

Boulder Creek welcomes CHP

By KAREN CLARK
Sentinel staff writer

BOULDER CREEK — The early response was more of a trickle than a stampede, but that didn't discourage Officer Monty Emery on opening night of the CHP's first San Lorenzo Valley community-service office.

"In this bad weather, I didn't think there would be much of a turnout," said Emery Thursday night, minutes after setting up shop in the Boulder Creek Fire Department.

The community-service office, which will be open every Thursday from 6-9 p.m., was the brainchild of Emery and Sgt. Frank Koss, who both live in Boulder Creek and saw a need for the California Highway Patrol to have more of a presence in the Valley.

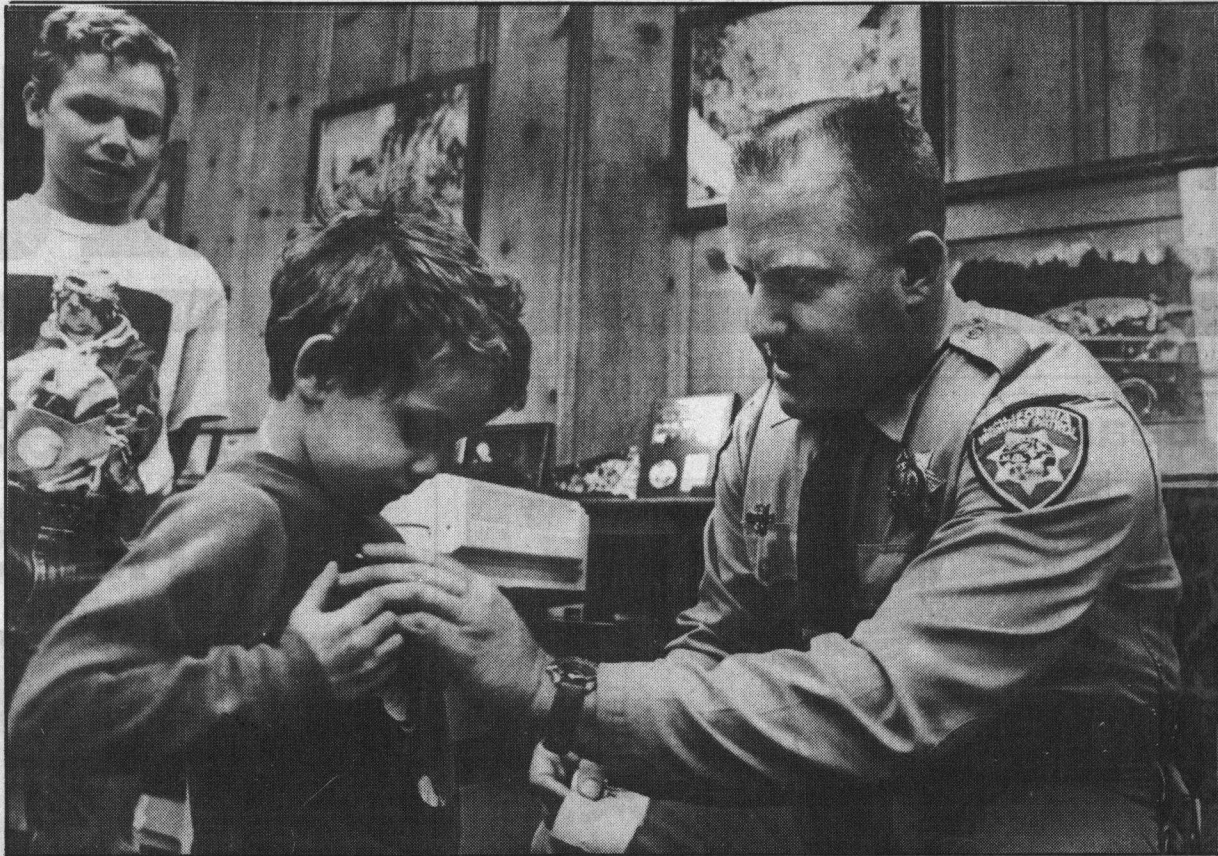
"We've been discussing what we can do as the highway patrol to be of service to the community up here because it's so remote," said Emery, who has patrolled Highway 9 for more than two years. "It seems like we drive around all the time and never have any contact with the community."

The office will be open for Valley residents who need fix-it tickets signed off, or who want to pick up accident forms or other traffic information brochures without having to drive to the CHP's main office in Aptos.

News of the new CHP service was music to Boulder Creek resident Marvin Hinshaw's ears.

"It saves me two hours, and that's good for working people," said Hinshaw, who asked Emery to sign off the fix-it ticket he received for having mismatched tires on his truck. "I had a feeling I'd be the first one (to use the new office). I'm not afraid of these guys like the rest of them."

About 30 minutes later, Emery's second visitor of the night showed



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Officer Monty Emery makes Brent Smith a junior trooper as brother Everett looks on.

up with proof she had gotten the smog certificate necessary to erase her fix-it ticket.

Sandy Smith, who lives in Boulder Creek, also cited the convenience of the new office for Valley residents.

"I was ready to go downtown to have it signed off, but I came in here instead," said Smith. "It's very convenient. Hopefully I won't need it very often."

Lt. Larry Heirigs, a CHP field operations commander, helped Emery christen the new office.

"It's one of our goals for this year to gear more toward service to the public," said Heirigs. "One way we can do that is to be available."

Both Heirigs and Emery likened the effort to old-fashioned community policing, which has become a popular law-enforcement method around the nation.

"Anytime you can deal with people one-on-one, it's beneficial to both sides," said Heirigs. "I see this as a real positive step to get out and mingle with folks, and let them ask questions. ... Frankly,

when we're on a traffic stop we don't want people to stop and ask questions. It could put them in danger."

Heirigs said the new Valley office may take a while to catch on, but he thinks it's a service that will become popular. The CHP will keep statistics, however, and will review them in three to six months.

"It's a test site," said Heirigs. "We're going to see if it's beneficial to tie up an officer here for a couple of hours each week. ... I think it will be."