

Police officer earns trust by learning new language

SCHUYLER (AP)—Schuyler police officer Aaron Pierce has found that learning someone's language is the most effective way to earn trust.

The 24-year-old officer completed an intensive Spanish language course and is using his new skill to work with a growing Hispanic population in Schuyler.

Pierce has said, "Ponga sus manos en las espaldas," several times since returning from language training this summer. But telling a suspect to "put your hands behind your back" isn't Pierce's best experience since completing the two-week course.

"It seems like people look at you differently if you can try to speak their language," Pierce said. "It puts them at ease to trust me more."

Pierce, a night-shift officer, was hired two years ago, and said he was honored to be chosen to learn Spanish.

"I was sent to help serve the Hispanic community better and I think it's doing that," Pierce said. "They can get just as frustrated as we get, too, when you mispronounce a word or something, and it opens things up a little bit now that I understand their culture a lot better."

On a recent weekend, Pierce had finished a domestic disturbance call and ended up being quizzed by Spanish speakers at the scene.

"The victim knew enough English and I knew enough Spanish to lighten the situation," Pierce said. "Some guys there were seeing how much I knew by asking me to name different parts of the body."

In August, Pierce joined about 20 other officers from around the country in attending Spanish classes at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Artesia, N.M. Pierce was able to attend the class through the help of private donations. City Clerk Mary Peschel said Schuyler businesses and individuals donated more than \$1,500 for Pierce's airfare and tuition.

Pierce said his studies involved role playing Spanish skits by day, and a nightly review with his roommate, Hall County Sheriff's Department deputy Chris Rea.

One evening during the first week of class, Pierce said he and Rea answered a surprise knock on their motel door.

An instructor with a mock search warrant for

"*It seems like people look at you differently if you can try to speak their language.***"**

AARON PIERCE
Schuyler police officer

English materials told them in Spanish that he had come to confiscate any English newspapers, books, or television tuned to English programs.

"We were so glad that we didn't have anything and had been doing our Spanish homework," Pierce said. A mock trial was held for those caught with English materials, and students found "guilty" were sentenced to sing Spanish songs to the laughter of their classmates.

The game helped officers understand how people who are not native English speakers feel when they deal with U.S. law enforcement officers and the court system, Pierce said.

"So it's a relief to Hispanics when we speak Spanish," Pierce said. "They have something to tell us and it might be important. They don't want to wait for an interpreter."

Pierce had never studied a foreign language before, but he now works with flash cards to increase his Spanish skills. He has attached Spanish labels to the furniture and other items in his home.

"I'm trying to add more words to my vocabulary," Pierce said. "Everyone expected I could speak Spanish just as fluently in two weeks as I do English, but there's a lot more studying to go on."

As he struggles to conjugate verbs, Pierce said he plans to sign up for additional Spanish courses at Central Community College.

Law & Order

A look at crime on campus and in the community

ATTEMPTED ROBBERY

A man who tried to rob an Amigo's restaurant with a knife Saturday night couldn't get the cash because it was locked in a safe.

A janitor at Amigo's, 2825 Cornhusker Highway, told police the suspect broke in through the south glass door at about 2:50 a.m., Lincoln police Sgt. Ann Heermann said.

The suspect pulled a 4-inch paring knife on the janitor and asked him where the money was, Heermann said. The janitor pointed to the safe, and the suspect told him to get out of the way.

After he failed to open the safe, he left through the shattered door.

The janitor said the suspect was a white man in his 20s, about 6-feet tall and 150 pounds. The man was wearing a blue jacket, blue jeans and a black ski mask.

LARCENY

More than \$11,000 in jewelry was stolen Friday night from an Omaha man's car while parked at the Days Inn near the Lincoln airport.

The suspect broke into the car through the driver's-side window and took a briefcase with

expensive jewelry inside, including three women's diamond rings and a gold men's bracelet, Heermann said.

Two Nebraska Starter jackets also were taken, for a total loss of \$11,670.

CONCEALED WEAPON

An 18-year-old man turned a loaded handgun over to police after grabbing it from a boy last week.

The man was at Kwik Shop at 48th and Calvert streets at 3 a.m. Thursday when he saw a group of kids hanging out in front of the store, Heermann said.

He saw one boy, who looked about 12 years old, tuck a handgun in the back of his pants, Heermann said. He approached the boy and grabbed the gun from him, Heermann said, so the boy and others ran away.

He later turned the fully-loaded 9 mm Ruger over to police.

The boy was described as about 5 feet, 7 inches tall with an average build and a shaved head.

Anyone who sees someone carrying a weapon should call police instead of trying to take the weapon, Heermann said.

ISU study targets emu meat, oils

AMES, Iowa (AP) — Emu producers are betting that scientific research will back up their view that the bird's meat is tasty and that its oils are commercially useful for ointments and cosmetics.

Emu ranchers in Iowa have donated 24 of the flightless birds to researchers at Iowa State University, where scientists are raising them to market weight. The birds will then be slaughtered and the meat and oils tested.

Enthusiasts say the meat is just as tasty as beef but with less cholesterol. And the really valuable part of the bird, they say, is a thick layer of fat along its back, which can be rendered into an oil that has anti-inflammatory properties.

But emu producers have had limited success in efforts to expand the market for both the meat and oils, which can be made into ointments and cosmetics.

Rich Olson of Iowa Falls, president of the 60-member Iowa Emu Association, said the research is critical because the results seem unreal.

"People look at you like, 'How can it be?'" he said. The research is "going to show those claims are true."

Sell said researchers will test the taste of emus, which have been divided into two groups — one being fed dietary fat from animal tallow and another getting its fat from soybean oil.

The researchers will also do chemical tests on the oil rendered from the fat.

Emus are natives of Australia but have proven to be hearty in Iowa's climate. They grow to about 120 pounds to 150 pounds, although the research animals will be slaughtered when they reach about 85 pounds.

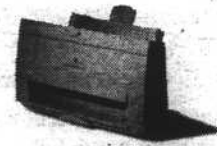
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