

Several years ago, many of you in the downtown -- business owners, employees and customers -- had the pleasure of knowing Henry Echandi, one of the many dedicated officers at the Redlands Police Department. Even if they didn't know his name, almost everyone in the downtown area was aware of the tall, ever-smiling police officer on the bicycle who seemed to be everywhere, all the time.

It was very common for those who needed police service downtown to call Henry on his cell phone before actually calling the Police Department. Working out of the downtown substation, he had essentially become the chief of the "Downtown Redlands Police Department," effectively dealing with problems ranging from kids on skateboards to incorrigible transients, parking problems, vandalism and theft.

Henry was so successful in his role -- and so popular with the downtown community -- that the department's executive staff developed the habit internally of referring to similar positions at the other three police substations, as "Echandis." We did this to honor and recognize the value Henry brought to our community-based, problem-solving policing strategy. We envisioned multiple Echandi-like officers that would serve business people and community members as consistently available points-of-contacts in their business districts or neighborhoods.

One of the most frustrating experiences for people dealing with ongoing crime or disorder problems is the need to repeat their concerns time and again to different officers. Police departments typically deploy patrol officers on rotating shifts. Therefore, if your problem occurs at various times, on various days you will inevitably deal with multiple officers and be required to repeat yourself many times before the issue is finally resolved.

Henry eliminated much of this frustration, becoming as familiar with the needs and concerns of the downtown community as they were with him.

For family reasons, Henry relocated to an Orange County police department a few years ago. He has replicated his success in his new department and we remain close to him today. Unfortunately, after Henry's departure, it took quite a while to replace him. And before his position was filled, other crime issues developed so that by the time his replacement came on board we needed the new officer in a newly developed crime suppression unit.

The downtown Echandi position has remained vacant -- until now.

The department has added three positions, all assigned to the downtown substation. Working exclusively in the downtown area, they will be our modern-day Echandi trio. Those officers are Ric Rincon, Jacinto DeLeon and Eddie Herrera.

These positions were added as a result of a U.S. Department of Justice grant and through the assistance of the Redlands Chamber of Commerce. During the FY2005-06 city budget hearings, Gary McCormick, representing the Chamber as chair of the Public Safety Subcommittee, expressed the Chamber's support for these positions as a way to help keep downtown safe. This is an example of how the Chamber/Police partnership works to help keep Redlands safe.

Rincon works during the day, Monday-Thursday, while DeLeon and Herrera work from approximately 4 p.m. to 2 a.m., Wednesday-Saturday. Contact these officers at the downtown substation (798-7610), RPD dispatch (798-7681), or by e-mail at

businessliaison@redlandspolice.org. They work out of the downtown substation located in the Vons shopping center on Orange Street and patrol downtown on foot, bicycle, Segways and cars.

These officers will be making contact with each downtown business over the next few months. Please be sure to express any concerns you have to them so they can be addressed in an expeditious manner. Sometime, in the not-too-distant future, we hope to develop one of the positions into a fulltime “business liaison officer” who will focus exclusively on the specific safety needs of the business community. I look forward to telling you more about the progress of these officers and the development of the business specialist position.

If you have any comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at 798-7661 or via e-mail at chief@redlandspolice.org.