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Photos by Jimmy Stroup



Dept. Jeff Heier was recently awarded a 2008 Centurion Award for Excellence by the Peace Officers Association of LA County for his work in traffic enforcement.

TSB Deputy Awarded for Excellence in Traffic Enforcement

- Dept. Jeff Heier wrote nearly 2,500 traffic citations in 2007

By JIMMY STROUP

(Feb. 12, 2008) Transit Services Bureau Deputy Jeff Heier writes a lot of tickets in an eight-hour shift. He writes so many tickets, in fact, that the Peace Officers Association of LA County recently awarded him the Centurion Award for excellence in traffic enforcement.

Heier focuses his attention on unsafe or illegal driving activities that could create problems for the Metro system. He said the bus operators have a hard enough job driving through the streets of Los Angeles. He hopes his contributions by clearing out the bus zones make life easier for the operators.

In his career in law enforcement, Heier figures he's written at least 20,000 citations. It all stems from his simple rule about writing tickets: "If I see it, I write it."

Dept. Heier wrote more than 2,400 citations in 2007. Most of the tickets were classified as "hazardous," such as a car parked or stopped illegally in the bus zone

– a \$255
mistake.



This number is even more impressive when compared against the number of times his tickets have been thrown out in court, which is less than 10.

“When people fight their tickets, it’s no big deal,” he said. “I actually kind of enjoy it. I’m prepared. I’ve got all the evidence to back myself up. I’m not writing citations that aren’t solid, so I don’t get many thrown out.”

Originally from Minnesota, Heier’s been a TSB deputy since 2001. He’d been a Community College officer in Los Angeles before that.

Heier came to law enforcement later in life than most deputies, joining at 30. But he seems to have made up for the delayed entrance. Heier seems born for the job.

From Gateway to the Westside

Heier’s day starts at Gateway and moves north toward Wilshire Boulevard. Though his area of enforcement doesn’t start until he’s west of La Cienega Boulevard, Heier is writing tickets all the way.

Heier is responsible for anything west of La Cienega Boulevard and all the way to the beach. He writes most of his tickets in Santa Monica.

For Heier, writing tickets isn’t about making money for the Sheriff’s Department or for Metro. It’s about what he called “quality of life.” If he can teach the dangerous drivers an expensive lesson, he believes the regular drivers are less likely to be placed into a dangerous situation.

“Traffic enforcement is primarily about safety, though,” he said. “When people drive carelessly and recklessly, you’re going to have a collision and someone could get hurt. I can help deter the behavior and avoid the collisions altogether.”

Heier’s philosophy is simple on writing tickets for violations – especially for cars parked in the bus zones:



"If I see it, I write it."

'As nice as he can'

When Heier pulls an offender over for a moving violation or tickets a car that's sitting in a red lane, he said he tries to be as nice as he can, though most of the time people aren't very happy to see him.

"These tickets are expensive as it is," he said. "I try to be as nice to those people out there as I can. They're just trying to get through their day, same as I am. There's no need for me to be a jerk."

How Expensive?

At \$255 for a bus zone violation, the tickets that Heier writes aren't cheap. In a two-hour period on Feb. 7, Heier wrote three bus zone violations (\$765), an unsafe lane change violation (\$159), a routine red zone citation (\$55) and a \$10 fix-it ticket for covered taillights.

From 2 to 4 p.m. on a Thursday afternoon, Heier wrote \$989 worth of violations. And he hadn't even made it to La Cienega Boulevard yet.

Most of the money recovered for those violations will be returned to Metro.

Keeping it safe

Heier said he hopes to spend the rest of his career on the motorcycle, out in traffic. He enjoys the freedom of the duty and thinks his citations remind people to drive safe all the time.

"Sometimes I'll have a spot where I'm writing tickets every day and all of a sudden it's totally dried up," he said. "It's then that I know I've done my job. The people I ticketed told their friends and enough people saw me citing the area that they learned to obey the law."

"At least, in that one spot they're obeying the law," he laughed.