

**Interview with Dan Larsen, Atherton Police Department  
School Resource Officer  
November 2016**

**With Bev Lenihan, *Atherton Now* Campaign Committee**

BL: How long have you been with the Atherton Police Force?

DL: I have been with Atherton just over three years, and eight years as a police officer. I am in my third year as the School Resource Officer—it was August of 2014.

BL: How did you come to be on the force anyway?

DL: I started out as a Community Resource Officer in San Carlos where I grew up. This position also helped pay for his college. My first responsibility was giving out parking tickets. I finished college at the University of Cal State, East Bay. Then the San Carlos police department put me through the police academy.

BL: Tell us a bit about your growing up years—what did you like most to do?

DL: My parents met at church. Strong moral values were always a part of our family. And education. I was a cub scout for a year—my mother was den mother. I really enjoyed sports—baseball and soccer.

BL: Tell us about your family.

DL: Now I am married and we have a baby of our own. My wife and I played coed soccer—and we may get back to that, but I we have different priorities now!

BL: What is your full responsibility?

DL: As the School Resource Officer, I am the primary liaison with the 9 schools here in Atherton. I respond to any calls for service (eg: suspicious people on campus; the accidental knife or bullet that shows up at school; drug suspicion) at any of the schools; I conduct security checks; and provide a positive presence on the campuses. When appropriate, I also backup our duty officers.

BL: What is a typical day like?

DL: The work varies each week—but I really like greeting the students on the campuses and getting to know them as people. I wear a polo shirt and khaki's most of the time. I do in-class presentations on safety. It is especially gratifying to teach the kindergarteners and second

graders about 911 calling. We have a fun game that is a good teaching tool. They catch on quickly—and we know this technique can save lives.

BL: What is that fine line between providing safety and security, and encouraging students to be the best they can be?

DL: It goes both ways. Whenever something goes wrong with a student, we attempt to find out why; help the student understand the law or rules that have been broken—and then come up with a plan of action that encourages the student's improved behavior. In the end, this process makes for a safer campus in the long run.

We always want someone to learn from their mistakes. Many do. The few who do not may end up being referred to Hillcrest Juvenile Detention Facility. We are fortunate in Atherton. These cases are the exception.

BL: What are the challenging aspects of the position?

DL: It is always difficult to be everywhere at once. One never knows what a day will bring, and as with life, sometimes there are multiple calls at the same time. We have a very collaborative force, and the other patrol officers assist in times like these. The paperwork continues to become quite time-consuming. It takes away from time on campus which I like.

BL: How do you see the opportunities with new Civic Center police facilities?

DL: We all want to have pride in the job we do and the place we work. As you know, our Atherton police facilities are over 50 years old, and in bad condition. One tiny bathroom for all the officers--and anyone being detained--to use. And, we have to change clothes in there too. I encourage residents to come for a tour of the current police facilities.

We on the Atherton Police Force welcome a new facility which improves these basic needs. Our sense of pride in new facilities will bolster our self-respect, and energize further the work we do in the community. Our identity will be reflected not only through our police professionals but also through our central place of work. Recruitment and retention of our officers will benefit.

BL: Describe the ideal police environment for the 21st century.

DL: Technology is a valuable tool in successful policing today. It facilitates the day-to-day operations of the work we do, enabling us to spend more time in the community. I believe our new facility will make technology upgrades easier, and allow us more time with the residents and students. More effort and time can be spent on collaborative problem-solving. Community policing at its best...

BL: What advice did you get that has guided you-and that you find yourself saying to the students you serve?

DL: My mantra is 'education is valuable-get it; use it.' When you use your education you have the opportunity for a successful and happy life. I am thankful I finished my education, and have this great opportunity to serve Atherton.

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