

Deputy Runs to the Top of Mount Whitney in Support of Department Families

“Charity begins at home,” as the saying goes. And there is no better example of that than Deputy Sheriff Damon Collier, assigned to Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department Custody Division.

Deputy Collier took it upon himself in a rather unique way to raise money for two Department families in need of medical assistance: He decided to run up Mount Whitney. Mount Whitney is the highest summit in the contiguous United States, with an elevation of 14,505 feet. It is on the boundary between California’s Inyo and Tulare counties, 84.6 miles west-northwest of Death Valley, which is the lowest point in North America. Mount Whitney’s summit is the southern terminus of the John Muir Trail which runs 211.9 miles; the east slope is in the Inyo National Forest.

To say the least, Deputy Collier is committed to bringing home some relief to these families. But this story is not about Deputy Collier, as he always says, it is about the Williams and Cechin families.

The first family Deputy Collier came to know was the Williams. Their story began on January 2, 2014, when Sergeant Glen Williams, also assigned to Custody Division, was transported to a hospital by his daughter for a partially blocked airway; a small piece of meat was lodged in his esophagus. The doctor removed the object, but during the procedure, the doctor nicked the esophagus wall. Because of the delicateness of the injury, the doctor had to repair the damage under general anesthesia. Glen never regained consciousness and has been in a coma ever since.



Trail marker at the beginning of the journey.

More than 25 years ago, Sergeant Williams married his junior high school sweetheart, Melissa, and raised three beautiful children with her. Sergeant Williams was a man of few words, but his actions and his regard for deputies spoke volumes. He listened and shared his vast knowledge with anyone who asked. His warmth and caring for those around him is a testament to this sergeant; a true gentleman.

Sergeant Williams receives round-the-clock care and Deputy Collier wanted to provide some measure of aid, if even for emotional support, with his run.

The next family Deputy Collier wanted to help was the Cechins. Desirae Cechin is the niece of Custody Assistant Jennifer Cechin. Desirae was diagnosed about six months ago with stage 4 Neuroblastoma Cancer and is undergoing extensive treatment.



An inspiring mountainside view.

“I desperately wanted to help the families with any medical costs,” Collier said. “I decided to raise money and awareness for Glen and Desirae by running round trip from the Mount Whitney portal (8,600 feet) to the summit (14,505 feet).”

Collier continued, “Over the last 25 years, God has allowed me to run events to raise money and awareness for other Sheriff’s Department families, and I am honored and blessed to be able to do so.”

On August 26 of this year, Deputy Collier secured sponsorship from family, friends and coworkers, and ran from the Mount Whitney portal to the summit and back in 6 hours and 20 minutes. The weather on the summit is always a challenge; cold, overcast, sometimes raining, sometimes snowing. The wide swing in temperatures also can make it difficult. As an example, Collier said, the day he ran the weather conditions ranged from 85 degrees at the portal to 26 degrees at the summit.

The amount of money raised is still being calculated, but Deputy Collier is just grateful to be able to bring some form of relief to these families.

As he said: “...I am honored and blessed to do so.”

“Charity begins at home.” But sometimes one’s home is on the chilly, imposing summit of the Nation’s largest mountain.



Deputy Damon Collier at the mountain summit!



Deputy Damon Collier on his way up the mountain.