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City Recognizes PVNET for Web Work

By Michelle Fisher
Special to the News

In today's computer age, it is vital that organizations open their electronic doors as well as their physical doors to reach the public. One Rancho Palos Verdes nonprofit has helped the Peninsula cities make their government more accessible to residents. Now, thanks to the Palos Verdes on the NET computer technology center, the Palos Verdes Estates Police Department has opened its virtual doors to the community as well. Earlier this month, the PVE City Council formally recognized the computer center — and, specifically, director Ted Vegvari and Pamela Piller — for designing the city's web site and that of the PVEPD, the

latter's free of charge.

Assistant City Manager Judy Smith says that when the city decided it was time to launch a web site, they chose PVNET because of Vegvari's extensive experience working with five South Bay cities and hundreds of organizations. "PVNET has been a great service to the community, especially for [Vegvari's] work with the city in creating the web sites. He was very generous with his time and what he charged us," Smith says.

Police Chief Timm Browne commends Vegvari for not only building the department's site but also for helping to conceptualize it. At the outset, Browne involved the captains and command staff in brainstorming about what type of

information the site should contain. Vegvari, he notes, was instrumental in helping them to focus their efforts.

"Ted has done a wonderful job of synthesizing all the idiosyncrasies of our department," Browne says. "He really helped us focus on what the true needs were. His experience and knowledge was certainly beneficial to us. For a community of our size — for a department of our size — we have a lot to offer on our web page.

At the main menu, visitors can choose from the following: History, Department, Special Assignments, Community, Humor, Remembrance, Forms, Contact and Neighborhood Watch. With a

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click of the mouse, visitors can learn about the PVEPD's early milestones, its current staff and special assignments, including the bicycle patrol, K-9 program, marine patrol and off-road quad detail. They can access a variety of forms and connect to Neighborhood Watch. They can also have a chuckle.

The Humor page shows photos of police officers armed with water guns and a mug shot of a peacock with the caption "PVE Jail Bird." "You have to be able to laugh at yourself," Browne says.

Browne emphasizes that developing the site was a team effort, with various members of his department contributing to the content. For him, it was especially important to create a site that would welcome, and not intimidate people.

Vegvari agrees, saying, "You want to make police services very friendly, very approachable so that people feel comfortable going to get information from the site."

When Browne first came on board, he says the staff had very limited access to the Internet and rarely used it — something he was eager to change.

"It was important to me to open electronic doors to our community, as well as our physical doors," he says. "We wanted to be as communicative as possible. We wanted to

answer questions community members may have. We wanted to tell them about us and what our mission is and the tools and resources we have to accomplish this mission."

Other features of the PVEPD site include a calendar that is integrated with the city's and a notification system in which subscribers can be apprised of

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upcoming community events. Both Vegvari and Brown point out that the site is still "morphing" and will continue to be upgraded as new needs arise. "We look forward to improving the site over time and adding more features to it," says Vegvari.

Future uses of the site include plans to post bulletins about the new community emergency response training

that the PVEPD will be offering in conjunction with the L.A. Fire Department. Browne says this particular function will be instrumental in dispersing information that must be relayed to residents quickly.

Browne is grateful to Vegvari for his expertise in designing the site and his generosity in doing it for gratis. "You go to other departments our size and you won't find this much information on their sites. We feel very fortunate," Browne says. "The biggest and most important factor is that Ted did this for free because that obviously cost a great deal of his time, effort and knowledge."

But Vegvari says it was his pleasure to lend a hand because the real reward lies in knowing that you've made a difference.

"A community is what you make it," he says. "Every community has limited resources, so when you donate services that may not have been offered otherwise, you are doing a service for your community. When what you've contributed is used and appreciated by the community, you feel validated and proud."

Browne has already received a lot of positive feedback about the web site, even from some of the city's younger residents. "People appreciate the fact that we're online and telling people about ourselves. You'd be surprised how many kids visit it," he says. "It's an affirmation that we're reaching out to them and they appreciate it."