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DUSTIN DELRIDGE NAMED QUALITY OF LIFE POLICE OFFICER

Sgt. Dustin Delridge, a 14-year veteran of the Missoula Police Department, is the City of Missoula's new Quality of Life police officer.

Police Chief Mark Muir sees Delridge as uniquely qualified for the job. His experience as a police officer includes a variety of positions, and he's grounded in the community as the father of three kids, a dedicated youth sports coach and official, an active participant in his neighborhood and an owner of rental housing.

Delridge sees the job as a great fit for him. Whether he's dealing with disputes about loud parties, excess trash, barking dogs or day-to-day disputes, he likes the role of mediator and enjoys listening to people.

"I like dealing with people," Delridge says. "And I like problem-solving – listening to both sides of situations and coming up with solutions."

Delridge's first two weeks on the job have been busy, with University of Montana students returning and residents learning how to get along.

"The bottom line is communication," he says.

The Quality of Life officer navigates disputes surrounding Missoula's parks, dog laws, building and zoning, parking and abandoned vehicles and more. The job also includes supervising the School Resource Officers. In general, the officer is the clearinghouse for policing efforts and information-sharing that bring citizens and agencies together to address residential problems that may or may not be criminal. In short, it's all about the neighborhood.

Delridge's experience in policing includes work as a K-9 officer, bike patrol officer, field training officer, DUI instructor, drug recognition expert, Civil Disturbance Unit member and, most recently, a patrol sergeant. He earned an undergraduate degree from Regis University in history and communications.

He believes in working face-to-face in a proactive way whenever possible.

"This position gives the community someone to interact with from the Police Department who has devoted time to their specific issues, which you can't always get with a patrol officer who has to prioritize their time for emergencies," he said. "I enjoy helping others find a way to get through a difficult time or situation."

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