
Elon police promote first two African American sergeants

By Elizabeth Pattman / Times-News

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More than 125 years since its formation, the Elon Police Department has promoted two of its African American officers to the rank of sergeant for the first time.

Sgts. Ditra Graves and Kedrick King were promoted Sept. 16. Neither knew until now that they were the first African American officers with department to reach sergeant.

“It’s unprecedented and I’m grateful,” Graves said. “I know it’s a blessing. Just like K-9s was unprecedented for me, so is being in the administration and front line supervision.”

“It all came as a shock,” King echoed. “You always hear about Elon, but you don’t know the history of it, so to find out after the process that you are the first African Americans, it’s pretty cool.”

Both King and Graves have a few years of law enforcement experience under their belts.

Graves started her career with the Burlington Police Department in 2012 before moving to Elon four years ago.

“Sometimes you hear kids say, ‘I always want to be a police officer,’ but that wasn’t my testimony,” Graves said. “For me it was destiny-driven. It’s just something I knew I was called to do.

“Because of the risk and everything that goes along with it, you really have to evaluate if that’s really what you want to do, so it took me a little time to be like, ‘OK, I’m ready.’ Once I was ready, it didn’t matter how many ‘No’s’ I heard. I was going for it.”

King, on the other hand, started his career as a jailer in Caswell County for about a year and a half before joining the Elon University Campus Police for three years then transferring to the town.

“I had a good mentor. My mentor is actually the sheriff of Caswell County, Tony Durden. He was my football coach. He kind of coached me through it all. After I went to college, I called him and said, ‘Hey, I need a job.’ So, he gave me a job at the Caswell County Detention Center,” he said. “From there, it’s kind of been like magic. It’s a joy.”

King also added that it’s a particular joy to be working in Elon.

“My sister went to Elon, and my aunt went to Elon, so when I left the Caswell County Sheriff’s Department, ... I wanted to come here, but they weren’t doing any hiring at the time. So when I worked with the university, it was a pleasure to be there, but you just kind of want a little bit more, and I feel like this gives me what I want,” he explained.

“I like the atmosphere. I like that I’m still able to do some things that I was in Burlington, just affecting a different demographic of people,” Graves added.

King is in the patrol division, and Graves also patrols with her K-9 Spartacus. Both of them to hope continue climbing the ranks in Elon as their careers continue.

“It would be an honor to be a chief here. I think that’s anybody’s goal. Anyone who has ever been promoted at Elon knows it’s a great place to work, so you definitely want to rise within that department,” King said.

“For me, going up is good. I love K-9, I love working with the different agencies in Alamance County that I get to work with, so I know me and my dog have plenty of years ahead of us,” Graves added. “While I’m here, I’m enjoying it, being impactful and just being that leader that I’ve been called to be.”

Also promoted alongside Graves and King were Sgts. Brad Brenner and Robert Lovett.

“We’re making history,” Graves said.

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