



Arroyo Grande Police Department

MEDIA RELEASE

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ARROYO GRANDE POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

At the conclusion of 2009 the Arroyo Grande Police Department solicited nominations from every member of the Department for Officer of the Year, Civilian Employee of the Year and Reserve Officer of the Year. The nominations are an annual event that culminates in the presentations of awards at the holiday dinner in December sponsored by the Arroyo Grande Police Officers Association.

The 2009 Officer of the Year was awarded to Officer Erik Jensen for his work on a major fraud and theft case. On August 2, 2009 Officer Erik Jensen was dispatched to the Albertson's store at 1132 West Branch Street regarding a report of a found wallet. A "simple" found wallet. Officer Jensen contacted the store manager who told him that a male suspect left a wallet after making a purchase with a check earlier in the morning. When the store manager searched through the wallet in an attempt to contact the individual he believed to be the owner, he discovered that the California driver's license appeared to be fraudulent and that there were several credit cards in the wallet that appeared to belong to other individuals.

What began as a "simple" found wallet quickly evolved into a major investigation. In the wallet Officer Jensen discovered multiple California drivers' licenses that appeared to be counterfeit along with credit cards and checks in several names. As Officer Jensen continued his investigation he learned that one of the female names on the credit cards in the wallet was linked to a male suspect residing in Ventura, California who had been arrested by the Ventura Police Department in June 2009 for identity theft, check fraud and possession of stolen property and who had an extensive criminal history of producing and using poor quality counterfeit driver's licenses and checks to make fraudulent purchases, theft, burglary and narcotics offenses.

Similar to peeling an onion, Officer Jensen's investigation continued to unfold, revealing layer after layer of additional fraudulent identities, driver's licenses and credit cards used to make multiple purchases throughout the area. Most of the purchases were made using fictitious identities defrauding multiple businesses of money and property.

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On August 12, 2009 Officer Jensen, assisted by other officers from the Arroyo Grande Police Department and the Ventura Police Department, deputies from the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, and agents from the United States Postal Service Police served a search warrant on the suspect in Ventura. The result of the search warrant service was the seizure of a massive quantity of apparent counterfeit drivers' licenses and checks, fraudulently obtained credit cards, equipment used to produce the fraudulent identifications, and stolen property. The suspect was located at the residence and arrested for multiple offenses and counts including 2nd degree commercial burglary, fraudulent use of another person's identity, and forgery.

The investigation continued for several weeks. Officer Jensen's investigation of the "simple" found wallet mushroomed into a major intricate and intertwined case investigation involving at least 44 identified victims from San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles Counties with police agencies from multiple jurisdictions in those counties expressing an interest in the suspect. Even the United States Secret Service joined in the investigation.

In addition, Officer Jensen is responsible for conducting regular compliance checks on sex offenders in Arroyo Grande to verify the information they provide during their annual registrations and to ensure that the Department is aware of their location.

The 2009 Civilian Employee of the Year was awarded to Support Services Technician Rebecca "Becky" Milton for her outstanding support in facilitating major changes in report writing and crime reporting procedures throughout the Department. These changes had a significant impact on the ability of the patrol officers and detectives to provide police service to the community. Without Support Services Technician Milton's willingness and ability to share her considerable experience and expertise in the records function, the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire organization would have been negatively impacted.

The 2009 Reserve Officer of the Year was awarded to Reserve Detective Michael "Doc" Zigelman. Since 1991, Reserve Detective Zigelman has served the City of Arroyo Grande as a volunteer and part-time employee of the Arroyo Grande Police Department. Retiring from his position as Medical Director for Mission Medical in 2000, Zigelman continues to devote more time and energy to cyber crimes where his medical background is a great asset during child pornography investigations.

Reserve Detective Mike Zigelman of the Arroyo Grande Police Department completed a two-week training seminar on personal computer forensics and advanced investigations sponsored by the Advanced Training Center of the California Department of Justice. The advanced training seminar was the culmination of a six-course training series dealing with high-tech crime investigations, Internet investigations and computer forensics. As part of the training, each trainee personally constructed and used an advanced computer forensics work station funded by a California Department of Justice grant.

On a side note, in addition to his efforts as a Reserve Detective and a Medical Consultant, Zigelman serves as the President of the San Luis Obispo Symphony.

On August 28, 2009, Reserve Detective Michael Zigelman was honored with "Distinguished Service Award" from the California Reserve Peace Officers' Association at the Reserve Peace Officer's Conference in San Diego.