

BIOGRAPHY - ALMEIDA

Mabton welcomes new chief and officer

BY JANE MARES

Captain Raul Almeida was made acting chief of the Mabton Police Department in September of 1995. He immediately began to make changes within the department which are a microcosm of changes being made in police departments in large cities all over the nation.

In a letter to his men, Almeida quoted from the writings of author Charlie Harrington, "Making a Difference". As the old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Finally, catching up to the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun. "But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish," countered the other. "How can your effort make any difference?" The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and threw him safely in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said.

This is the hallmark of Almeida's approach to police work -- one person can make a difference.

He is a proponent of foot and bike patrols and freeing up officers from the isolation of squad cars. Almeida has made it clear that the changes he has made are not quick fixes to a deep-rooted problem, but are the beginning of a new and better rapport between the citizens of Mabton and the police de-

partment.

Almeida recently welcomed Ruben Bayona 38, to the Mabton Police Department as a new full-time officer.

Bayona, 38, was born in Piramarca, Peru. He graduated in Lima, Peru. At the age of 20 he moved to the United States, and later became a U.S. citizen. He has been married to his wife Helen for 16 years and they have three children.

Bayona has been a reserve officer for the Pasco Police Department for the past five years. He has been pursuing a degree in criminal justice at Columbia Basin College, while working as a nuclear technician at Siemens Power Corp.

In his spare time Bayona enjoys jogging and camping with his family. He said he is looking forward to serving the community of Mabton.



Mabton's acting police chief, Raul Almeida left welcomes Ruben Bayona formerly of Peru, as a new officer in the Mabton Police Department. (Photo by Jane Mares)

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