plan ahead because even good kids can sometimes end up in difficult situations - like when 20 people they don't know suddenly show up at a small, quiet get together - because a friend Tweeted about "a party in Orinda." Just visit the police department to complete a card indicating when you'll be away - and that kids will still be home. By letting OPD know how many friends might be visiting and when - and what cars those friends will likely be driving, police will then be able to verify that all's well with a simple drive-by. For more information, call (925) 254-6820.

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