

U.S. attorney, FBI agent singled out for work

By Kathryn Reed

It is never the work of one person to put a criminal behind bars; it often takes cooperation at many levels.

The efforts of Michelle Rodriguez, assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of California, has helped get a number of South Lake Tahoe's notorious criminals off the streets for years.

In her 20 years she has worked on the Jaycee Lee Dugard case, Operation Clean Sheets that involved fraud against the Redevelopment Agency, the Fedora bank robbery, multiple child exploitation cases, and more recently the case of disgraced South Lake Tahoe police Officer Johnny Poland, who in November started serving an 18-month sentence for obstruction of an official proceeding.



South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole reads a proclamation for Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Rodriguez.
Photo/LTN

As Mayor Hal Cole read the list of her accomplishments, he

added, "It sounds like we have a horrible city here."

Rodriguez countered, "We're working together to pull the weeds in the community."

While the veteran prosecutor is not retiring, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department and local FBI office believed it was long overdue to recognize Rodriguez's contributions to making the area a safer place by getting criminals locked up.

"What Michelle excels at is digging deeper, finding out what is really there," local FBI Agent Chris Campion said at the ceremony last week.

Tom Osborne, assistant special agent in charge of the Sacramento FBI office, said Rodriguez "is a model for how to get things done."

Rodriguez refused to take full credit for the accomplishments her peers spoke of.

"You guys make the cases and pound the pavement," she said to the room full of officers.

Afterward Rodriguez told *Lake Tahoe News*, "What makes a difference is this community is interested in dealing squarely with the problems confronting it."

She had high praise for Campion who was also honored for his years of service as the resident FBI agent in South Lake Tahoe. He admitted to the irony in everyone being able to keep the surprise from him.

"He can bring resources together and that makes a difference," Rodriguez said.

While Campion is not retiring, his accomplishments were also noted. Both were given proclamations from the city.

"Mr. Campion goes out of his way. He juggles a lot of balls in

the air at the same time and does so with aplomb and grace," Rodriguez said.

Several South Tahoe officers praised the work of Campion.

"One reason I'm here now is this man shoots straight," police Lt. Brian Williams said of Campion. They were involved in a shooting several years ago.

Also being presented was Poland's badge. Campion returned it to Police Chief Brian Uhler. It was recovered during the investigation. Poland had given it to someone with close ties to gangs and violent people, Campion said.