

## Employee Focus

### “Chico, the Bike Man”

David “Chico” Cole is a familiar face to many who visit downtown Blacksburg on weekdays. For almost ten years, Chico has been seen riding his bike, patrolling the streets of Blacksburg as one of the police department’s bike patrol officers. Recently *the* Community Relations Office sat down with Chico to find out more about him.

#### Quick Facts:

**Name:** David “Chico” Cole

**Hometown:** Radford, VA

**Birthday:** May 8, 1968

**Martial Status:** Married to Lisa, one daughter Haley (9)

**Pets:** Miniature Dachshund - Reese, American Eskimo - Nicci, Cat – Kelsi

**Favorite Movie:** *Sling Blade*

#### Where did you get the nickname Chico?

I actually got it in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. From a guy I went to high school with....We were both on the baseball team. He saddled me with it and it stuck ever since.

#### How old were you when you thought, “Hey, I would like to be a police officer?”

I actually have a newspaper article that the *News Journal* did on my dad because he was a police officer in Radford. I was 15 at the time and saying that that’s what I wanted to do. I knew that was the direction I wanted to go in life.

#### How long have you been a police officer?

Almost 18 years. I was a Deputy Sheriff with the City of Radford for about 9 months. I didn’t like working inside so I went to work with the Town of Pulaski and worked there as a road officer for almost 4 years. Then I came to Blacksburg.

#### How long have you been an officer with the Town of Blacksburg?

A little over 13 years.

#### How long have you been a bike officer?

In April it will be 10 years.

#### Do you like being a bike officer or is it just part of the job?

I love it. It’s being out. It’s being in the open - not being confined to a space like the inside of a car. I’m a people person so it allows me to be able to get out and chat with people and talk with people and still do the law enforcement function. This type of position suits me and fits me like a hand in a glove. It’s perfect.

#### How many miles a day do you ride?

Normally I would say anywhere between 10 and 20 miles a day.

#### What are some of the challenges you face in your job?

I think all in all in the job itself, one of the major challenges you face is dealing with people who have mental health crisis’. You have to use all of your experience a lot of times to try to help that person and to find something that will meet the needs they have. A lot of times can be a challenge in and of itself.

#### What have been some of the most unusual/unforgettable things that have happened on your shift?

As a road officer you don’t get many opportunities to investigate crimes. About 5 years ago a guy called the police department because he had information that he thought would prove his roommate had killed

his dog. I listened to what he told me and the more he talked, the more I thought it was worth looking into. And just through the course of that investigation the guy was convicted. It was very gratifying because I have been a pet owner my entire life, but also because it was such a challenge to put the pieces of that puzzle together to get a charge and conviction.

Also several years ago it was during Thanksgiving Break and people had just put Christmas Trees on sale. I was working the evening shift and I'm going down North on Main Street. Just past Bogen's, a car comes off of Giles Road and I see what I thought was a Christmas Tree on top of a car. I thought, "It's 11:30 pm, they've stolen a tree." When I got behind the car at Turner Street, I turned the lights on and realized it wasn't a Christmas Tree on top of the car, it was a person. There's this guy laying on top of the car with a Lay's potato chip bag stuck over his head. The driver and the guy on top were drunk. The guy had jumped on top and they'd shut the car doors on his hands so he wouldn't fall off. After I pull them over, he gets off the top of the car and starts eating the potato chips out of the bag that had been on his head. I said, "Why did you put him on top?" and they said, "Well we didn't have anywhere inside for him to ride." The driver got a dui, but I didn't have the heart to arrest the guy on top.

**What do you like best about your job?**

As far as riding the bike, it's the freedom, the not being confined to a space. And it's being able to be out and talk to people and get to know people on a first name basis.

**What do you like least about your job?**

I wish I never had to arrest anyone. I wish that people behaved enough to where you didn't have to arrest them. While it's gratifying to catch someone doing something wrong, you still wish deep down that everyone behaved in such a way that you didn't have to do that.

**If you were not a police officer, what would you want to be?**

A school teacher. A coach or health/phys ed teacher. Something along those lines.

**What do you love most about Blacksburg?**

I think it's the wide variety of people that are here. If you talk to people and listen to what they have to say you can learn a lot about people.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**

My hobby is weight lifting.

**Where would people most likely see you?**

The most frequent places are College Avenue, Draper Road, and Main Street