

Attorney General Harris awards Valley law officers

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Bee

Kamala Harris came to Clovis Thursday not in her role as U.S. Senate candidate, but in her current position as state attorney general.

It probably didn't hurt her quest to replace retiring Sen. Barbara Boxer. She was in the central San Joaquin Valley to meet with local law enforcement officials and hand out awards to several law enforcement officers for their actions in the line of duty. It was a good news event that Harris said is her favorite part of the job.

"As attorney general, the chief law enforcement office of the state, I am here to thank them, and to thank the community," she said after the ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Building in downtown Clovis. "Part of the awards we gave out were the awards recognizing that law enforcement does its best work when we're working closely with the community, and when we have trust."

Harris also held closed-door meetings with local law enforcement officials, including Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims.

"The attorney general outlined her priorities and how she's helping to support local law enforcement in the area of technology," Mims said, "bringing databases under one umbrella we can access." The new system is "much more user-friendly than the old databases we're used to looking at."

Mims said Harris "wants to hear from us, and I'm really pleased that her ears are open."

Receiving awards were:

- Lt. Jose Garza, Fresno Police Department — Peace Officer Commendation Award. Garza, a 34-year veteran who is the department's Southeast District commander, was noted for his community-oriented policing methods
- Detective Angie Isaak, Fresno Police Department — Peace Officer Commendation Award. Isaak was recognized for her community policing work. Early in her career, she was assigned to the Special Projects Unit, which was involved with Citizens On Patrol, the department's community policing program. She is now the coordinator of a model police/community partnership called "Bringing Broken Neighborhoods Back To Life."
- Deputy Chief Daniel Bear, Kings County Probation Department — Recidivism Reduction Certificate of Commendation. Bear was recognized for the Kings County Probation Department's program to provide at-risk youth with the help they need to become successful adults and productive members of the community. He was the driving force behind the department's grant application for a Second Chance Re-Entry Planning Grant from the U.S. Dept. of Justice.
- Officers Henry Diaz, Tom Reinhart and Angela Yambupah, Sanger Police Department — Peace Officer Valor Award. The three officers were recognized for a July 2014 incident involving an angry 22-year-old man who, high on drugs, used his mother as a human shield. The officers were able to subdue the man without using lethal force and rescue his mother.
- Officer Jeffrey Packebush, Arvin Police Department — Peace Officer Valor Award. Packebush was awarded for responding to a domestic violence dispute where he was shot in the shoulder. Despite this, he was able to protect his partner and subdue the suspect.

- Officers Aaron Keller & Cynthia White, California Highway Patrol — Peace Officer Commendation Award. This past April 1, the two officers responded to a report of a hysterical and possibly suicidal woman who was sitting on the edge of an overcrossing, threatening to jump into a river 60 feet below. They were able to calm the woman and pull her off the bridge's railing.