



Tillamook County's Weekly Newspaper ONLINE

TILLAMOOK

headlightherald.com

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

On the scene: 'I'm here to help you'

On patrol with Tillamook County Sheriff's Office Deputy Kelly Awe

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Kelly Awe

TILLAMOOK - Kelly Awe turned the air vent in his cruiser to the coldest setting.

It was about 1:30 in the morning on a weekend night in mid-March. Awe, a deputy with the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office for more than eight years, had just been dispatched to an emergency call in Pacific City.

Driving at speeds near 100 mph from Tillamook with lights blazing and sirens blaring, Awe slowed as he passed a field near Pacific City where he saw a herd of deer bedding down hours earlier. He pulled up to the home where a neighbor had reported a couple fighting outside.

"I'm here to help you," Awe called through the door.

Awe, like his mother, grew up in Tillamook. He wanted to be a police officer since he was in grade school. He earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Western Oregon State College and served as a reserve officer in Canby, the city of Tillamook and later the Sheriff's Office. After five years of working at the Tillamook County

Creamery Association cheese factory, he took a job as a sheriff's deputy.

But after working in the jail for five and a half years, Awe said he was ready to go on patrol.

"You're there just as much as the inmates are," he said. "It was time to do something different."

But going on patrol took some getting used to.

"It takes a couple of years to get comfortable out on the street. Every call is different," he said.

Awe shares his Tillamook home with his two teenaged stepsons, two dogs - a yellow lab named Murphy and a Rottweiler mix name Bailey - and a cat named Oreo. On his time off, Awe likes little more than taking his boat out for a day of fishing.

His work as a sheriff's deputy is often exciting. A night can begin slowly and end with a rush of adrenaline.

That evening was a good sample of what Tillamook County law enforcement officers often experience. While the evening started out slowly with just a few traffic stops, it ended with a bang. A high-speed trip to Pacific City resulted in more than an hour of investigation.

The lights of the home were on, but no one answered the door. Awe eventually found a man who lived at the home in the back yard. His wife, he said, was inside, but was drunk and had kicked him out.

The woman finally answered the door for Awe. He arrested the man on suspicion of fourth-degree assault and took him to the county jail.

"It's satisfying to get to arrest a person who has hurt somebody else and make that person feel safe," Awe said. "You're the

good guy."

At nearly 3 a.m., Awe brought the man accused of beating his wife to the jail.

After booking the man, he learned that somebody had brought in brownies. Awe helped himself to a glass of milk and a brownie. And at nearly 4 a.m., he left the jail.

"Thanks," the man he arrested hollered as Awe walked out of the jail.

Awe grinned and got in his cruiser. His shift was over.

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