Meeting Notes – Mar. 19, 2024

The LaFayette Rotary Club had excellent attendance from its members during its weekly meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2024. Twenty-four of the twenty-seven members were present. Rotarian Faye Seroyer was responsible for the program and introduced as her speaker Deputy Tommy Weldon from the Chambers County Sheriff's office. Tommy began his 36-year-long law enforcement career as a patrolman with the City of Valley Police Department. He has also served as an investigator and head of the Chambers County Drug Task Force. He spent a couple of years as the Chief Deputy to Sheriff Sid Lockhart with the Chambers County Sheriff's office, then returned to the City of Valley Police force to serve as their chief of police. It is from this position that he retired in 2021. In 2022 he re-joined the Chambers County Sheriff's office in a part-time position. He is involved with conservatorship/guardianship, the community correction program, solid waste complaints, and manning the metal detectors.

In his role as conservator/guardian, he is responsible for 11 individuals, ranging in age from 41 to 90 years of age. Deputy Weldon is the one who is contacted when these individuals have needs or problems that arise. There are approximately 27 felons and 20 individuals convicted of misdemeanors that are involved in the community correction visits. These visits are unannounced and Deputy Weldon accompanies Jetta Wood on her visits to their homes. Deputy Weldon volunteered to handle the solid waste complaints because of his belief in the importance of listening to citizens when they are upset or frustrated and working to find a solution to the problem. He also relieves fellow officers from their posts at the metal detectors in the Chambers County Courthouse Annex located in Lanett, AL, so those officers can have a duty-free lunch time.

In addition to explaining his job duties, Deputy Weldon shared a case from his past that had a great impact on him and exemplifies the reason he feels the job is so important. He was contacted on a Friday night about a fourteen-year-old boy who had been kidnapped from Opelika (along with two others) and later escaped from his kidnapper in LaGrange. Unsure of why the Valley Police Department was involved, he learned that the boy was taken to Valley, where he was horribly abused, then taken on to LaGrange. There the boy saw a police car, ran over to it, explained what had happened, and was ultimately reunited with his family. Weldon met with the boy, but the boy was unable to identify where he had been taken in Valley. Weldon met with the boy again the next day and through careful questioning the boy was able to remember that he had been taken on the interstate and then on a dirt road. Weldon drove the boy around every dirt road he knew of in the Valley/Cusseta area, but nothing seemed familiar to the boy. The boy then remembered coming into a clearing from the dirt road. Initially, this still did not give Weldon the information he needed, then suddenly he knew where the site was. Weldon attributes this as coming directly and only from God. He was able to drive the boy to the scene, which the boy immediately recognized, and Weldon found crucial evidence at the site. Two years later the case came to trial and the jury returned a guilty verdict in about 14 minutes.

At least two Rotary members also spoke up to commend Deputy Weldon, not only on his work on that particular case, but regarding his exemplary career in law enforcement.

Diane Sherriff