

DOUGLAS BUDGET

\$1⁰⁰

Wednesday,
December 28,
2016

Vol. 130 No. 52



Tried & True

Renewed CCSO mounted patrol serves much-needed purpose in a modern law enforcement landscape

By Jen Kocher
jen@douglas-budget.com

There's just something about law enforcement on horseback that makes sense in Wyoming, as Corporal Rick Jones hears a lot from people, particularly from those traveling from out of town. And as counter-intuitive as it may seem in an increasingly modern world of high-tech gadgetry, tasers and body cameras, the Converse County Sheriff's Office, along with other agencies across the nation and state, are going old-school and beefing up their mounted patrol.

Jones wasn't sure what to expect nearly four years ago when he first pitched the idea to Sheriff Clint Becker, but it turns out he didn't need to make much of a case as Becker was instantly on board. Like Jones, he saw the advantages of adding a mounted patrol and gave Jones the permission to do some research and eventually set up a program.

For good reason, too, as Jones points out, as not only are horses a great PR tool for communicating with the public, but horses also make great tactical sense.

Consider riding by horseback at the State Fair or downtown during a parade or other public events. Not only do police get an unique vantage point across crowds or into parked cars along the route, but unlike officers on foot, people actually get out of the way for a horse, which helps part the crowds in the case of an altercation or medical emergency.

And try getting into a fight with a horse. Even if a guy gets a punch into the horse's nose, that guy as Jones points out, is going to suffer a lot more than the horse.

As Jones has found out, however,

people are much less prone to take a swing at the horse as they are to just come up and want to pet his horse Biscuit or just start a conversation.

"Biscuit gets a lot of attention," Jones said, "particularly at the state fairgrounds where people will go out of their way just to come over to talk to him."

That never happens to Jones when he's out on foot, he's quick to point out. People typically take one look at the CCSO uniform and take off for the hills, he jokes.

"But people get a real kick out of seeing a cop on a horse in Wyoming," he says, shaking his head. "It's a good buffer for connecting with the public or just getting a conversation started."

In the nearly four years that Jones and his mounted patrol have been up and running, it's been mainly for PR events such as the State Fair and downtown parades and events. Behind the scenes, however, there's been a lot of training for Jones and Biscuit, which along with renewing their annual certification, also requires numerous hours in the saddle just to fine-tune some of the skills required for a mounted patrol horse.

That's just fine by Jones, who prior to joining the CCSO seven years ago, spent his life on a horse, including a lifetime working cattle on ranches, rodeoing, and finally, breaking and training horses.

There's a lot of training that goes into making a good mounted patrol horse, according to Jones. Along with training the horse to block out the man-made distractions of screaming children, popped balloons, discarded cups blowing around

Please see
MOUNTED,
page A-2

Top six stories of 2016

#1 Ramirez Shooting

Our city was rocked this summer by the shooting of Jasen Scott Ramirez by a U.S. marshal in the parking lot at St. James Church after his father's funeral on June 30. Marshals were attempting to serve an arrest warrant for possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute, possession of a firearm during a drug-trafficking crime and being a felon in possession of a firearm. After a three-month DCI investigation, the marshal who shot Ramirez was cleared and not charged in the shooting, which was ruled justified.

Continued on A-2



This week's weather

	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
High	32	32	45	33	32
Low	9	24	15	18	9



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Energy crisis

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Community development

#3

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Heavy rains in May flooded parts of Converse County with knee-high runoff that sent rivers and creeks gushing, prompting several evacuations, including 15 families from the Deer Creek RV Park in South Rec Park in Glenrock. Some of the families piled their belongings on picnic tables and left with what they could carry.



Election with record turnout

Voters turned out in record numbers at the November general election. While most local races were uncontested or very quiet, the race for president was divisive and bitter. More than 100 percent of the registered voters in Converse County showed up to the polls (6,706 people voted, while we had 6,143 registered voters going into the election). In the end, two new

Douglas City Council members (Rene Kemper and Monty Gilbreath) won seats over Doug Olson and Adam Hughes. Five of the 11 candidates for Douglas School Board were chosen; they are Tom Holt, Brad Reese, Jennifer Rinn, Jay Butler and Brandon Gilbreath.

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Katie Marcus

Former Douglas special education teacher Katie Marcus was sentenced to 4-5 years of supervised probation in early November for having sex with an underage Douglas High School student. The sentence was driven by the evidence, Marcus' lack of criminal record, the pre-sentencing evaluations that indicated Marcus is not a repeat offender, the recommendations of probation and parole, and the victim's wishes, according to Judge John C. Brook.



Mounted

from the front page

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Jones could talk about horses all day, he admits, and though the 37-year-old is typically a pretty shy guy in general, when it comes to horses he gets pretty verbose. He's particularly excited, too, to see his one-man operation turning into an

actual department, now that in the past year he's added a second patrol to the force, CCSO Sergeant Sara Tiensvold, who is as happy as Jones to take over the reins.

Tiensvold had been waiting a long time for a good excuse to finally buy a horse.

Having grown up in residential Glenrock, she'd been around horses all of her life but never had owned one of her own, a long-term dream that she's harbored for as long as she could remember.

"This is Wyoming, right?" she laughed. "What little girl didn't grow up wanting a pony?"

After undergoing an extensive 40-hour certification program last year, Tiensvold spends a lot of time training with Jones, who is also a Glenrock native. Her horsemanship skills weren't the best when she started, she admits, though in the past year and a half she's learned a

lot from Jones.

The only drawback to having a growing mounted patrol program, according to Jones, is the lack of funding for the program, which was one of the stipulations put out by Becker when Jones first launched the idea. And as much as Becker was behind the program from the get-go, he'd also made it clear that Jones would have to be pretty creative to get the program up off the floor.

Luckily, Jones has found, that's been easier than he'd imagined. Not only are other county and city agencies in Wyoming open to helping other patrols get started, they're also a group who pulls together to help each other out, whether that means with free training or hotel rooms.

"Everyone has been really great about extending a hand," Jones adds, detailing the free train-

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Not only have their PR duties grown in the past year from State Fair and the annual Fourth of July parade, but they've also started receiving several more requests over the past two years to appear at community events. This year was their second time patrolling Fort Fetterman Days and the Horse Expo in Douglas, as well as their first year in official capacity at Business After Hour events and the Easter egg hunt in Rolling Hills.

Along with their PR work, the mounted patrol also put in some recon duty over the past year, including lending assistance to the county search and rescue team, as well as checking out an abandoned

camp up in Esterbrook that was inaccessible by patrol car.

Back country work is another advantage of having a mounted patrol, according to Jones, who sees multiple opportunities for assisting the department.

The sale of raffle tickets for a 6.5 Creedmoor Ruger American rifle, purchased by Sheriff Becker and Undersheriff Justin Scott with their own money, and three boxes of ammo and an extra magazine donated by Phil Filing of Phil's Sales and Service have helped too.

Along with raffle ticket sales, the search and rescue unit also received a \$5,000 donation from SM Energy to purchase a used four-horse trailer from a Glenrock resident, which will provide them greater access to move the horses as needed.

Overall, the lack of county funding has in no way held the

growth of this program back, according to Becker, and to date the program has been self-funded.

"The program is actually moving ahead very well," Becker said, who noted substantial support from the Converse County commissioners, who gave them their support and blessing for the program despite the lack of available funding.

Moving forward, Jones and Tiensvold hope to grow their unit by another two or so officers within the next few years as well as continue to raise funds for additional equipment and training.

If anyone in the community would like to support the mounted patrol unit, raffle tickets are available at \$10 per ticket or three tickets for \$25. Tickets can be purchased from any CCSO deputies or staff or by calling the Sheriff's office at 358-4700.

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2017

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CLINIC HOLIDAY HOURS OF OPERATION

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RURAL CLINICS	CLOSED	CLOSED
ORTHOPEDIC OFFICE	CLOSED	CLOSED
URGENT CARE	9 AM - 1 PM	CLOSED

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