

Just before 10 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 12, 2006, 16-year-old Adrian Valdovinos' young life came to brutal and tragic end in a public restroom at Redlands' *Community Park*. Someone shot him. Someone I'm sure the detectives of the Redlands Police Department will bring to justice. He was the victim of a senseless murder. His family, friends and our community will never be the same. Whenever a young person loses his or her life in such a brutally shocking manner all of Redlands suffers.

For this month's column I had intended to write further about the RPD's interest in "excellent policing work and innovation" in the context of our ongoing efforts to acquire a non-taxpayer-funded airplane to leverage the community's investment in the Police Department. However, as I started writing, I realized the images of his family mourning Adrian's death were too strong for me not to comment on our efforts to bring his killer to justice. For most people, the murder of a young person is an abstract event, restricted to their reading of the tragedy in a local newspaper. But, for those who knew and cared about him, Adrian's murder on Saturday is far too real a nightmare.

I was notified of Adrian's murder via the RPD's electronic *incident notification system* shortly after the first officers arrived at the scene. I responded like many of the RPD executive staff to find the investigation well under way. After a hurried briefing on the events, Lt. Rogelio Garcia, Sgt. Dave Anady and Detective Mark Hardy left the scene for the unenviable task of informing Adrian's parents of his murder. Unless you have ever had to give the heartbreaking news to parents that their child – whom they had seen only an hour before – was never coming home again, you can't possibly understand how deeply this affects caring, compassionate professionals like Garcia, Anady and Hardy. But they have a job to do and they are some of the most professional investigators in policing.

Several hours later I was driving the streets of North Redlands searching, with other officers, for what we thought at the time was the suspect vehicle. In doing so, I drove past Adrian's house and saw 30-40 of his family and friends mourning his death. Words will never adequately describe the scene of utter pain and sadness I witnessed. Nobody's child should ever die like Adrian did.

Since 1998, the year I became Chief, the RPD has solved every one of the city's 18 murders. I have every confidence that, similarly, our detectives will solve this crime. How we do this is a testimony to the dedication and skills of RPD officers and a tribute to the efficacy of our corporate values. When I talk about the department's commitment to "excellent policing" and our "respect for human dignity," I mean it. These values aren't flowery wordsmithing. They are grounded in the realities of policing in Redlands and reflect what we believe is the community's expectation of its Police Department.

Immediately after a murder is discovered in Redlands a significant number of professionals go into action. The department's entire cadre of investigators, all of its forensic services personnel, the entire Multiple Enforcement Team (MET), many, many patrol officers, many members of our Citizen Volunteer Patrol (CVP), our police Explorers and multiple administrators respond. It is not uncommon for 30 or more people

to be involved for the first 24 hours of a murder investigation. At one time almost all of the RPD was involved in the recent Kelly Bullwinkle murder investigation.

Our investigators worked through the night and well into the next evening on this crime. After just a few hours sleep they were back at work until late the following day. In murder investigations, the more time that passes after the crime, without a suspect being identified, the odds against the case being cleared mount exponentially. That's why we throw as many resources into the investigation as fast as we can.

As I write this column three days after Adrian's death, I have an overwhelming sense of sadness, that, yet again, another young life has been senselessly ripped from the fabric of our town. My belief that we'll eventually identify and arrest the person responsible for Adrian's murder does not assuage the brutal reality that another young person will never grow to realize his dreams, bring a tear of joy to his parents' eyes or become a contributing member of our community.

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