

# Michelle Duncan is new Linn County Undersheriff

ALBANY — When Michelle Duncan was a teenager, her parents thought her interest in law enforcement as a career might just be a passing phase.

But the new Linn County Undersheriff said a high school career exploration program sealed the deal and after graduating from Santa Teresa High School, she enrolled in the criminal justice program at San Jose Community College.

“I’ve never looked back,” Duncan said from her new office.

She succeeds former Undersheriff Paul Timm, who retired at the end of September.

Duncan, 47, is low key about the fact she is the first female undersheriff in Linn County.

“I have never wanted to be picked because I’m female, I wanted to be selected because I am the best person for the job,” Duncan said.

Duncan said she has come to realize that “it’s important that other women see that someone can progress in this field. It’s exciting to be a role model for other women, who can see that with hard work you can do this.”

Yon agrees wholeheartedly.

“Michelle was chosen because of her years of experience with the Sheriff’s Office, her excellent service and because she has very good decision-making and problem-solving skills,” Yon said. “She has strong support from the entire staff.”

Yon added, “She was promoted because of how she does her job.”

Duncan spent her early years in Linn County and attended the former Dixie School on Peoria Road. Her family



*Linn County Sheriff Jim Yon has named Michelle Duncan as his new undersheriff, succeeding Paul Timm.*

moved to San Jose, California, when she was about 10 years old. She graduated from Santa Teresa High School and then earned a degree in criminal justice at San Jose Community College.



“My parents thought my interest in law enforcement might just be a phase, but it wasn’t,” Duncan said with a laugh.

Duncan knew she wanted to return to Oregon and landed a job in corrections at the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem.

“I knew it wasn’t long-term for me, because I always wanted to be on patrol,” Duncan said.

Just over a year into the job, she was hired by Linn County, and she was a

resident deputy in Mill City for seven years.

“I loved it up there,” she said.

She was promoted to detective and worked narcotics for four years, targeting dealers on the streets.

“It was a blast,” Duncan said. “I have always believed that drugs are the root cause of so many issues. They tear apart families and they are factors in property and personal crimes.”

Duncan was promoted to Patrol Sergeant in 2008 and worked with the county’s mountain patrol deputies.

“That’s a unique job,” Duncan said. “It’s very rural and you know that many of the citizens you interact with are carrying a gun.”

In 2015, Duncan was promoted to lieutenant in a newly created position of dealing with contract cities as well as the marine and mountain patrols. She also was the Field Training Coordinator, which she enjoyed.

She enjoyed working with area communi-

ties, listening to their needs and working as a team to make things happen.

“I am a strong believe in field training,” Duncan said. “It’s important how we deal with someone whose home has been burglarized. It’s such a personal crime. We must be sure we teach our new deputies to treat victims right and do everything we can to solve the crime.”

In 2019, Duncan was promoted to Patrol Captain.

I have always believed that every one of our six divisions is important and wanted to know as much as about how they work as possible,” Duncan said.

The divisions are patrol, corrections (jail), detectives, corrections programs (work crew), civil and support services (dispatch).

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

“I believe we work best as a team,” Duncan said. “There is a great respect for each other in this office. People who

transfer here from other places are amazed at how it feels like a family. We hold people accountable to do their jobs right but they also feel supported.”

Duncan is married and has a son, 22, and daughter, 17.

She enjoys hiking, fishing, doing yard and garden work — she even enjoys pulling weeds — and football games.

“The word compassion is in our mission statement,” Duncan said. “There’s no reason to be condescending to people.”

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## QUOTABLE

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