

# Police chief starts local SRO trend

By Garrett Pearlman

Durant's 10-year police chief, Orville Randolph, started a trend for rural small schools in the area to hire school resource officers (SROs) when a former Durant officer took on the role in 2019.

In 2023, Officer Joshua Bujalski replaced Mike Meier, now the police chief in Blue Grass, but in the meantime, Wilton, Bennett, and Tipton have brought in their own SROs, and West Liberty is soon to follow.

Chief Randolph continues to prioritize the safety and well-being of our town and school, and we appreciate his efforts.

He first approached the school district in 2015 about bringing in an SRO and began walking the school halls himself to get students and staff comfortable with his presence.

"I would get my cardio in, walk around the school, and talk to people, but in that brief snippet of time, I really didn't have time to get to know people and say, 'Hey, how are you?'" said Chief Randolph.

"I might not even know your name, but I know your face. Whereas a full-time officer up here would know names, know relationships between student conflicts, and hopefully stop those conflicts before they become a true law enforcement issue."

Chief Randolph even helped to recruit Officer Bujalski into his SRO job.

"I actually met with him [Officer Bujalski] before he actually applied and brought him up to the school and showed him around and talked to him before he even turned his paperwork in, and then he decided to apply," said Chief Randolph.

Growing up in DeWitt, Chief Randolph began his law enforcement career as a military police officer in Georgia before returning to Cedar County, where he has worked in public safety for three decades.



He worked as a jail administrator and Cedar County deputy sheriff before joining the Durant Police Department 15 years ago.

"I've been chief for 10 years, but I've been with the police department for 15," said Chief Randolph. "Five of those [years] I was a part-time officer and a full-time deputy."

In addition to working law enforcement, Chief Randolph has also served as a paramedic and firefighter.

In total, Chief Randolph was a Cedar County deputy sheriff for about 27 years, patrolling all of Cedar County, but he particularly enjoys working in Durant due to its smaller size and the benefits that come with it. He leads a four-man department.

"It's kind of what I call a fishbowl; you know all the fish in the bowl and how they swim around that bowl, and so that versus when I was a deputy, you really don't get the feel of the routine of the town," said Chief Randolph.

"A lot of times when I'm walking into the school or in businesses or around town, people are calling me by name without even looking at my name tag because they

know who I am, and I like that personal approach."

Chief Randolph met his wife Jill in the Cedar County Sheriff's Office in 1989 where she worked as a dispatcher, and they married a year later.

"We knew each other from work, obviously, and then, I think, we decided neither one of us was doing anything, and Solon Beef Days was going on," he recalled. "Then it just kind of started from there. Here we are, two kids and living in Durant."

Chief Randolph worries that if a school shooter incident were to happen at the school, he would have to run past his wife, now a study hall supervisor at Durant High School, and the vast majority of students and staff that he knows to deal with the situation.

Over Chief Randolph's career, he has had some hard calls to respond to, but dealing with his daughter's car crash in 2015 was his hardest.

Sidney, now 27, was attending an Iowa-Wisconsin game and was on the way home from Iowa City.

"When I picked up the phone, she was crying, number one, and number two, I could hear her horn honking," said Chief Randolph.

His daughter was very upset, and "all I could get out of her was that she was in a car accident," he said.

"Long story short, she was about two miles south of Bennett and fell asleep and rolled her car. It was upside down."

In the past couple of years, Chief Randolph recovered from COVID-19 and two heart attacks but doesn't have retirement in his plans. He is 59 years old and due to state legislation, law officers must step down at the age of 65.

A 2018 Durant graduate, Dawson Frett, has been working as a civilian corrections officer with the Cedar County Sheriff's Office for two years now and was inspired by Chief Randolph to pursue a law enforcement career.

"The biggest impact Chief Randolph has made on me is just being a part of my life growing up being able to talk with him about law enforcement and hearing the stories about when he first started his career," said Frett.

Chief Randolph's ability to handle situations and find resolution in a professional and calm manner stuck with Frett.

Cohen Jepsen

## Can you hear the music of your soul?

Everybody has a "spark," whether it be in math, sports, cooking, or virtually any other profession.

Some would call it "hearing the music" of your soul, as you not only develop a skill but also know the deeper meaning of it.

This skill guides the flow of our lives and determines how we use our capabilities to achieve what we think matters most—it allows us to succeed.

At a young age, a seed is planted in this skill that grows and maintains itself throughout our lives.

It has the potential to grow into a hardy tree whose canopy resides above the clouds of expectation and can not be knocked over.

It may be thrashed by a raging storm, and yet it still stands, hardened by its bruises, growing ever

stronger.

However, the great catastrophe of this blessing is that with today's social media, these inherent skills are being pruned by irrelevant distractions

The internet constantly throws short-form content at us that is easy to get hooked on.

The few dozen seconds it takes to consume these info bites, combined with our own dopamine-hungry minds, results in the easiest time wasters ever invented, and they have been integrated into almost every social media platform.

Too often, I find myself on YouTube looking for a specific video and encounter a short-video wormhole.

Every video is appealing, until it's not, and then I go to the next appealing video, and the next.

Too much time in this spiral makes me freeze up and be totally subject to the emotional engineering of social media.

The only reason we fall into the spiral is because our minds have a hunger for fulfillment and happiness.

Our human nature never fails to give us a purpose, but its unstoppable drive is being pulled away from the road of potential by these online videos.

They use a formula to let us experience someone's else victories, but at the same time preventing us from achieving our own.

Instead of allowing our minds to remain stagnant, we should use the time we have to improve our own skills instead of wasting it comparing ourselves to others.

When I shut away distractions, I am overtaken by an innate desire to write.

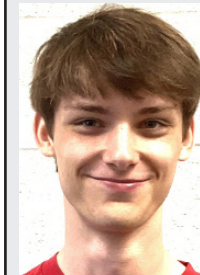
I don't know why or where it comes from, but once I start writing, everything else melts away, and then I can focus on something that is true and important.

The spirit that washes over me while I'm writing is indefatigable as I chronicle my life for further reflection.

Writing is one of my hobbies, but it can be used by anyone to open up the doorway of possibilities.

It's up to you how far you travel the road of possibility.

As I stamp my mark on paper, where will you stamp yours?

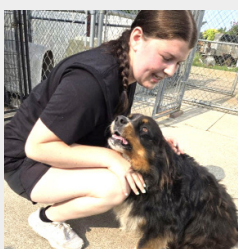


## Green Acres employee of the month



2051 Highway 927  
Wilton, IA 52778

Abigail Elder, a junior, has worked at Green Acres for seven months. Her favorite part of the job is seeing all the cool dog breeds. She gives baths to the dogs and loves working with the animals.



Elder



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## The Wildcat Chronicles

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The Wildcat Chronicles staff believes a school newspaper is uniquely qualified to inform, entertain, and represent our peers. We strive to present accurate stories and thought-provoking commentary, and we are responsible for the content of each issue.



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## Today's Dentistry coach of the month

Coach Daniel Knipfel is starting his eighth year coaching boys' track and field at Durant. His favorite part of coaching track is "developing positive relationships with athletes and watching them succeed at reaching their goals." Coach Knipfel expects the athletes to have fun, work hard, and compete. He got into coaching himself because he had a rewarding experience as a high school athlete.



Knipfel



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## Liberty Trust & Savings Bank's club member of the month



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Senior Ethan Ryan has participated in band for eight years and plays the tenor saxophone. Ryan's favorite part about band is performing a challenging part of a song. He plans on continuing his education at the University of Iowa and playing with one of the bands available there.



Ryan