2-18-2013

'burg Blogs : 2013 : 02 : 18 : Reporting from the Streets

Chelsea Tatham

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.usfsp.edu/usfsp_news_press_releases

Recommended Citation

Tatham, Chelsea, "'burg Blogs : 2013 : 02 : 18 : Reporting from the Streets" (2013). *USFSP News and Press Releases*. 370.
https://digital.usfsp.edu/usfsp_news_press_releases/370

['burg Blogs »](#)
Reporting from the streets

Posted February 18, 2013 at 4:55 pm by [Chelsea Tatham '14](#)

The inside of the police cruiser

One of the last places most people want to be is inside a police car.

Not me.

I jumped right in. (Don't worry, I was sitting in the front seat.)

Last week I got a chance to ride along with a St. Petersburg Police officer through the neighborhoods of south St. Petersburg.

I was working on a feature story for the USFSP Neighborhood News Bureau, which is both a class and a real, working newsroom run by journalism students. The goal of the class is to report on the people and goings-on of Midtown.

I started my shift with Officer Mike Geil at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb 5, and ended the shift around midnight. Officer Geil is just one of many officers who patrol District 1, which includes most of Midtown.

The city has spent millions of dollars in recent years on infrastructure and economic development to improve the lives of Midtown residents.

The ride-along started off with officer Geil going over basic information about the area and things I should expect to see. The goal of the ride-along was for me to get a better understanding of the area. Officer Geil spoke of the area's challenges and some possible

solutions. He mentioned that one of the main problems in the area is the large number of people loitering in public, especially around liquor stores.

The first call we got was for a high school student accused of stealing a Nintendo Wii.

At first, I didn't want to get out of the car when we arrived at the student's home, but Officer Geil wanted me to "experience what it's really like to be a police officer."

Throughout the rest of the night, Officer Geil and I took myriad calls ranging from harassment to a mysterious vehicle and person parked near a creek. He also showed me where all the "hotspots" were for criminal activity in the area.

Officer Geil also introduced me to Duncan McClellan, owner of the Duncan McClellan glass art studio and hot shop. The glass studio is one of Officer Geil's favorite hangouts. He has come to appreciate McClellan's art and often visits other nearby artists. The ride-along ended with him showing me the oldest cemetery in St. Petersburg. Some of the graves date back to the Civil War and the late 1800s.

One of the most interesting parts of this experience was learning about the forms of communication that the officers use and how quickly they can get a call, answer it, resolve it and report it. Officer Geil's laptop rests where the center console would be. Surrounding the laptop are various radios and speakers, and near the rearview mirror were controls for the lights and sirens. (I was really tempted to press the siren button when he wasn't looking).

I hope I won't be seeing the inside of a police car again unless I am on another ride-along. As a student journalist, this was a great way for me to be involved with something that not many people ever get to experience. I got the opportunity to tag along during a police officer's shift while also learning about a community from the eyes of someone who has spent the last six years patrolling the area.

I shared a night shift with Officer Geil

About the blogger

I'm a senior majoring in Mass Communications. As a student journalist, I work for The Crow's Nest student newspaper as the Creative Director. I enjoy anything and everything that has to do with journalism, especially design and feature writing. Having been born and raised in Florida, I enjoy the beach, native wildlife, and learning about Florida's history. I'm also left-handed and an only child so I'm sort of an oddity.