

Ex-Realtor aids the California Highway Patrol

Volunteers support Napa office in myriad ways

KERANA TODOROV Dec 25, 2013



FRIDAY - DECEMBER 06, 2013 - NAPA, CA - Roger Umbdenstock volunteers weekly for the California Highway Patrol based in Napa. Volunteers, who do not have any law enforcement powers, help officers with a variety of tasks, including delivering documents to the courthouse, helping with traffic control and data entry.

Once or twice a week, Roger Umbdenstock and a fellow California Highway Patrol volunteer hit the road to deliver and pick up documents, making the rounds of courthouses and district attorney offices.

They also take evidence envelopes to the state Department of Justice Laboratory in Santa Rosa. On weekends, Umbdenstock will sometimes enter data for the CHP officers at the Napa unit's headquarters on Freeway Drive.

Umbdenstock, 70, a retired area manager at Coldwell Banker, is one of 19 active CHP volunteers who run errands and do other clerical duties for the officers. The volunteers have no law enforcement powers and work under the direction of the officers.

Umbdenstock enjoys being on the road in a CHP vehicle, now a new Ford Expedition, with a sign on the window that reads “Volunteer.”

Reacting to the sight of a CHP unit, people slow down, buckle their seat belts and drop their cell phones on the road, sometimes all at once, Umbdenstock said. “I like being on the road,” he said.

On average, the volunteers, who wear uniforms, give about 20 hours of their time each month. Umbdenstock, who has been volunteering for more than six years, last month volunteered 63 hours, the group’s second highest number of hours.

His partner on the road, Jack Allen of American Canyon, who also volunteers to clean the office once a week, put in the most hours — 79.

“They see a need and ask, ‘How can we help you with that?’” said CHP Officer Anna Paulson. “It’s a great group of people.”

A former aerospace engineer in Seattle who came to the Napa Valley more than two decades ago, Umbdenstock did not know what to expect when he decided to volunteer after his retirement from Coldwell Banker in 2006.

He had first tried volunteering at Queen of the Valley Medical Center, then read an article about how the CHP used volunteers.

Over time, he got to do more and more, he said. He also got to see more of the county. Traveling with Allen, they talk about “everything and anything,” he said.

When he is not volunteering for the CHP, Umbdenstock enjoys fishing with a friend in his 18-foot boat at Lake Berryessa, Lake Shasta or Clearlake. He does have a short honey-do list at home, mostly dealing with computer issues. And he goes with his wife, Carole Terry, to play golf in Yountville.

Volunteers in the program, which debuted in 2001, have to be at least 50 years old.

Holly Holiday, a longtime volunteer, said the volunteers come from all walks of life. Holiday herself is a retired teacher from the Napa Valley Unified School District.

Others, all of whom are either retired or semi-retired, include a nurse, a few Mare Island workers, a barber, a radio announcer, a pharmacist and a heavy equipment operator. “It makes for such a diversified group. We all have things to share,” Holiday said.

The regular officers show their appreciation by thanking them and including them at social functions, Holiday said. “It’s like a big family,” she said. “You make lifelong friendships.”