

## Police Horses Run through Gateway Division 10 for Daughters' Day

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(May 1, 2002) To spice up Gateway Division 10's annual Take Your Daughters to Work Day, organizers decided to invite two four-legged guests to entertain a large group of young girls.

Two horses with the Los Angeles Police Mounted Platoon, Bert and Captain, clip-clopped their way into Division 10's maintenance area with their partners, officers Ron Terrazas and Andy Peterson.

"We contacted the SWAT team, last year, and they told us about the mounted division," said Gateway Mechanic Leona Swedenhjelm, one of the event's organizers. "I thought they'd be perfect for the girls because girls like horses."

Teaching the girls about the mounted division was one of only two female officers on the platoon, Officer MaryGrace Weaver. Although Weaver couldn't ride in on her horse, Elvis, because of a recent knee injury, she answered many of the girls' eager questions and shared her experience with the platoon.

"Because there were going to be young ladies here, we thought it would be nice to bring along a female officer," Weaver said. "It helps them see the police in a different perspective. The only time they see us is on the news, which is usually negative. Being here lets them know we're like them —we're human."

Answering various questions from "What color are the horses" to "Have you killed anybody," Weaver explained why horses are needed in law enforcement.

### Horses help with crowds

"We look for anyone breaking the law — like breaking into a car or fighting — then we talk to them and arrest them if we need to," Weaver said. "Horses help when people get a group together and cause problems and don't want to leave. Well, horses help them leave."

After showing a video on what the mounted police do, the girls got to see Bert and Captain up close. And while they were a little disgusted after seeing Bert digest his hay and taking a gander at Captain's teeth, the girls were more than pleased to pet the docile animals.

"It was fun when I got to pet the horse," said 7-year-old Nicole Powell. "I liked when his hair tickled my nose."



▲ Officer Andy Peterson introduces "Captain" to the crowd of youngsters.



▲ Nine-year-old Rachel Rogers, left, and Samantha Valtierra, 13, pet police horse "Captain" at Gateway Division 10 as part of Take Your Daughters to Work Day.



▲ Officer MaryGrace Weaver (in black) explains the job of mounted police officers and their horses.



▲ Nicole Powell, 7, takes notes on the gear used by the Los Angeles Police Mounted Platoon.

Swedenhjelm, who put the event together with volunteers from her division and Venice Division 6, said inviting non-MTA employees to speak at Take Your Daughters to Work Day broadens a young girl's view of the workforce.

"I try to bring guest speakers in because we get a lot of repeat girls and they don't want to hear the same old thing," she said. "Today is a learning day, and it's only an hour out of the day to give them other options."

Weaver agreed.

"It allows them to see what their parents do and to see if it's something they may or may not want to do," she said. "The main thing, though, is that it makes them proud of what their parents do."

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