



DWAIN HEBDA/CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

"I always had kind of a drive to do something," said Cory Pickard, a Catholic High School grad and an Iraq War veteran. He now leads a law enforcement department of nearly 50 officers and staff.

PICKARD

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and include deployment to Iraq with the 39th Infantry Brigade as part of the 1st Cavalry Division from 2003 to 2005. He completed the police training academy in Camden simultaneously with his military service and was hired by the Maumelle Police Department in 1999.

"I happened to apply here just as a dispatcher to kind of get my foot in the door," Pickard said. "When I was applying, I had a couple of friends applying, and it was kind of hard to get on the Police Department. I ended up getting a call back, saying, 'Hey, do you want dispatch or police-patrol side?'"

"Well, that's a no-brainer! I think those were my exact words. I want to be out on the street."

He steadily worked his way through the ranks of the department, with experience as a patrol sergeant, a canine handler and a member of the tactical team, and in professional standards and the training division, where he served as firearms and Taser instructor, all of which made him a compelling candidate for chief.

"Chief Pickard has demonstrated passion and professionalism in his many years as a Maumelle police officer," Maumelle Mayor Caleb Norris said. "Being chief of police is a huge responsibility, but Cory's love for this community, his family and his fellow officers were just a few of the strengths needed for success."

Pickard had attained the rank of captain when he was selected to replace the retiring Sam Williams last September, a move that Williams wholeheartedly endorses. He said he saw leadership potential written all over his successor, and he wasn't alone in that, which has, in part, allowed Pickard to get off to such a positive start.

"Cory's just a great leader. He is absolutely a servant leader," Williams said. "People want to follow people that they have confidence in, people they look at and say, 'This guy knows what he's doing,' and they know that he has their best interests at heart. He's not the kind who's going to be haphazard. I think if you care about people and you care about the outcome and care about them personally, it shows."

"I also think it helps your decision-making. You're not making decisions for people you don't know and have very little interest in the outcome. You're making decisions for people you see every day and you love and respect."

Pickard is similarly effusive in his praise for Williams as a leader of the department and as a mentor.

"One of the things that Sam did that I really appreciate is building up the investigation side of the house and still allowing me, as the patrol commander back in the day, to build my side," he said. "He had a good balance, and I'm hoping to continue that and be like that."

"One thing that I did learn from Sam, and that I will always carry, is always be prepared to do or have done

anything that you ask of your officers or the people under you. As long as you're willing to do that, I think they will follow you anywhere."

Having said that, Pickard admits to some decided differences in his style and that of his long-serving predecessor — that uniform, for one thing.

"I come from a patrol background more than the investigation side," he said. "So where Sam would come in and wear civilian clothes, I typically will come in in uniform. That's a huge difference. I come from patrol and a military background, and I have a different bearing and a different way."

"Sam was also a very personable guy, and I learned a lot from him on that. I wouldn't say I'm not as outgoing, but I'm not as eloquent as Sam is."

Pickard said the future of the 48-person department — 38 of them sworn officers, including him — has its share of challenges, from hiring new personnel to keeping up with technology and finding new ways to improve through training.

"This is a skilled job. People don't realize that at times, and a lot of it comes from on-the-job training. We're doing ourselves and our citizens a great disservice if we don't train our guys to the highest standard that we can," Pickard said.

"Having been to Iraq and been in combat, assigned to an infantry platoon, there were some things that I learned there that I thought could be brought back to the Police Department," he said.

"One of the things we do when we go to firearms training — we have the officers running or doing physical exertion to mimic as best we can those situations that happen when everything hits the fan," Pickard said. "That way, they can understand their limitations better. They can understand how their bodies are going to react and, hopefully, make better decisions so that we don't end up in a bad situation."

"Here in 2020, we're going to start doing some scenario-based training, taking some of our old incidents that we've had that we can improve upon. I think that's one of the best training aids we could ever do, is to take what we have done right, what we've done wrong and bring them back to it and rework it."

Pickard has personal motivations for seeing these training initiatives succeed — creating a safer community for his own family. He and his wife, Ashley, have three sons: Harley, 12; Avery, 9; and Landry, 3. Pickard's conspicuous role as a father also helps connect him to the community on yet another level.

"People stop me all the time, and we'll talk," he said. "I don't believe there is a standoffishness of our police officers or myself. So if I'm walking in Kroger, and somebody feels they can go talk to the chief or this officer or this captain, then I believe that really benefits us."

"One thing that we strive to protect is that sense of community and that sense of we are part of this community. That makes a huge difference."

SNAPSHOTS: 3RD ANNUAL CHOCOPALOOZA, RUSSELLVILLE



Davis Ramsey, 7, of Pottsville tries to gain the lead in the children's cupcake-eating contest by putting as much of the cupcake into his mouth as he can Feb. 7 at the third annual Chocopalooza at the Hughes Community Center in Russellville. He almost succeeded but came in second place. All the children who participated received gift cards from local businesses. See more photos at www.arkansasonline.com/galleries/categories/rivervalley/.



PHOTOS BY AMBER QUAID/CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER Up front is Katy Bratton, 7, and from left, back row, are Karen Lagunas, 16; Eunice Morales, 16; Addie Casey, 16; and Allie Bratton, 6. The teenagers are volunteering for Chocopalooza as part of Interact, a Rotary-sponsored club for ages 12-18 to develop leadership skills.



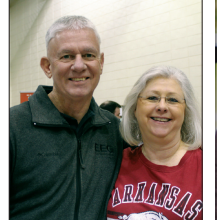
Lacey Potts, 11, right, and her friend Jenna Kamerling, 10, both of Pottsville take aim at the target, an inflatable ball, with the SAFE archery booth provided by The Bow Shop of Russellville. Jerry Lettice, in the background, helps monitor his sister's booth and the patrons who come to participate Feb. 7 during the third annual Chocopalooza.



Laura and Chris Sheach of Russellville begin their journey through the third annual Chocopalooza.



Shown are Dylan Penzo, left, and Taylor Foshee, both of Russellville.



David and Jane Prewett of Russellville take their time exploring the various booths and chocolate options at Chocopalooza.



Nikki McNowin of Russellville had her eye on the prize during the adult cupcake-eating contest and took home first place at Chocopalooza.



From left are Miaa Purnell, 6; Duran Brown; and Amanda Tucker, all of Dardanelle.

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RSVP to Sandra Hayes @501.450.1833 or shayes@fsbank.com.

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