

# SANDOVAL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT YEAR 2022

Teamwork

Respect

Integrity

Stewardship

Professionalism

Safety

Mutual Trust

Transparency

Accountability

Proudly Serving  
Since 1903





# **MISSION STATEMENT**



*The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office is committed to working in a partnership with individuals, communities, businesses, and other divisions and agencies to provide **Safety and Quality Service** in order to promote a high quality of life for the people of Sandoval County. This will be accomplished through fair enforcement of the law and diligent defense of the rights of all. The Sheriff, deputies and staff strive to provide professional services to the public in an effective, efficient and timely manner through communication, consideration and cooperation.*



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- END OF WATCH



# ***ABOUT SANDOVAL COUNTY***

## **County History**

Sandoval County has a rich culture and was a thriving area centuries before Don Francisco de Coronado explored and camped near present-day Bernalillo in 1540. Prehistoric artifacts in many areas of the County date back thousands of years, with archaeological finds suggesting that Sandia Man lived and hunted in the area thousands of years ago.

The area consisting of modern-day Sandoval County was included in one of two partidos, or districts, created in the New Mexico territory. It became part of Santa Ana County, one of seven political subdivisions created in 1852. Sandoval County was first established as a separate entity on March 10, 1903, nine years before New Mexico's statehood. The area that forms Los Alamos County was separated from Sandoval County in 1949.

## **County Today**

Today, Sandoval County encompasses 3,714 square miles of diverse geography and has a population of approximately 140,000 people. It includes the incorporated municipalities of Bernalillo, Cuba, Corrales, Jemez Springs, Rio Rancho and San Ysidro, as well as numerous unincorporated communities, all or portions of seven Indian pueblos, and all or portions of six Tribal entities/lands.

## **Sheriff's Office General Information**

60 Sworn Deputies

5 Court Security Officers

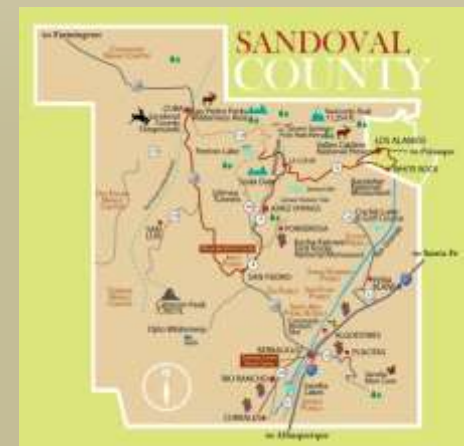
2 Animal Control Officers

5 Civilian Support Employees

1,516 Miles of Maintained Roads that are patrolled

3,714 Square Miles in Size

13 Pueblos and Tribal Entities/Lands we assist with Law Enforcement concerns



## MESSAGE FROM THE SHERIFF

I am extremely pleased that in a world of negative media coverage of law enforcement and in many cases a negative public perception of law enforcement, the resident of Sandoval County have stood strong and resilient in supporting the Sheriff's Office and the Law Enforcement professional that work in Sandoval County. I believe the men and women of the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office is our most valuable asset and I am proud to lead them and for the work they accomplish.

***In 2022, Deputy calls for service increased 15+%. Due to Deputies initiative and hard work categories such as Self-initiated area, Business and Home Checks increased 24%, Traffic Stops increased 36+% percent and Assisting Other Agencies increased a whopping 66+%. Working harder and Working together with our partners, attributed to countless crimes being solved and prosecuted, including several violent crimes and drug trafficking individuals and organizations. In most categories, crime in Sandoval County has either been lower or flat when compared to previous years. (Highlighted in this report)***



Additionally, as your Sheriff I am committed to transparency and maintaining public trust. In 2022 the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office fully implemented the use of Body Worn Cameras. The cameras have proven invaluable in recording deputy's actions, resolving complainants and providing transparency. The majority of Deputies favor wearing the body-worn cameras which has proven to keep *good deputies safe from false and malicious complaints and document the great job the deputies do for the community*

While I am proud of our accomplishments, I recognize many variables that contribute to Sandoval County being a safe place where people want to live and work. The strong support from the County Manager and County Commissioner's, and community support and partnerships with the citizens throughout Sandoval County are clearly reflected in our ability to help keep Sandoval County safe.

*This report was completed by Chief Deputy Mills, designed to provide you noteworthy and transparent information regarding how we carry out our responsibility to protect you and your families.*



## Frequently asked questions regarding the Sheriff's Office.



*Our dedicated employees serve the citizens of Sandoval County 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We are committed to providing the public with the quickest, most efficient response to emergency calls and respond to “all” essential calls for service. The Sheriff's Office does not screen calls for service and as a matter of practice, a Deputy will be dispatched in person to all calls. However (in a non-emergency) there are times when it is appropriate to ask the dispatcher to speak to a Sheriffs Supervisor. If a Sheriffs Supervisor is not immediately available, the dispatcher will take your information and a Sheriffs Supervisor or Deputy will return your call as soon as possible. For non-emergency questions during business hours you can call the Sheriff Office at 505-867-7526.*

### Who am I calling when I dial 911 or the non-emergency number 505-891-7226?

The Sandoval County Regional Emergency Communications Center (SCRECC) receives and dispatches all sheriffs, police, fire, medical, and animal control emergency 911 and non-emergency calls for Sandoval County. Dispatchers are highly trained to send the appropriate type and number of emergency services units in response to your calls for assistance. Please remember, you are not talking to a Sheriffs employee when you call dispatch, SCRECC is a separate agency from the Sheriff's Office. If you are seeking information regarding an incident, reports, or an issue of concern or other questions more appropriate for a Deputy, **and it is a non-emergency issue**, please call the Sheriff's Office directly at 505-867-7526, during business hours.



## Where do I find Information on the internet, regarding the Sheriff's Office & Services the County provides?



[www.sandovalcountynm.gov](http://www.sandovalcountynm.gov) is the Counties Official web site. The web site has “Quick Links” that are helpful in answering frequently asked questions.



The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office, County Web Page, [www.sandovalcountynm.gov/elected-officials/scso/](http://www.sandovalcountynm.gov/elected-officials/scso/) is also full of information about the Sheriff's Office and has links specific for:

- *Sheriff's Office Record Request "How you get a copy of a report".*
- *Submitting a Tip!*
- *Sheriffs Facebook page*
- *Sex Offender registry "How you find out if a sex offender lives in your neighborhood?"*
- *Dialogue with a Deputy*
- *And various information about the Sherriff's Office.*



## Common Questions from Residents



### **At times, I see Sheriffs Units sitting in parking lots or rest areas for long periods of time.**

*Deputies complete reports on a mobile terminal in their unit, and also complete Law Enforcement training on the computer that is required to retain certification. Completing these duties while remaining parked and available in the community, allows a visible deterrent and a quicker response to an emergency.*

### **Will the Sheriff's Office check my residence while I am out of town?**

*Yes, the Sheriff's Office conducts vacation checks as a part of its preventative patrol program. To set up a vacation check, simply go to the link on the Sheriffs County Web Page "Submit a Close Patrol Request Form"*

### **When I call to report something, do I have to give my name?**

*No. It is not required, however, leaving your name and a phone number is appreciated and allows a Deputy to follow-up with the caller on the information you provided.*

### **Why do we sometimes see City or Town Officers conducting police activity in the unincorporated areas of the County?**

*Law enforcement agencies within Sandoval County work as a team and this benefits everyone involved. On occasion, the Sheriff's Office requires assistance from municipal or state agencies for certain issues, an example would be a multicar crash incident, search for a dangerous felon, SWAT or Bomb situation, etc.*

### **Why do we sometimes see Deputies in Rio Rancho, Town of Bernalillo or the Village of Cuba.**

*Sandoval County Sheriff's Deputies have authority anywhere within Sandoval County and adjoining jurisdictions. This includes, inside the city of Rio Rancho, Town of Bernalillo, Village of Cuba etc.*

### **Information on Free Roaming Horses in Placitas.**

*Information regarding the Free Roaming Horses in Placitas can be found in the Animal Welfare Programs & Services area of the **Community Services Link**.*





## **INTERESTING FACTS**

### **“YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK”**



**Unlike cities, towns or villages, the money as the result of Citations Issued by Sheriff’s Office Deputies do not generate revenue for the Sheriff’s Office or the County. All monies collected in Magistrate Court go the State General Fund. The reality is, a ticket written to a traffic offender ultimately comes at a cost for the County in wages for the Deputy, the cost of maintaining a marked unit, the cost of court time for the Deputy, etc.**

**Communities throughout Sandoval County frequently ask for additional Traffic Enforcement specific to perceived problem of speeding or aggressive driving.**

- The Sheriff Office has a multipurpose message Traffic Speed Radar Trailer that can be deployed to help calm traffic and increase speed awareness and also collects data such as real time speeds that can be evaluated.**
- Specific Traffic Operations outside the normal traffic enforcement of patrol deputies comes at a cost. An example is, a (3)three day Specific Traffic Enforcement Operation at the beginning of the new year cost an additional \$1,285.55 in overtime wages for the operation time, along with the cost of maintaining a marked unit, the cost of court time for the Deputy, etc. An operation of this type netted 3 arrests one of which was a DWI arrest, 57 Traffic Citations and 41 contacts with drivers. The Sheriff’s Office must manage overtime and evaluate special requests based on complaints and actual speed data collected.**



# 2022 End of the Year Overview



**Recruiting & Hiring:** One of the many issues facing the law enforcement community today is staff turnover and 2022 has proven to be another challenging year. The negative climate surrounding law enforcement has hastened retirements along with aggressive recruiting by surrounding agencies promising greener grass and large sign up bonuses. Patrol Deputy Attrition rate in 2022 was 27%, which is a slight decrease over 2021, which is good news however When a Patrol Deputy resigns there is lag time in hiring and then a training process that can be as short as 30 days and as long as 6 months depending on the experience of the hire. All this creates a lack of available manpower that effect minimum staffing level of a patrol shift. This cycle has prevented the Sheriff's Office from ever being fully staffed in the last 15 years. A Goal for 2023 is to work with the County Manager and HR to develop a strategy to address deputy turnover and maintain a full or stable manpower number.

**New Public Building:** We are excited the New Public Safety Building, which will house the Sheriff's Office is on schedule for completion before the end of the year. Our current facility is cramped, has been refashioned and remodeled numerous times in order to adapt to the needs of the employees and the ever changing needs of the Sheriff's Office. The new building is being constructed with larger, more flexible spaces that can be arranged to create common areas or office space. The new building was also designed to accommodate future expansion as the Sheriff's Office grows.



**Court Security Officers:** In 2022, two additional Court Security Officer were approved, bringing the total number of Court Security Officers to (5)-five. The Court Security Officers have arrest powers while on the Sandoval County Administrative Campus and assist in the day to day duties in the Civil Division.

**Court Security Officers Promoted to Deputy Cadet:**

In an effort to encourage professional development, the Sheriff has the prerogative to promote a qualified candidate from a Sheriff’s Office Court Security position to Deputy Sheriff’s Cadet. In 2022, (2)-two Court Security Officers promoted to Deputy Cadet graduated the CNM Law Enforcement Academy. Deputy Benjamin Zerby and Deputy Tommy Romero are now Sandoval County Deputies patrolling their community. Two addition Court Security Officers are currently in the 2023 CNM Law Enforcement Academy scheduled to graduate in May of 2023.



**Marked Sheriffs Units:** Legislator funds from the State were awarded that assisted the County in purchasing 18 marked patrol vehicles and an animal control vehicle which will greatly helped in replacing the aged fleet, as they sporadically arrive in 2023.

**Training Update:** The Sheriff’s Office has continued implementing online training in order to stay abreast of new laws and procedures and best police practices. This initiative has proven its value in allowing a Deputy to train at their own pace, while sitting stationary in a marked vehicle, which has a secondary purpose of providing visibility that deters crime and help deter unlawful traffic behaviors. In addition, Deputies with training skillsets that can train other Deputies in the field have been identified that has allowed additional training in a more efficient manner that allows more deputies in the field in a given shift.



## COMMAND & SUPERVISORY STAFF



**Jesse James Casaus, Sheriff**  
**Joe Gonzales, Undersheriff**  
**Allen Mills, Chief Deputy**

**Jason Benally, Lieutenant** – *Patrol, Traffic Investigations, Fatal Crash Team.*

**Frank Tomlinson, Lieutenant** – *Criminal Investigations Civil Division, Community Services & Animal Control.*

**Bryan Peters, Lieutenant** – *Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit.*

**John Castaneda, Lieutenant** – *Administrative, Professional Standards, K-9 Unit.*



**Scott Holt, Sergeant**- *Patrol*  
**Brandi Kie, Sergeant**- *Patrol*  
**Rene Alvarado, Sergeant**- *Patrol*  
**Orlando Carrillo, Sergeant**- *Patrol*  
**Jonathan Crespín, Sergeant**- *Patrol*  
**Luke Osborn, Sergeant** – *K-9*



**Olga Guymon, Sergeant** – *SORNA & Administrative Investigations*

**Audeliz Nieves, Sergeant**- *Civil Division, Building Security*

**Thomas Griffin, Sergeant** – *Criminal Investigations Division*

**William Dunaway, Sergeant**- *Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit*

**Deputy Anna Wendt** – *SCDC Detention Investigator*

**Deputy Kevin Saiz**- *Assigned Fleet Management & Equipment*

**Deputy Della Murray**- *Assigned Training & Safety Coordinator*

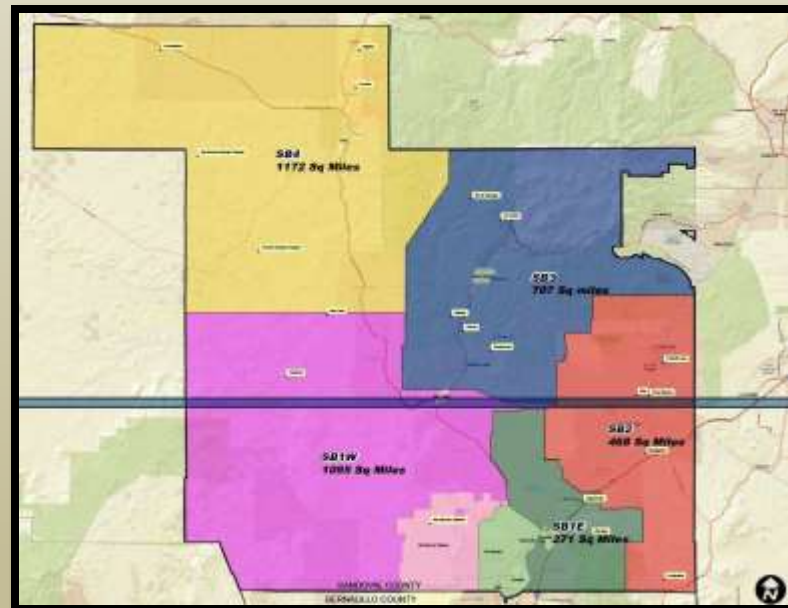


# Patrol Division



Patrol is the largest division in the Sheriff's Office. Patrol is currently made up of three shifts that work around the clock, 365 days a year.

When fully staffed, Patrol is staffed with 26 Deputies & 6 Sergeants. Patrol Deputies are primarily responsible to provide public safety by maintaining order, responding to emergencies, protecting people and property, enforcing motor vehicle and criminal laws, and promoting good community relations.





# DEPUTY INITIATED ACTIVITY CALLS FOR SERVICE



**Total Calls for Service – 23,702** (15.50 % increase of call vs. previous year)

**Alarm Calls – 278** (3.8 % decrease previous year )

**Suspicious Activity Calls- 419** ( 13% increase over previous year)

**Traffic Stops – 6,828** ( 36.7 increase over previous year)

**Motor Vehicle Crash Calls – 598** (21 % increase over previous year)

**Self-initiated Area, Business and Home Checks- 4721** (24 % increase over previous year)

**Calls Assisting Other Agencies- 326** (66.32 % increase over previous year)

**DWI/DUI Arrests – 115** (63.7 % increase over previous year)

**Domestic Violence Calls- 265** (66.6 % increase over previous year)

**Neighborhood Disputes – 37** (7.5 % decrease previous year )

**Total Arrests – 360** (24.5+ % increase over previous year) *The new system counts multiple arrests as a single arrest therefore this number is not counting multiple arrest at the same incident "meaning this number is lower than actual arrests"*

**Animal Control Calls – 484** (67.4+ % increase over previous year)

**Shots Fired Calls – 170** (48% decrease previous year) (Calls are Typically Unincorporated area of the Mesa which Deputies have been aggressively enforcing the County ordinance prohibiting discharge of firearms in certain areas.)



# Crime Statistics At a Glance



## Crime in "Unincorporated" Sandoval County.

### Criminal Homicide:

2017- 4  
 2018- 1  
 2019- 1  
 2020- 5  
 2021- 1  
 2022—1 (Murder suicide)

### Assaults Reported:

2017- 128  
 2018- 109  
 2019- 149  
 2020- 78  
 2021- 22  
 2022- 28- Assault on Peace Officer Incidents -7 total  
*Previous years not recorded.*

### Forcible Rape Reported:

2017-3  
 2018-1  
 2019-1  
 2020-2  
 2021- 0  
 2022- 0

### Robbery Reported:

2017- 0  
 2018- 2  
 2019- 1  
 2020- 2  
 2021- 0  
 2022- 2 total (1 incident was a violent Robbery! Suspect Arrested and Indicted.)

### Auto Burglary:

2017- *Not Recorded.*  
 2018- 31  
 2019- 27  
 2020- 26  
 2021 – 9  
 2022 - 8

*All Auto Burglary cases are assigned to an Investigator and investigated by the Street Crimes Unit.*

### Residential Burglary:

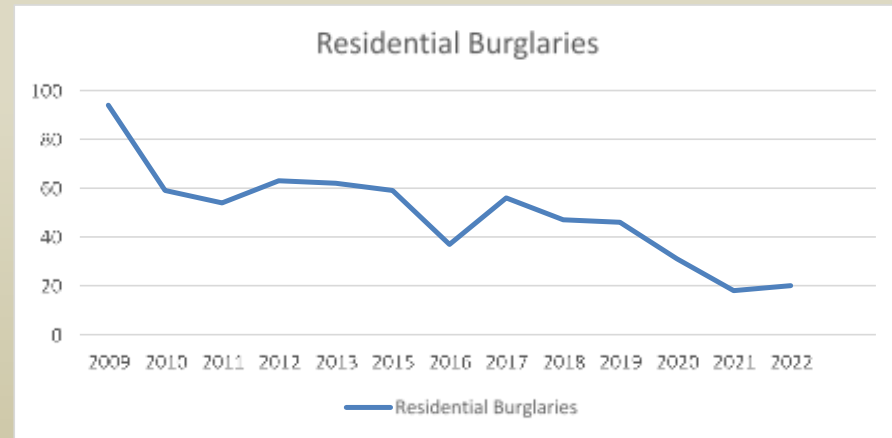
2017- 56  
 2018- 47  
 2019- 46  
 2020- 31  
 2021- 18

*(Residential Burglary is occupied homes and excludes homes under construction or sheds.) All Burglary cases are assigned to an Investigator and investigated by the Street Crimes Unit.*



## Sandoval County's Crime is Typically Lower Than Surrounding Jurisdictions

Property Crimes in the unincorporated areas of Sandoval County have historically dropped over the last decade. Many of the Residential and Vehicle Burglaries over the years and today are committed by drug addicted individuals who were passing through Sandoval County from neighboring communities (Albuquerque, Los Lunas, Belen, Santa Fe) and found themselves in a residential area in the unincorporated area of Sandoval County. Typically these individuals will break into a few homes or vehicles (*Vehicles parked at Hiking Trail Areas are attractive targets*) and don't stay or reside in Sandoval County. The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office assigns each and every Residential Burglary and Vehicle Burglary to an Investigator (*which is not a common practice at surrounding agencies*). This practice has helped to increase the solvability rate of Burglary Crimes. As an example- an Investigator learning a credit card stolen in the burglary was used immediately at a local store. This information leads to a swift identification of the suspect and at times an arrest of the suspect and recovery of stolen property before more crimes are committed. Another common tactic is saturating the area a burglary occurred with marked patrol units for several days or weeks after the burglary in hopes of catching the burglar or at a minimum to detour the burglar from burglarizing again. One question that always comes up when a home is burglarized, is regarding construction workers in the area. Although the presence of construction workers is always taken into consideration, rarely it is found a construction worker is responsible for the burglary. However a residential area with a lot of construction does allow a burglar to blend into the area and it is less likely a citizen will call to report a suspicious person. This is one reason a residential area with ongoing construction might have higher crime and is an area that requires closer patrol by marked units.







### **The Sheriff's Office responds to all calls and incidents.**

Regardless of the type of call, deputies are encouraged to listen and work with citizens to solve problems together. Occasionally a call might not necessarily be a law enforcement problem. However, Deputies are encouraged to be problem solvers, flexible and take the time with a citizen and help the citizen with their problem. Sometimes, this means coordinating with other government or social groups or services that can help with quality of life concerns. This strategy seems simple but extremely important in creating public trust with the community. Time and time again, a citizen who has gained the public trust of the deputies later provides information that helps the community or leads to solving a crime.

### **The Sheriff's Office investigates all incidents and criminal cases.**

The Sheriff's Office has Crime Analytics and Mapping and software tools that assist in following crime trends, and this software has proven helpful, however the Sheriff's Office does not utilize a computer to select what cases are assigned for follow-up investigation, since ALL FELONY CASES ARE INVESTIGATED.

All Felony cases are reviewed telephonically by an on-call Detective/Investigator while a Deputy is on the scene of a crime, regardless of the time of day or night. A decision is made if an Investigator will immediately respond or pick up the case the next day. All Burglary cases and other various Felony cases are assigned to either Criminal Investigations or the Street Crimes unit, in an effort to make sure no incident falls through the cracks. This approach has helped increase the number of incidents solved and prosecuted and creates a stronger relationship between Law Enforcement and the community.

The Sheriff's Office is committed to working with adjoining jurisdictions as a team. The Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit sponsors a bi-weekly Taskforce meeting with local, state, federal and the Office of the District Attorney. Crime trends, individual case, suspect and Teamwork strategies are among the issues discussed. Participants in the Taskforce routinely work together on a common case or group of suspects that are committing crimes that effect multiple jurisdictions.



# Traffic Services Unit



**Traffic Services Deputies work in a partnership with patrol deputies and surrounding agencies to continually improve traffic safety thru enforcement, crash investigation, and special event planning and safety education.**

**Enforcement activities include:** excessive speed enforcement initiatives, road rage and aggressive driving enforcement, BKLUP, Click-It-Or-Ticket enforcement, participation in DUI Task Force initiatives, Placitas “Free-Roaming Horse” corridors traffic enforcement, bicycle safety saturation and drug interdiction operations. In 2022, Sandoval County Deputies arrested 125 impaired drivers (DWI/DUI) and conducted 6,821 Traffic Stops.

Traffic Services Deputies on a daily basis are responsible for the investigations of major vehicle crashes to include fatal collisions. In 2022, Sandoval County Deputies investigated 598 vehicle crashes. Deputies coordinated numerous special events, including funeral motorcade escorts.

**Education activities include:** child safety seat installation events, participating at high schools driver safety events, and social media message via “Traffic Tip Tuesday”.

Throughout the year the Sandoval Sheriff’s Office participates and commits deputies to Safer New Mexico Now programs that enhance roadway safety and help make communities safer.

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# Traffic Fatal Team



When a fatal or serious traffic crash occurs in Sandoval County the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office Fatal Crash Investigation Team is responsible for the investigation. The need for a highly trained and specialized team was brought about by the intricacy of traffic collisions and to further understand complex causal factors. The Fatal Crash Investigation Team consists of a Lieutenant, Sergeant and a Deputies with advanced training in crash investigation and reconstruction. The object of the team is to provide the Sheriff's Office with the tools and knowledge to investigate and analyze major injury or fatal collisions. The goal of the team is to be able to identify the factors and causes of collisions that occur in the County and develop information that may lead to the prevention of further incidents.

Members of the team are deputies assigned to Traffic and other units within the Sheriff's Office. Members can be called in at any time of the day or night for an investigation. They are trained in various levels of collision investigation including At Scene Investigations, Crash Reconstruction, and Mathematical Calculations to Determine Speeds, Skid Mark Analysis and Velocity Calculations. Members are also versed in the use of scanning equipment and computer aided diagramming software. This equipment is used to create a factual diagram of the scene, which can later be used in the reconstruction of a collision or for use in court.

In 2022 team members have investigated 9 fatal injury collisions *"Almost double from last year"* and have assisted the Operations and Investigations Division on numerous crimes scenes. Members are committed to providing quality investigative assistance and to identifying causal factors to help prevent further incidents from occurring in the County of Sandoval.

In addition to collision investigations, team members are available to respond to assist the Operations and Investigations Divisions with homicides or other major cases.





# Criminal Investigations Unit



The Criminal Investigations Division is comprised of highly motivated and trained sworn deputies who provide support in many areas. The division's values of Integrity, Professionalism, Accountability, High Quality Service and Customer Focus are in line with the Sheriff's Office Mission.

Criminal cases requiring further investigation are received in large part from the initial reports taken from deputies while on patrol. Initial Incident reports are submitted to the Criminal Investigations Division and reviewed by the Detective Sergeant for assignment. Detectives are responsible for various types of investigations, which may include: homicide, robbery, burglary, auto theft, identify theft, organized crimes, missing persons, juvenile crime, fraud, narcotics, criminal intelligence, aggravated assault/battery, sexual assault, computer crime, domestic violence, arson, and other various crimes. Detectives spend a considerable amount of time assisting deputies in the field and responding to calls to assist, while maintaining their own caseload. Detectives also utilize several online programs to track property and locate stolen property. Currently, the unit is supervised by a Lieutenant and staffed by one sergeant and a detective.





# STREET CRIMES & INTELLIGENCE UNIT



“THE STREET CRIMES & INTELLIGENCE UNIT”, was created 2019 to address the Sheriff’s mandate to combat the illegal drug problem in Sandoval County, and has been extremely effective. The Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit”, is a multi-purpose unit that could address not only street level drug trafficking, but also other criminal activity. The unit consists of a Lieutenant, Sergeant, & Investigator. The Street Crimes Unit also has an Investigator assigned to the Detention Center (SCDC) that specifically address Narcotic Activity and various Crimes committed within the Detention Center.

*In 2020, the unit also started a Task Force Initiative with the Town of Bernalillo Police, Village of Corrales Police, Rio Rancho Police. The task force has grown to also include, Navajo Nation Police, Santa Anna Pueblo Police, Village of Cuba Police and Federal agencies ATF, DEA with the mission to address not only street level drug trafficking, but also property crimes, specifically burglaries.*

## Street Crimes and Intelligence Unit Crime Activity Stats January 2022 – December 2022

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY/SEIZED	QUANTITY/WEIGHT	STREET VALUE
STOLEN VEHICLES	11	
FIREARMS	26	
WARRANTS	38	
NARCOTICS- HEROIN	81.98g	\$8,198.00
NARCOTICS- FENTANYL	59,042 Pills	\$413,294.00
NARCOTICS- COCAINE	28.94g	\$868.20
NARCOTICS- METHAMPHETAMINE	6,673.3g	\$400,398.00
NARCOTICS- OXYCODONE	108	\$108.00
NARCOTICS- METHADONE	14g	\$37.06
NARCOTICS- PRESCRIPTION PILLS	206	UNK
Narcotic Arrests (Non-Warrant Based)	16	
		<b>TOTAL: \$822,903.26</b>



# CIVIL DIVISION



The Sheriff's Civil Unit is supervised by a Lieutenant and staffed by a Sergeant, (2)-two deputies, (5) Court Security Officers and a civilian Clerk. The Civil Unit provides a wide variety of services for Sandoval County, these include, but not limited to:

- Acts as a messenger of the Courts in all civil matters such as service of civil process, execution of court orders and process service.
- Provides armed Law Enforcement Officers at the County Court House and adjacent county buildings, to ensure the safety of persons and property.
- Provides security for Commission Meetings and County functions.
- Responsible for the court ordered transportation and extradition of prisoners from detention facilities to and from court. Prisoner extraditions can occur as close as a neighboring County to as far as the state of New York. *"It should be noted, the amount of Court ordered transportation and extradition of prisoners from detention facilities to and from court, is a category of duties that increase every year as the County grows in population, and one reason the Civil Division has more Officers this year and will continue to increase in manpower with county population growth."*
- The Sheriff's Civil Clerical personnel process incoming requests for service, enter them into the civil computer system and distribute process service and enforcement actions to the field deputies for completion. Clerical personnel collect money pursuant to wage garnishments, bank levies and other enforcement actions and distribute it to the judgment creditor(s) or a designee towards satisfying the judgment. Clerical personnel also process claims, stays, exemptions and bankruptcies on civil enforcement actions and communicate with the courts to determine dispositions. Clerical personnel maintain records, return writs to the court and distribute proofs of service or service attempt reports to the requester of a service or enforcement action.



# K-9 UNIT



The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office established its K9 Unit in 2019. The current unit consists of Sergeant Luke Osborn, with K9 Maverick Baron Harris and Deputy A.J. Noriega with K9 Titan. In early 2021, K9 Candice (*Narcotic Specific Dog*) was transferred to the Sandoval County Detention Center due to her expertise regarding jail facility searches. K9 Titan (*a multipurpose K9*) was acquired by the Sheriff's Office in 2021 with the assistance and strong support of Commissioner Block. K9 Titan (*a multipurpose K9*) assigned to Deputy A.J. Noriega provides an addition to the K9 Unit that is versatile in many patrol situations and environments that adds a level of safety to Deputies and provides a greater advantage in criminal apprehension.

Both K9s serve an invaluable role assisting the agency and others in the accomplishment of mission objectives. The superior sense of smell, hearing and potential aggressiveness of a trained law enforcement canine is a valuable supplement to law enforcement manpower. Sergeant Osborn and Noriega have a strong commitment to the program. The dogs live with the family of the handler and obey their handlers without hesitation and are able to work under the most stressful situations. The dogs have an innate sense of when they will be required to assist their partner, and they look forward to coming to work.

K9 Maverick and K9 Titan are trained in criminal apprehension, narcotic detection, and tracking. The unit train for real life applications of tracking, building searches, area searches, obedience, suspect apprehensions and anything else a patrol K9 might encounter. Both dogs are specifically trained in the tracking and trailing of fleeing felons and lost children or missing persons. Maverick and Titan are trained in searching large areas or buildings for hiding suspects, and can enter small areas that deputies would not be able to access. They are also invaluable in high-risk situations such as foot chases where the dogs' speed and tracking ability are extremely useful.



The K9 Unit also participates in numerous civilian functions each year. These include school visits and demonstrations at local civic groups, public education programs and recruiting events.

K9 Maverick was donated in 2019, by The Hometown Foundation Inc. who supports Law Enforcement agencies with Police K9s as well as to support them with vital safety equipment and training.



## **SANDOVAL COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL**



**Sandoval County opened a new a new high-quality, climate-controlled tiny animal shelter in 2021, just in time for the alarming spike of homeless pets not only in Sandoval county but nationwide. The addition of the shelter, has significantly increased Animal Protection efforts and has proven to be a lifesaver for many pets. The shelter houses animals, on a short-term basis before they're returned to an owner or transferred to a permanent facility.**

**Sandoval County follows the No-kill, as a philosophical principle, and the Sheriffs Office's partnership with the Community Services Department this year has proven extremely successful in caring for impounded animals and in finding homes for animals that were taken into our custody. In 2022 Animal Control Officers handled a total of 950 calls for service.**







# SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION UNIT



**The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office Sex Offender Registration Enforcement (SORE) Unit, is composed of (1)-one Sergeant, a civilian coordinator and is assisted by Deputies in the field. The SORE Unit registers and keeps track of registered sex offenders "Approximately 140 sex offenders" , through registrations at the Sheriff's Office and home verification visits. SORE also registers offenders on several pueblos. The unit assists Probation & Parole on special enforcement operations, including keeping kids safe "Halloween Operation's".**

*The New Mexico State legislature finds that sex offenders pose a significant risk of recidivism; and the efforts of law enforcement agencies to protect their communities from sex offenders are impaired by the lack of information available concerning convicted sex offenders who live within the agencies' jurisdictions. The purpose of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act is to assist law enforcement agencies' efforts to protect their communities by: requiring sex offenders who are residents of New Mexico to register with the county sheriff of the county in which the sex offender resides; requiring sex offenders who are residents in other states, but who are employed in New Mexico or who attend school in New Mexico, to register with the county sheriff of the county in which the sex offender works or attends school; requiring the establishment of a central registry for sex offenders; and providing public access to information regarding certain registered sex offenders.*



# COLD CASE INVESTIGATIVE TEAM



*The Sheriff's Office is currently working several cold cases, including the 47-year-old murder of Mary Aleta "Molly" Sparks. Sparks, 21, was from Albuquerque and was a recent graduate from the University of New Mexico. She was last seen on July 23, 1975, at Rosa's Cantina in Algodones, New Mexico, where she was to meet with friends and fellow members of an all-female rugby team. Her body was found in a drainage ditch west of the bar on July 24, 1975. The cause of death was blunt force trauma to her head and neck, with possible strangulation. After decades of no leads, the FBI and Sandoval County Sheriff's Deputies are working together to solve the case.*

**The most important component of cold case team is personnel; the team must have the right mix of investigative and supervisory talent. Traits considered essential for cold case investigators include seniority, strong communication and interpersonal skills, strong research skills, patience, creativity, persistence, high motivation level and enthusiasm for the job. The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office Cold Case Team reports to the Chief Deputy and includes a Sergeant and Deputy who possess over 50 years of combined investigative experience.**

**SEEKING INFORMATION**  
**MARY ALETA "MOLLY" SPARKS**  
 Homicide Victim  
 Algodones, New Mexico  
 July 23-24, 1975

Four photographs of Mary Aleta "Molly" Sparks are shown: a color photo of her smiling, a black and white photo of her in a dark coat and hat, a small black and white photo of her, and a black and white portrait of her.

**DESCRIPTION**

Alias: "Molly"	Place of Birth: Albuquerque, New Mexico
Date(s) of Birth Used: March 29, 1954	Height: 5'6"
Hair: Brown	Sex: Female
Weight: 140 pounds	Nationality: American
Race: White	

**DETAILS**

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Albuquerque Field Office, along with the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office in New Mexico, are seeking the public's assistance in identifying the circumstances surrounding the homicide of Mary Aleta "Molly" Sparks in 1975.

Sparks, 21, was last seen on July 23, 1975, between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. at Rosa's Cantina in Algodones, New Mexico, where she was to meet with friends and fellow members of an all-female rugby team.

Her body was found in a drainage ditch west of the bar on July 24, 1975. The cause of death was blunt force trauma to her head and neck, with possible strangulation.

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Albuquerque



# COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM



The Community Relations Team is committed to improving the quality of life within Sandoval County. Many strategies are utilized to fulfill this commitment, including a strong partnership with Patrol Deputies, Traffic Deputies, Detectives, School Resource Deputy, various civilian employees, and supervisors depending on the task. Community Relations Team also works hand in hand with Sandoval County Community Services and the County Public Information Officer.

The team's primary mission is to encourage the concept of partnerships between the Sheriff's Office and the community. Community Relations Team members work with residents, homeowners' associations, citizen advocates, Neighborhood Watch and various community agencies to identify and address problematic issues.

The bond between the citizens and the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office has always been strong and united; with prevention, problem solving and communication between citizens and deputies being key to protecting our community from crime and its consequences.





# TACTICAL RESPONSE TEAM

The Tactical Response Team (TRT) is a group of specially trained deputies that are utilized in a variety of law enforcement situations that exceed the capabilities of standard patrol resources. The TRT is used when circumstances exist that would establish a reasonable belief that there is a potential for violence sufficiently greater than that which would face police officers during normal and lawful execution of duty.

Each Tactical Response Team member must complete a minimum 60 hour Basic S.W.A.T. certification course covering instruction in areas of special weapons applications, tactical operations used in the apprehension of violent individuals, use of force, less than lethal weapons & munitions, search and rescue techniques, and chemical restraints. Each member receives additional training to include defensive tactics, tactical shooting, building entry, tracking an individual in any terrain, land navigation and orientation skills, running sustained operations in rural areas or compromised urban environments and other skills utilized in Search and Rescue (SAR) missions.

Members of the Tactical Response Team serve in other capacities within the agency, and are only called upon as a team during incidents where they are needed. Qualifications to become a member of the Tactical Response Team include successful completion of a rigorous physical agility test, advanced firearms qualifications and work-performance evaluations.





# SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM



Traditionally, Sheriff's Patrol deputies are the first to respond to a lost or missing person. Search & Rescue calls are characterized by constantly changing task demands and collaboration between emergency response agencies, such as Law Enforcement, Fire, Health Services "EMS" and various State and volunteer organizations. The ability to save a life or affect a successful rescue is often dependent upon how quickly a person can be found or reached. In 2019, the Sheriff mandated the creation of a dedicated Search & Rescue Team to improve the agency's abilities to collaborate and coordinate efforts during an emergency. This newly established program is currently staffed with a Lieutenant and (2)-two Sergeants *(Will expand as potential team candidates are trained.)* who have a sufficient understanding of the responsibilities, needs, plans, and capabilities of their own and other participating agencies. A team member will assist deputies in the field as a coordinator, resource manager, etc. and once on scene will be the Incident Commander for the Sheriff's Office. Each team member will have access to resource contact lists regarding specialized personnel with the Sheriff's Office, an example Tactical Tracking Team, K-9 Unit and contact lists for outside agency resources, such as Air Support, High Angle Rescue SAR units, etc. Based on the size and scope of the incident, other responding team members will be tasked with specific tasks and responsibilities depending on the situation, having the ultimate goal of providing additional expertise that assists in a successful rescue.





# PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS



The Professional Standards Unit is an internal administrative investigations unit staffed with personnel who report directly to the Undersheriff and Sheriff. Lieutenant John Castaneda oversees the day to day operations of receiving, tracking and managing the case load of complaints and compliments. To ensure the public's trust and maintain the Offices' integrity, this unit conducts immediate and objective investigations of all complaints. It is essential that all allegations of employee misconduct are thoroughly and objectively investigated to assure the public that official misconduct will not be tolerated and, at the same time, provide a vehicle whereby officers unjustly accused can be vindicated. Lieutenant Castaneda handles the majority of complaints that are based on a misunderstanding of accepted law enforcement practices or the duties of the officer or other agency member. Many times, this type of complaint is quickly resolved after speaking with a supervisor and the citizen filing the complaint. When lengthy, complex or serious allegations of employee misconduct are alleged, Lieutenant Castaneda is assisted by supervisory staff that serves in other capacities within the agency. All assisting staff have extensive criminal and administrative investigation expertise and training. In 2022 the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office fully implemented the use of Body Worn Cameras. The cameras have proven invaluable in recording deputy's actions, resolving complainants and providing transparency. The majority of Deputies favor wearing the body-worn cameras which has proven to keep good deputies safe from false and malicious complaints and document the great job the deputies do for the community. Another function of the Professional Standards Unit is to investigate risk management issues, conduct internal audits concerning appropriate use of force standards, vehicle driving issues and other department policies and functions. The unit also works in cooperation with the County Attorney and reviews matters of civil liability for the Sheriff's Office and other county entities. The Professional Standards Unit also oversees Deputy Compliments and Awards. (See 2022 Deputy Awards page)

Standards provide a measure for accountability. Sheriff Deputies are appointed by the Sheriff and exercise extraordinary authority over their fellow citizens. This responsibility requires accountability. Accountability is achieving by imposing high standards of conduct on police, including through a discipline code which deputies voluntarily accept upon their appointment. These higher standards apply to conduct both on and off-duty. Sheriff Deputies want to both be seen as professional, not just for their own satisfaction, but to enjoy public confidence that is necessary for democratic policing to succeed. It may be more so now, when law enforcement is under consistent scrutiny. The Sheriff believes fostering and promoting a sense of professionalism strengthens the relationship and trust between the citizens of Sandoval County and the Sheriff's Office.



# DEPUTY AWARDS



## 2021 Deputy of the Year: Deputy Rodolfo Reyes

**Commander Commendation Award: Lt John Castaneda**

**Sgt. Al Nieves**

**Sgt. Luke Osborn**

**Sgt. Thomas Griffin**

**Deputy Rudy Fields**

**Outstanding Public Service Award: ACO Lawrence Tafoya**

**CSO Thomas Lohr**

**Sheriffs Unit Citation Award: Deputy Brian Espinoza**

**Deputy CJ Smith**

**Deputy Kevin Dupre**

**Deputy Robert Touchin**

**Deputy Michael Hucceby**



## 2022 Deputy of the Year: Deputy Rodolfo Reyes



# SHERIFF'S FLEET MANAGEMENT & EQUIPMENT UNIT



The primary function of the "Sheriff's Fleet Management & Equipment Unit" is to provide:

- Sheriff's Office employees with safe and reliable vehicles so they can more effectively perform their duties, responding to emergencies and providing quality police service to those who live and work in Sandoval County and surrounding areas.
- Sheriff's Office employees with uniforms, protective equipment, materials, and other "police specific" equipment. Makes equipment and supply purchases and maintains inventory records. Identifies and evaluates "police specific" equipment and technologies that are the most effective, safe, functioning and long lasting.

The Sheriff's Fleet Management & Equipment Unit is under the supervision of a Lieutenant with a Deputy assigned as the Fleet & Equipment Coordinator. The Sheriff's Office's fleet includes marked Patrol vehicles, Command vehicles, Investigations and Administrative vehicles. In addition, the Sheriff's Office has support, utility, tactical and Search and Rescue equipment. The Coordinator is responsible for many aspects involving our vehicles, including assisting Fiscal Year budgeting, acquisition, licensing, insurance, emergency equipment up-fitting, preventative maintenance and repair. In addition, the coordinator handles fleet related equipment and supplies, vehicle driver assignments and rotation, to ensure the most efficient and effective long term use of each of our vehicles. The coordinator is also responsible for the general oversight of the Sheriff's Office's equipment and supply function, to include, issuing equipment and other supplies to department personnel, identifying and evaluating "police specific" equipment, making equipment and supply purchases, and maintaining inventory records. The Sheriff's Fleet Management & Equipment Unit also assists administrative personnel with the oversight and inventory of other department assets as needed.







# TRAINING AND SAFETY COORDINATOR



*The Sheriff and Undersheriff recognize that effective law enforcement is a cornerstone in the protection of our constitutional rights; and the mission of law enforcement is not only to protect and serve, but to operate in an efficient, effective manner that is in the best interest of the community we serve.*

The Training and Safety Coordinator works under the supervision of a Lieutenant. Duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

## **TRAINING**

### **Coordinates and assists with:**

- NMLEA Biennium Training & Training through the department's Virtual Academy program.
- Training in the field and classroom setting & Continuing Professional Training and other training programs as assigned.
- Education programs related to the Sheriff's Office and the community.
- Implementing training goals and objectives set by the Sheriff's Office as assigned.
- Maintaining Training Request Routing and Processing Procedures as set by the Chief Deputy.
- Monitoring and making recommendations to command staff for remedial training.
- Conducting research, schedules training, prepares training materials as assigned.
- Performs a variety of administrative, professional, and technical tasks in support of the assigned area of responsibility.
- Accurately maintain and update records and files both in house and with NMLEA.

## **SAFETY**

- Participates as a liaison between the Sheriff's Office and Sandoval County Risk Management
- Issues Risk Awareness Program training on a weekly basis & maintains records and required documentation to Risk Management
- Attends Risk Management meetings as a committee member
- Complies with OSHA rules and standards regarding the Sheriff's Office Building.

## **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE AND POLICY UPDATE**

Updates outdated written procedures and policies to reflect "Best Police Practice" that are constitutional, effective, reduce liability and improve communication, skills, knowledge, ethics, and attitudes that will improve overall policing of the community.



# END OF WATCH



Joseph “Joe” Anthony Harris, Sr. was born in South Ozone Park, Brooklyn, New York to Arthur and Helen Harris. He grew up on Long Island with his big Italian family. In the late 1970s, he moved to New Mexico with his parents and finished school at Cibola High School. In 1984 he joined the Rio Rancho Police Department and was one of the original Rio Rancho Police Officers. Harris was cross trained in Law Enforcement/Fire Fighting and EMT. While at RRPD He started the D.A.R.E. program, the G.R.E.A.T. program, Neighborhood Watch, Mc Gruff the Crime Dog, and worked with the Citizen Police Academy and any other program he could bring to the department that had to do with community safety. Sergeant Harris served with the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office for six years prior to his untimely death. While serving with Sandoval County, he started the D.A.R.E. program and was very instrumental in expanding Neighborhood Watch programs throughout the county.



Sergeant Harris was killed, while working a Sheriff's Office stakeout targeting the “Cookie Bandit”, who was an unidentified suspect in cabin burglaries in the Jemez area for over 6 years. Sergeant Harris, during the arrest, although mortally wounded by gunfire was able to return fire and kill the “Cookie Bandit” who was later identified as Joseph Henry Burgess wanted for a double homicide in Canada. Burgess is also a potential suspect for other murders in New Mexico, California, Arizona, and Oregon, and had eluded Law Enforcement for over 40 years.

He is survived by his wife and five children and is buried at Vista Verde Memorial Park in Rio Rancho, New Mexico.



# END OF WATCH



Robert W. Baron was born on September 10, 1966 to James Bernard and Karola Baron of Simi Valley, California. He graduated from California State, Northridge with a BA in Political Science and Public Administration. Early in his career Baron worked as a Juvenile Probation Officer in Los Angeles County. Prior to moving to New Mexico Baron worked as a Wildland Firefighter and as a Federal Park Service Ranger. As a Federal Park Ranger, Robert received the “Exemplary Act Award” for his quick actions in saving the life of a park visitor who suffered a major heart attack. Robert joined the Sandoval County Sheriff’s Office in 2006 and was a dedicated Deputy, Detective and Sergeant, and he had a passion for improving the Sheriff’s Office. Assigned as a Detective, he was extremely diligent, hardworking, always answered the call and was conscientious of victims and their families while working all cases regardless of their seemingly insignificant importance or their high profile nature of a case, such as homicide. Robert loved his community, church and helping others. He dedicated time as a Boy Scout leader mentoring scouts and in law enforcement organizations such as Law Enforcement United, an organization committed to "Honor the Fallen, and Remember the Survivors.” He participated in the in the 2010, 250+ mile Memorial Bicycle Ride ending in Washington D.C. Memorial, in memory of Sgt. Joe Harris in 2010.



On December 5, 2013, Robert had been dispatched to I-25 in response to reports of multiple, minor motor vehicle crashes and disabled vehicles under blizzard conditions. He was fatally injured when he was outside of his vehicle and struck by a motorist while assisting motorists and investigating the crashes.

He had served in law enforcement for a total of 25 years and is survived by his wife and son.



# END OF WATCH



Deputy Dennis Coulter was born to Charles and Vurlma Coulter on August 7, 1965. Dennis was the very embodiment of the words Protect and Serve, and not only in his police work, but in every aspect of his life. He began his adult career working with various construction and tile companies in New Mexico, perfecting his craft and becoming known for his exceptional craftsmanship. In 2011 he joined the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy, fulfilling a lifelong dream to serve in Law Enforcement.

Dennis' life was one of service, active with Sagebrush Church in Albuquerque, dedicated whether it was standing in support of someone during times of great need, conducting repairs on his mother's home, or rescuing a frightened kitty lying in the middle of the road, Dennis was always available for those in need. Dennis was a man of his word, honorable, hardworking, dedicated, and had a deep love for those close to him. He was a loyal and steadfast friend and was held in great respect and esteem by his fellow deputies.



On March 25, 2022 at approximately 10:53pm, Deputy Coulter was in the Sheriff's Office parking where he was discovered on the ground, unconscious and not breathing. Multiple agencies arrived and attempted to resuscitate Deputy Coulter. Sadly, Deputy Dennis Coulter, 56, passed away as the result of the medical episode at Sandoval Regional Medical Center on March 26, 2022 at 12:07 am.

Dennis is survived by his wife of almost 24 years, Vanessa, along with his mother, his three sisters, and his brother. Dennis is also survived by 5 nieces, 2 nephews, 6 great-nieces, 3 great-nephews, and a multitude of friends. Dennis's passing is a heartbreaking loss to the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office, the Law Enforcement community, and the citizens of Sandoval County.