



PAUL BERSEBACH, THE REGISTER

TICKET TOTALS: Jim Lusk estimates he's handed out more than 10,000 citations in his 20 years of volunteering.

Street worth valued

San Clemente honors Jim Lusk for 20 years of volunteer work not always appreciated by those on the road.

By **ANDREW GOOD**
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SAN CLEMENTE

There are numerous ways volunteers can help the community, says Jim Lusk, a member of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

But not all of them get you cussed out for doing your job.

"We get people mad at us, cursing at us," said Lusk. "We used to do enforcement on street sweeping days. That's when you'd have the worst problems. People come running out of their house and call you all kinds of nice names."

Traffic violators might not appreciate his work, but earlier this month, the City Council

recognized Lusk for 20 years of service in the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

He estimates he's handed out more than 10,000 citations over the years, saving paid officers time to investigate more serious crimes.

Sgt. Nancy Gaffner, who coordinates the program, said volunteers average 16 hours a month. Their duties include citing minor traffic violations, traffic control for special events and crime scenes, performing home checks for residents on vacation, visiting shut-ins and taking police vehicles in for service.

Gaffner said Lusk's specialty has been the unenviable task of writing tickets.

"Giving out parking tickets is probably one of the most difficult assignments," Gaffner said. "People get very angry,

very quickly."

San Clemente's program has grown to about 30 volunteers since starting in 1985, said Lusk. It was the first of its kind in Orange County and one of the first in the country.

Lusk became one of the program's first coordinators, despite having a non-policing background. Most of his career had been spent in the diamond tools business, but an enforcement job, he said, had always appealed to him.

"Ever since I was young, I wanted to be a police officer," Lusk explained. "I tried to enter the Los Angeles Police Department back in the '50s, but then I got an offer for a job that paid a lot more, and they didn't pay very much then.

"I haven't been paid in 20 years, but I enjoy it."

Getting to hit the streets, meet people around town and serve the community are all parts of RSVP that Lusk enjoys. It's still a job with risks, however. Lusk has had more than just insults thrown at

him while citing a traffic violation.

Once, a Los Angeles firefighter illegally parked on El Camino Real became enraged after receiving a ticket and actually tossed a cinderblock at Lusk.

"He was real mad - 'This is the fourth ticket I've got you so-and-so,'" Lusk said, adding that he felt the block sailing past his head.

His partner immediately called for backup, and three officers arrested the man.

It hasn't been easy, particularly when handing out expensive tickets. Parking in a handicapped spot, Lusk said, can run more than \$100; using someone else's placard can hit \$1,000.

"Some people don't like to write tickets," Lusk said. "When I started it was hard. Twenty years later, it's not as hard."

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