

OUR TOWNS Cedar County

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New Hartington Police Officer Feels At Home



Officer Mark Simpson, a recent hire of the Hartington Police Department, said he's enjoyed getting to know area residents during his first month on the job.

Simpson Aims To Work With Local Youth

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON
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HARTINGTON, Neb. — After having spent just more than one month on the job, Hartington's newest police officer, Mark Simpson, said he has been won over by the area's small-town atmosphere.

"I really like small towns," he said. "I grew up in a town of 800 people, and I've always liked small towns because everybody knows everybody. It's a good way to keep your family protected, a good way of getting to know people."

The Bridgeport, Calif., native started work in Hartington on June 3. Previous to that, he worked for 15 years in St. George, Utah.

"I started out as a beat cop and was in corrections for a couple years, and then I did patrol," Simpson said. "I've been on the investigation side for approximately 10 years of my career. Most of the time I've done undercover work."

Simpson also worked as a firefighter and EMT. He has a degree in criminal justice from Southern Utah University, and is currently working on a master's degree in emergency preparedness and response management.

"I stayed pretty busy," he said. Coming to Hartington has offered a welcome change of pace, which was part of what brought him here.

"I love small towns, and I wanted my family to grow up in a small town," Simpson

said. "The safety factor is a good thing. Being in a big town, there's a lot of variables. You have to watch your kids, watch your family, and make sure everything is safe. Being a police officer, of course, there were a lot of duties that I could harm myself (performing)."

Some of what Simpson did in Utah involved area youths. He said this was the most rewarding aspect of his work, and something he hoped he could continue.

"I gave seminars, teaching kids positive thinking, talking about date rape and all sorts of other things to help the youth," he said. "I think one of the things I'm looking forward to is getting to know the youth here and continuing that — teaching them and helping them through their time as teenagers."

He also taught month-long self-defense classes for girls.

Before he came to Hartington, he said, "I would still have people come up to me who were in some of my classes back in the day and thank me for being there for them at a rocky time, being available when they needed me. It's interesting to have a cop on your side when you're that young, feeling that you have somebody who's that type of authority that you can go to when something goes wrong."

Police work is in Simpson's genes. "My grandfather was the sheriff in Orange County, Calif., and hearing his stories growing up got me interested in it," Simpson said.

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MARK SIMPSON

"I always wanted to follow in his footsteps because he was a really good man. He inspired me. He's one of my heroes."

Although he's been on the job for only a short time, Simpson said he is already getting to know a lot of Hartington residents.

"I've been asked to come over and eat dinner at a couple places, and that's been nice," he said. "People have been really kind and courteous. I've walked into a store, and people come over and say 'hi,' and in your normal town if they see you're an officer they don't come to you. They walk the way most of the time."

That positive relationship is crucial in maintaining an effective police department, Simpson said.

"Most of law enforcement is just mere presence, just being out there and being seen," he said. "Here in this town, you just get out there and talk to people, get to know them. Then they get to know you. A department can function to the best of its ability when they are supported by their community, and this community seems to support us pretty well."

SCHOOL

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said. "One thing I have noticed is that every year, people start looking for back-to-school items earlier and earlier."

Simpson agreed saying: "Getting ready for back-to-school begins with the buyers. They are out there trying to find the trends before we know what the trends are and making sure we have the products that kids are going to want here in the store when they are looking for it."

Simpson said that Kmart has been receiving a lot of fun, bright colors coming in with the school supplies this year, a trend that he even sees in the back-to-school items for college students such as furniture and home goods.

While Ace does not focus specifically on school supplies, it also gets into the back-to-school market by focusing on bringing in products that students can use,

primarily college-age students for use in their dorm rooms.

"We have organizers, locks and maybe most importantly, we have the battery store," Barton said. "People don't realize how important having access to the proper batteries can be. For students heading to college, it can be a very big deal. Parents like to make sure that their children heading off for the first time have everything they need. That might mean buying them jumper cables (for vehicles)."

When it comes to making sure the stores have the proper items for the local schools in the area, it falls back to the schools themselves.

"The schools are great that, at the end of the school year they send us lists of what the students will need the following fall when they come back to school," Bent said. "We then try to make sure we have all of the items in stock when families are getting ready for back-to-school."

The store managers all said that having those lists accessible for parents when they come into

the store is a huge advantage for parents.

"When they can come in and grab the lists without having to search for them, it is an advantage," Ekeren said. "Parents look for the lists. It also helps us to get them early so we can forward the lists on to our buyers to make sure we have all of the items on hand."

One change, Bent said, is that where in the past families would typically come in and purchase all of the back-to-school items in one trip, he is now seeing the

purchases spread out over an more expanded period of time.

"They may come in and pick up colors and pencils in one trip because they see that there is a great sale price on them," he said. "So it becomes very important to make sure they know what we have in the store."

To find out the specific items your child needs for back to school in the Yankton school district visit www.yak.k12.sd.us or look for the lists in area stores.

All Types of Bed Pillows
(feather, foam, down, etc.)

In & Out the same day
Friday, July 9th

Link Auditorium • 5th & Capitol
Doors are open from 8:30am-3pm

Make your pillows look like new.
Completely renovated with new ticking
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Fri. 7:30 PM • Sat. 7:30 PM • Sun. 4 PM
Students \$2.00 Adults \$4.00

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Tripp, SD

Celebrate
Summertime
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Enjoy
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Open Thursday, Friday
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3 salads • 2 soups • 2 pastas
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Each person to receive Play \$50, get \$50 FREE PLAY
on your rewards card. Plus, \$5 off meal coupon, ride and room.

All for \$50 each
(double occupancy)

For Reservation/Info:
HENNEN TOURS
1-800-551-5275

Bus will leave from Fry'n Pan Restaurant
on July 25 at 1 p.m.
(pick-up also available in Vermillion)

VFW Post 791
209 Cedar

Thursday

5-7pm - Hamburger/
Pizzaburger & Fries \$5.00
6-7pm - Domestic Beers
\$1.00

Friday

Brats, Baked Beans,
Potato Salad or Menu
Serving 5:30-8:00

Saturday

Kenny Carlow
Serving from Menu 5:30-8:00
Singles Dance - Basement
Soundz Unlimited

Bingo Wed. at 7:00pm
Sunday at 6:30pm
Happy Hour M-F 4:30-6:00

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Saturday, July 17th

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Nightly Specials at Magilly's!

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Buy One Burger Get One 1/2 Off
\$2 "Two-sdays" Pints, Wells & Domestic

Wednesday
Wing Wednesday 30¢ Per Wing
Ride On Down For "Budweiser Bike Night"
\$1.50 Bud & Budlight Bottles

Thursday
Nachos Night 1/2 Price Nachos
1/2 Price Mexican Beer
Ladies Night Lakeside Drink Specials

Friday
"Dock"tails \$5 Dock Drinks 5-9pm

Saturday
The Captain Is In! \$3 Captains 5-9pm

CLIP & SAVE

NO PARK PASS NEEDED FOR MAGILLY'S

Yankton Children's Theatre Company

STUART LITTLE

Summit Theatre, Yankton High School
7:30 July 8 - 10 • 2:00 July 11

TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE BY CALLING
YCTC 605-689-0401
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ADULT \$10, CHILD (18 & 4) \$5, AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR