

## **Following the ‘Blue Bloods’ path**

### **Son to graduate from CMC law enforcement academy, just like his parents**

<http://enews.coloradomtn.edu/2017/06/09/following-blue-bloods-path/>

**By Mike McKibbin**

**June 9, 2017**

Law enforcement runs in the Wheatley family.

Quenton Wheatley will graduate from the Colorado Mountain College Colorado Law Enforcement Training Academy (CLETA) this year, 16 years after his mom and dad did the same thing.

“I didn’t really think about it until I was old enough to start wondering what I wanted to do,” Wheatley said. “I guess 21 was old enough and I had enough life experience.”

The program is based at the Spring Valley campus outside Glenwood Springs, but this year’s commencement will be held at the CMC Rifle campus on Friday, May 5, with guest speaker Gov. John Hickenlooper. Assistant program director Stu Curry said since CMC is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the program invited past graduates, many of whom are now police chiefs, assistant chiefs, detectives or hold other positions, to the ceremony. To ensure they would have room to seat everyone, the event was moved to Rifle.

The CLETA program began in the mid-1970s in the Eagle/Vail area and moved to Spring Valley in the late 1980s. The CMC academy has graduated over 1,400 officers and placed graduates in more than 100 Colorado law enforcement agencies.

The program has helped educate and train most of the officers that now protect and serve the state’s central mountain jurisdictions. Active duty officers teach between 60 to 70 percent of the curriculum, so it is current and field-tested.

After deciding to follow in the footsteps of both parents, the now-27-year-old Wheatley has been offered and accepted a position as a deputy with the Pitkin County Sheriff’s Office.

His mother, Penny Paxton, and father, Kirk Wheatley, were in the same class in the fall of 2001. Paxton was the first female police officer and sergeant with the Basalt Police Department and now works for the State of Colorado’s Marijuana Enforcement Division. Kirk Wheatley was an Eagle County Sheriff’s deputy and is now an Aspen police officer.

Having two cops as parents was different for Quenton as he grew up.

“Most of the other kids knew what my parents did,” he said. “Especially my mom, because she was a school resource officer. I just told the other kids that their parents all had jobs, too, mine were just a little more public.”

Curry is also a program graduate from the Class of 2001, the same one as Wheatley's parents, and the first one overseen by program director Kevin Brun, who plans to retire at the end of year, when he will have helped 45 classes of officers begin their careers.

"The strength of the program has always been the partnerships with nearly all the agencies in the region," Curry said. "We have about 25 to 30 adjunct instructors and they're all active officers that represent the entire geographic area."

For example, Curry said law enforcement officers from Aspen, Pitkin County, Carbondale, New Castle, Vail and a retired Colorado State Patrol trooper were among those who taught classes this year.

"They do a great job and they're always trying to improve," Wheatley added. "It's good to know that we have some of the best training at a smaller academy right here."

Wheatley said the compressed, one-semester, 16-week program helps students "test yourself, see how much you can learn and what you're capable of."

Wheatley said he had not yet decided what direction to take his law enforcement career.

"I just want to be proficient and gain as much experience as I can at the entry level," he stated. "I really like teaching, so maybe helping train at the academy as an adjunct instructor at some point."