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Michelle Duncan sworn in as 41st Linn County Sheriff

ALBANY — Michelle Duncan, Linn County’s 41st sheriff is a hard worker, dedicated, compassionate and a team leader, Circuit Court Judge Rachel Kittson-MaQatish said Monday morning as she officiated over Duncan’s swearing-in ceremony at the Linn County Courthouse.

Duncan, 47, is also the first female sheriff in the 173-year history of the Linn County Sheriff’s Office and one of less than a handful of female sheriffs in Oregon.

But Duncan has never put being a female in front of her many job titles during her 24-year career at the Sheriff’s Office where she has held positions ranging from patrol deputy to undersheriff.

Her supervisors say she excelled at each level.

She was hired by former Sheriff Dave Burrigh and has been trained and promoted under former sheriffs Tim Mueller, Bruce Riley and Jim Yon. Former Sheriff Art Martinak was present and Duncan said all of her past supervisors shared Martinak’s management philosophies with her as she worked her way up the leadership ladder.

Judge Kittson-MaQatish said she spoke to several of Duncan’s coworkers and supervisors and all expressed confidence in her ability to lead the Sheriff’s Office. Duncan will serve out the final year of Sheriff Jim Yon’s four-year term and then be on the ballot in coming elections this year.

Some of their comments included that Duncan is a resolute leader, she has honesty and integrity, she is an extremely hard worker, she doesn’t quit when times get hard and she is highly intelligent.

Judge Kittson-MaQatish said less than 2% of sheriffs in the United State are female and until Monday, there was only one female sheriff in Oregon. Three more were sworn in Monday.

“This is a monumental day,” Judge Kittson-MaQatish said. “It’s been 173 years and Linn County now has its first female sheriff.”

Coworkers said Duncan’s leadership skills were especially evident during the Labor Day 2020 wildfires.

Judge Kittson-MaQatish said signing up to be a deputy sheriff is not “an easy task.”

She asked that Sheriff Duncan be protected, feel honored, have the support and unity she needs and have compassion.

Sheriff Duncan said she learned something new from each sheriff with whom she worked.

Dave Burrigh taught her to always keep what’s best for the public in mind when making decisions. Tim Mueller taught her to take care of the staff. Bruce Riley taught her about leadership in and out of the office and Jim Yon taught her about true humility, doing what’s right even when others disagree with your decision and not being afraid to “make fun of yourself.”

Sheriff Duncan added that she has always taken great pride in being a hard worker.

“Public safety is always the number one priority for any sheriff,” Duncan said.

Duncan has previously said her philosophy is that each of the Sheriff’s Office’s six divisions — patrol, corrections, detectives, corrections programs, civil and support services — are important.

At full strength, the LCSO employs 190 people and has a budget of \$36 million.

Duncan believes the office works best when all staff members work as a team.

Duncan’s children, Kendall Leggate, 17, and Jacob Leggate, 22, pinned a new badge on their mother.

“We’re very proud of our mom,” Jacob said after the ceremony. “She’s always about putting family first.”

Per tradition, in her first act in office, Duncan swore in retired Sheriff Jim Yon as a deputy sheriff.

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Above: Sheriff Michelle Duncan’s children, Kendall Leggate, 17, and Jacob Leggate, 22, pin the new bad on their mother Monday morning at the Linn County Courthouse.



Left: Circuit Court Judge Rachel Kittson-MaQatish administers the oath of office as Michelle Duncan becomes the 41st sheriff in the 173-year history of the Linn County Sheriff’s Office.



Below: Sheriff Duncan with her predecessors, left to right: Art Martinak, Dave Burrigh, Bruce Riley and Jim Yon.