

# How Arapahoe County's Sheriff went from fielding skepticism to fielding praise



BY JESSICA ROE  
BEHIND THE SCENES  
STAFF WRITER

**E**ighteen months after a shock-wave rumbled through Arapahoe County when a democratic outsider unseated a highly popular republican incumbent sheriff, nothing but praise can be heard today from both sides of the aisle.

"Sheriff Brown wisely chose to get to know and understand the culture of the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office and learn where his strengths could add to a high functioning law enforcement agency," said Centennial City Manager Matt Sturgeon, "I've been impressed by Sheriff Brown's willingness to listen and learn from the women and men who have made a



Photo courtesy of Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department

career serving the citizens of Centennial and Arapahoe County."

Not only was democrat Tyler Brown from the opposite party in a county that once swung heavily red, he was an unknown. Brown came in from the outside as a young police officer from another district, having never even served time as an Arapahoe County Sheriff's Deputy.

Today, the 37-year old sheriff looks back, acknowledging his place as an outsider meant he had to work twice as hard to gain credibility. He also acknowledges his young age meant he had an opportunity to learn from the wise knowledge of those more experienced than

him. He is now one of the youngest sheriffs in the country to lead a department of this size, which includes more than 800 employees, 500 of whom are deputies.

"The day after the election, there was some uncertainty, and uncertainty breeds fear. I wrapped my head around that early on, and I think that's what made our transition smooth, was that I recognized there was that hesitation, 'Can we trust this guy? Do we know what he's about?' I knew that I had to prove myself, and the only way to do that was to get into the job and start working," said Brown.

Bureau Chief of Public Safety, Glenn Thompson, has been with the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office for more than 30-years and served under four different Sheriffs. "Sheriff Brown is probably the most receptive to suggestions and advice as any sheriff I've worked for," he said. "That has led to a relatively seamless transition to his command and allowed the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office to continue to provide excellent service for the community."

Brown grew up in the area, a graduate of Smoky Hill High School. He and his wife Kimberly and their two daughters live in the area, where Kimberly is a fifth grade teacher in Cherry Creek Schools.

"This outside person comes in and essentially shocks the world by beating a popular sheriff," said Brown. "The thing is, Dave was a great sheriff and led a great organization," he said, in reference to the incumbent he beat, now retired and former Sheriff David C. Walcher, who held the office for the prior four years.

While Brown prides himself on making no sweeping changes, one quality he con-



Sheriff Tyler Brown played catcher at Eastern New Mexico State University in Portales, NM from 2004-2006.

stantly gets complimented on by staff is his willingness to consider their new ideas.

"It's kind of easy to say, 'Well that's the way we've always done it, so let's just keep doing it that way, but my philosophy is let's explore some of those ideas that maybe were brought up in the past and they were just not suited for the time,'" said Brown.

Centennial's mayor praised Brown for one such idea.

"Sheriff Brown's initiative to stand up a dedicated Emergency Operations Center, which opened February 27 of this year has proven to be extraordinarily beneficial and essential to meet the needs of our residents and first responders throughout this pandemic," said Centennial Mayor Stephanie Piko.

Arapahoe County's Detention Center's top cop speaks highly of Brown.

"Since taking office Sheriff Brown has shown genuine care for all people, citizens and agency members, and he allows that care to help guide his decisions and actions," said Vince Line, Bureau Chief Detention Administration. "What concerns or anxieties may have existed about his level of experience prior to him taking office has been countered by his collaborative approach to leadership and his willingness to accept thoughts and recom-

mendations from members of the agency at all levels, who in some cases have many years of experience providing public safety services to the community."

What many on his own force may not know is that Sheriff Brown played baseball in high school, and he had a scholarship in college where he played catcher at Eastern New Mexico State University in Portales, NM.

"If you don't hold up your end of the deal, everything collapses."

He also approaches this job differently than your typical top-of-the-hierarchy bosses.

"The way the flow chart may work in its hierarchy is that the sheriff sits at the top, but I really view it in reverse. I am here to work for everybody else," said Brown. "They know that 24-hours a day, I'm available. If they have an idea and they bring it to me, nothing is going to be held against them. If they bring an idea up in a command staff meeting, they know that is our centralized leadership group, rather than a hierarchy led meeting. We're all on the same page when we walk into that meeting."

Sheriff Brown takes nothing about his winning the election or his successes since then, for granted.

"This is the best job I've ever had. I have to pinch myself every single day."

## In Honor of National Police Week May 10 - May 16



Sheriff Brown and his wife Kimberly have two daughters.