

# Long-serving Gallup police officer gets promotion

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 17 January 2020 04:18

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### **Sergeant Padilla-Begay becomes a lieutenant**

Family, friends, and colleagues of Gallup Sergeant Melanie Padilla-Begay gathered at the Magistrate Court Jan. 3 to watch as she was promoted to lieutenant.

Captain Erin Toadlena-Pablo spoke about Padilla-Begay's path through the ranks, and how they influenced one another throughout the years.

"She didn't want to put in for her testing, and I said, 'Where are you going to go from here?'" Toadlena-Pablo said. "She's thinking retirement, but she has a lot of knowledge and abilities that need to be tested, and why not [have] Gallup Police Department benefit from that?"

Toadlena-Pablo shared the memo she wrote to Padilla-Begay for the occasion.

"One thing to keep in mind is where our organization is going," she said. "We don't want to be stuck in the mud. We want to keep moving forward."

The memo continued by asking what Gallup officers stand for as law enforcement officers, and why they enrolled in the force.

"If we can remember those things, it's pretty simple to help you with where you're going," Toadlena-Pablo said.

Padilla-Begay is headed to the patrol division as part of her new rank, which Toadlena-Pablo describes as the backbone of the department.

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“In this job, what makes this all unique as a team here, is we all have strengths and weaknesses,” Toadlena-Pablo said. “We all bring something good to the table, and I want her to be her own person and build on her own strengths. The department will benefit from that.”

When Padilla-Begay took the floor, she thanked the staff she worked with for their support during her 19 years of service.

“I say my department because this is my other family that I work with, that I see everyday,” she said. “I’ve known a lot of them for a long time, and I’m very grateful.”

Padilla-Begay went on to say she is grateful for her belief in who she is, and referred to Toadlena-Pablo’s memo.

“It comes back to who we are individually, where we stand,” Padilla-Begay continued. “I really thought about retirement, and moving on to something new. But I had to step back and think, ‘Why did I apply here? Who am I? Do I have anything to offer anyone?’”

Padilla-Begay said after pondering those questions, she believes she still has goals to achieve at the department. She said the rest of the department does as well.

“We have a lot of people here who have experience and knowledge that we all need here, and for us to work as a department, we have to be a team,” she added.

This point also reminded Padilla-Begay why she applied for the position with the department in the first place: the people.

“The main [reason] I became a police officer is because I could help other people,” she said. “I love to help others, and that’s what we are as police officers. We protect and we serve our community.”

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Padilla-Begay said she has seen a lot of changes in the department over the years, and she has a lot of respect for the other officers she has served with over the years.

“I’m looking forward to my new position and looking up to new goals,” she continued. “I’m ready to go back out in the field, and I’m very grateful.”

Gallup Police Chief Franklin Boyd spoke about seeing the number of qualified officers try to apply for higher ranks like sergeant and lieutenant, and how it can be disheartening when some of them get denied because there are a limited number of positions.

But, Boyd added he is constantly looking for ways and speaking with city officials in order to find other ways to increase the number of officers in those positions.

“We’re trying to get more lieutenants on the street, which will in turn lead to promotions to sergeants,” Boyd said. “This is for the officers, so they can advance in their careers and serve the public in a more efficient manner.”

Boyd spoke about Padilla-Begay making the ceremony not just for her, but for the department as a whole, and how that is a reflection of her character.

“It’s good to see a lieutenant or supervisor up here talking about the department, training, or recruitment,” Boyd continued. “It tells you something about a leader and what they believe in. This was the lieutenant’s day, but she shared it with everyone in the department. That’s a good thing to see.”

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