

Captain Burnett Awarded the "Richard A. Maxwell Regional Award of Merit for Public Safety" - North Kern News

About Vincent Martinez 188 Articles



As a journalist, I am supposed to remain objective. But every once in a while I have the opportunity to write about someone I respect and admire so much that impartiality goes out the window.

Captain Diana Burnett of the Shafter Police Department was recently awarded the "Richard A. Maxwell Regional Award of Merit for Public Safety" at the Kern Council of Governments Regional Awards Event.

Shafter Mayor Gilbert Alvarado said:

"Captain Burnett in receiving this award was much deserved. She has dedicated herself to the safety of our community for over 20 years and has set a good example for other women in the department as well as young women who would like to pursue a career in law enforcement. She is a great asset to the Shafter Police Department as well as to our community. "

Captain Burnett has 27 years of Service with the Shafter Police Department and she has been a trailblazer the entire time. Captain Burnett was Shafter's first female Senior Officer, first female Sergeant, first female Lieutenant, the first female Captain and the Departments first female Acting Chief.

Captain Burnett joined the police department when Shafter had a population of only 7,000 people.

Shafter Mayor Pro-Tem Cesar Lopez said:

"Captain Burnett is a very valuable part to our amazing Shafter Police Department. In her 27 years with the department she has broken many barriers that have helped other police officers and the community is forever grateful for her service. Today March 8 is International Women's Day and she is an amazing example of what women can accomplish. Captain Burnett is a true leader in her field, and she is irreplaceable. "

Business owner and Shafter Recreation and Parks Board Member Lorena Ayon said:

"Captain Burnett is such a great person, not only as an officer but also as a community member. She definitely deserved this award. She is a well-respected officer here in Shafter. I love the fact that she is an officer who lives in the city of Shafter. She not only protects the people in the town she lives in, but she also serves her community in any way that she can and I admire that about her. She always has a smile on her face. I always find it a pleasure speaking to her. She always

shows professionalism and loyalty to her community. She is a prime example of a role model for not only our youth but our community as a whole. Thank you, officer Burnett for everything you do, as it does not go unnoticed. Congratulations and continue the great work that you do!"

Chief Of Police Kevin Zimmermann said:

"Captain Burnett represents a small yet distinguished group of law enforcement professionals who served the residents of Shafter for the better part of three decades. It is truly Captain Burnett's commitment to service that sets her apart and it is within that spirit of service that makes her singularly deserving of this recognition."

I first met Captain Burnett nearly 20 years ago when I was a brand new 22-year-old Deputy Sheriff assigned to the Buttonwillow Substation. My youth and inexperience frequently got me in a tight spot. Back then it was Sergeant Burnett, who would often times lead the Calvary to my aid in Smith's Corner.

Every time I was in need of help Captain Burnett would show up and say the same thing "Vince, whatever you need just let me know. But before we go do this, did you think about...". Captain Burnett then would ask me a series of questions. At the time I didn't know what she was doing, I just thought she asked a lot of questions. But what I realized later in life is Captain Burnett never told me I was wrong. She never told me I was about to make a tactical or investigative mistake. Instead, she would ask me a series of questions and let me work out the problem on my own. Because of inexperience there were often times things, I simply had not considered. But she always let me come to that conclusion on my own.

That's what a good leader does. They don't tell people what to do, they give the people around them the tools, knowledge and confidence to make the right choices on their own.

Captain Burnett was not my supervisor, we didn't even work in the same department. But she saw a young, inexperienced kid who wanted to make a difference around the town she called home, who was eager to learn. And if you know Captain Burnett, she will always take the time to guide and mentor anyone who wants to learn.

I always admired that about Captain Burnett and I tried to emulate her management style later in life, but I was always much less successful at it than her. For her, it was just natural.

I have had the opportunity to watch Captain Burnett work in the community of Shafter for two decades now. During that time, I have come to realize for all of Captain Burnett's accomplishments and trailblazing, to me her greatest success is earning the trust of the community in which she serves and the respect of her peers. That's not an easy thing to in law enforcement these days, but Captain Burnett has set an example for everyone to follow. This is a much-deserved award, congratulations Captain Burnett.