Hard to believe it was nearly a year ago that I was sworn into office as the new Constable for Travis County Precinct 5. The culmination of more than 30 years as Chief Deputy in Pct. 5, being elected Constable is a key milestone of my long career in law enforcement, and allowed me to hit the ground running that first day.

Constable 5 is known for its expertise, attention to detail, and solid customer service. My goal as Constable is to use all available technology to raise our service to the next level. Here’s how:

**Communications.** Our customers go to www.constable5.com, CN5’s online 24/7 service check for information about a case. Case files are updated regularly to reflect current activity and status ensuring case file information is accurate and timely.

**Professionalism.** Constable deputies and clerks attend law enforcement and judicial training every year, ensuring they are up-to-date on specialized service, writs, evictions, protective orders and court orders. They handle legal issues related to business, family, property, and tax matters, every day.

**Access.** Our law enforcement status gives us access for service others don’t have.

I’m looking forward to serving my community in this new and expanded role.

January 1, 2013, seems like only yesterday ….

Lopez appoints Gutierrez new CN5 Chief Deputy

In March, Bobby Gutierrez joined Constable 5 as the first new CN5 chief deputy in more than 30 years. Chief Deputy Gutierrez has an extensive law enforcement resume. A faculty member for the Justice Court Training Center, Gutierrez has conducted statewide training for constable and JP staff for many years. Between us, we have nearly 60 years of experience in law enforcement and managing a large, urban constable’s office. We strive for the things our customers care about: speed, accuracy and timely communication with our clients.

Easy access to Constable 5’s office: directly across Guadalupe Street from the county courthouse.

(photos: Elaine Hosage)
Every other year, stretching back more than 175 years, legislators have made their way to the Texas State Capitol to take on issues large and small that affect citizens of this state.

Constable 5 has monitored legislation for many sessions in conjunction with JPCA, a statewide association of JPs and constables, and the Texas Association of Counties.

Constable Lopez and his legislative team have met with state senators and representatives to advocate for changes to the law affecting courts and the service of process.

A perennial issue – warrant fees – again gained little traction this session. The bill would increase warrant fees from $50 to $75. Rep. Fletcher has pursued raising warrant fees over multiple sessions. Constables around the state appreciate Rep. Fletcher’s persistence.

Speaker Joe Straus and Lt. Governor David Dewhurst are sending interim charges to committees of the House and Senate. As issues arise relating to our concerns, CNS’s legislative team will be there listening.

Disabled Parking Enforcement wins grant

“Ensuring equal access for our disabled community is one of the reasons I ran for constable,” said Constable Lopez earlier this fall. The Constable is serious about ensuring access for people with disabilities. This summer, CNS applied for a grant from the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities to plan a public awareness campaign around accessible parking, and in early November we learned we had been chosen. The award represents a substantial advance for the disability community, as CNS staff will partner with marketing firm CreativePickle to prepare an education and outreach program on accessibility awareness in Travis County.

Working with AISD to prevent underage drinking

Travis County has collaborated for years with the Austin Independent School District to educate students from 4th grade to high school on the legal and social consequences of underage drinking.

CNS deputies recently visited Murchison Middle School to talk about the dangers of underage drinking and how to avoid situations where they are tempted or forced to drink alcohol. More visits are scheduled throughout the school year.

A quick glance at APD stats on alcohol-related incidents shows alcohol a factor in 24% of traffic fatalities in Austin during 2012; of the 5,314 DWI arrests in 2013, 236 were under age 21.

CNS actively supports the UDPP mission: “to create a community consensus that underage drinking is illegal, unhealthy and unacceptable in Travis County.”
Historic flood ravages southeast Travis County

Torrential rains hit Travis County October 30-31, dropping more than 9” in the southeast part of Travis County in less than 12 hours and less than a month after the region was hit with a 12” rain. Boggy Creek and Onion Creek topped their banks in a historic flash flood that was reported flowing at 120,000 cfs. Hundreds of homes were flooded and families displaced. The flood claimed six lives, and untold numbers of pets, livestock and wildlife were lost.

Early on Oct. 31, CN5 deputies went directly out to Bluff Springs to assist Pct. 4 Commissioner Margaret Gómez, Pct. 4 Constable Maria Canchola, and City of Austin officials. Since that day, county staff have been organizing and delivering needed provisions and volunteering in the cleanup this disaster has required.

A variety of groups are offering assistance here: www.traviscountytx.gov/emergency_services/news/2013_flood.asp

Dove Springs Rec Center is operating as a one-stop shop for flood victims.

Restoring these neighborhoods will take a long time. Assistance continues to be needed, especially with the holidays coming.

Keeping the Planet Safe

The grand opening of PlanetSafe, Travis County’s new supervised visitation and safe exchange center for families who have a history of family violence, was held on May 15, 2013. The center is a collaborative project between Travis County and SafePlace which is funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. Since 2009 the Constable 5 office has been a partner on the Consulting Committee, a multi-disciplinary committee of community stakeholders that provides guidance to PlanetSafe through the planning, development, and implementation stages of the project. Because of the unyielding support and commitment from the Constable’s Office, it was selected to provide security for the center during its hours of operation.

Zandra Hinojosa, the PlanetSafe Manager, very much appreciates CN5: “The Constable’s Office has been providing security for us since the beginning. Not only have they kept everyone safe, they have made everyone feel welcome.”


Third Annual Stand-Up Paddle Parade

For the last three years, Travis County has highlighted the serious issue of family violence and domestic abuse. The “Stand Up for Safe Families Paddle Parade and Rally” uses a fun activity to send positive and hopeful messages to families who are dealing with this tragedy, while honoring the lives lost to domestic violence.

CN5 is instrumental in planning this annual event in collaboration with the Austin-Travis County Family Violence Task Force. The goal is to help keep families safe, give them tools and resources to protect themselves, and support them as they deal with domestic abuse so they know that they are not alone.
Points of interest:

- **TRAVIS COUNTY’S WEB PORTAL SWITCHED TO EFILETEXAS ON NOV. 19**
- **TRAVIS COUNTY GOES LIVE WITH EFILETEXAS FOR ALL FILINGS (EXCEPT PRO SE) ON JAN. 1, 2014**
- **FEES ASSESSED IN THE NEW SYSTEM DEPEND ON THE TYPE AND NUMBER OF CASE TRANSACTIONS FILED**
- **FOR MORE INFO OR HELP, GO TO WWW.CONSTABLE5.COM OR CALL US: 512.854.9100**

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eFileTexas.gov debuts in Travis County in 2014

1. EFile box is checked automatically
2. Highlight “Service - Constable ($70)”
3. Click [Add] button plus quantity
4. Add Filing Comments - request CN5

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Giving back is a holiday season tradition here, and one of this year’s recipients is SafePlace. Sergeant Denise Lozano organizes the energy behind this yearly effort. SafePlace plans to assemble welcome baskets with donations from CN5.