

Wilson Co. native becomes Lakewood Chief of Police

By: By HILARY TRENDA

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Photo by Dallus Whitfield
K. D. Smith

August 5, 2008 – After 24 years in law enforcement, K.D. Smith has met one of the goals he set for his career path.

The Wilson County-native has been the Lakewood Chief of Police for just a week now, but he said he's ready for the challenge.

"I had my goals set and achieving the rank of chief in some department was one of my goals," he said. "I was fortunate enough to get [the position] and I'm trying to do my best at it."

Smith worked in the Lebanon Police Department for 20 years and said the decision to make a career for himself in law

enforcement was an easy one.

"My family's been involved in it ... my dad's been in law enforcement. I just fell into it and have enjoyed it."

While at LPD, Smith was named officer of the year in 2005 and received two life-saving awards.

The past two years were spent at Mt. Juliet's Police Department, and Smith said he was glad to be able to take the job of Lakewood's chief and still stay in the area.

"I wanted to stay close due to my kids in the area. One just graduated and one's still in school."

His son, Tyler, is 16 and plays football for Watertown. His daughter, Chelsey Jones, 18, recently graduated and moved to Florida. "She may be pursuing a career in law enforcement."

Smith's parents, sister and brother-in-law all live in the Watertown area as well.

While Smith is excited to have reached one goal, he already has a list of things he'd like to work towards in his new department, as well as numerous things to adjust to.

"I'm learning the different procedures right now. Coming from Wilson County and how they do booking procedures, Davidson County is totally different," he said. "Everything from procedures using the radio, codes, booking, everything is different."

Smith has four full-time officers, two part-time and three reserve officers to oversee, and he said the responsibility can be daunting.

"The responsibility does make you nervous. It's a small department but you've still got responsibility for the officers and liability," he said.

"But I'm trying to make sure things are done right day-to-day ... I've got a good bunch of guys. They're ambitious, and very knowledgeable, which makes my job a lot easier. We've got a good working relation already."

With the help of his officers, Smith said he wants to break the stigma of "Speed-trap City" that Lakewood currently has. He estimated that in a month's time, officers write 150-200 speeding citations.

"That's one thing we're working on. Speeding kills and it is a violation, but instead of being real nit-picky, we're going to start focusing on more serious issues," he said. "Red lights, stop signs, following too closely, stuff that could be avoided real easily."

Smith also said he want to improve the relationship the Lakewood Police Department has with its residents.

"One of my main goals is bringing the relationships with citizens back to a level where it should be. I'll be trying to get officers to interact more, be seen out on patrol more," he said.

"The main thing is building the image of the police department back up to a high level of professionalism. That the citizens of Lakewood can be proud of."

"We're also going to focus a lot on drugs, put an emphasis on the drugs coming through. I'd like to get the image of 'Don't bring them through here because you'll get caught and go to jail,'" he said.

"We have a lot of complaints from citizens in certain parts of town. It's hard with only so many officers on the street at a time."

The expansion of the department, while dependent on budgetary issues, is something Smith said he'd like to pursue.

"It's an option I'd like to see addressed in the future because crime is not going away. The more of a presence we put out, it's a deterrent."

Lakewood is home to about 3,500 residents with its 10 road-miles inside city limits, Smith said.

And as the new chief settles into his new role, which he said includes increased paperwork and responsibility both, some things will never change for him.

"In 24 years I've seen and done a lot. [But] I'll still do patrol, write citations, make arrests. One thing I've always said is I'd be a working chief. I'm not going to ask my officers to do anything I wouldn't do," he said.

"I wear the same uniform they do."

Staff Writer Hilary Trenda may be reached at 444-3952 ext. 45 or by e-mail at hilary.trenda@lebanondemocrat.com.