

# HISPANIC IMPACT

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**JUSTIN PAEZ**  
DUBLIN CHIEF OF POLICE

## Leading with Empathy to Inspire and Serve Others: Meet Dublin Chief of Police, Justin Paez

2020 has been a year of unprecedented events, to say the least. This new decade brought a global pandemic, and conversations about equality in America. Even through this unusual time in our lives, Justin Paez seems to find the motivation to work hard and remain a leader for his community. Chief Paez, of the Dublin Police Department, has dedicated his career to protecting and serving his community with the utmost respect, empathy, and gratitude. His family and mentors have shaped his perspective on life and have allowed him to grow and seek new opportunities through the span of his career.



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*Leadership is about learning to guide others through tough times. It's convincing and inspiring others that we're going to get through it by doing it together.*

## Tell me a bit about your childhood

My grandfather was a Mexican migrant farmworker residing in Alice, Texas. He moved to Willard, Ohio for work on rich fertile farmland where he grew crops and vegetables. I was born and raised in Willard for the first 16 years of my life. We eventually moved to Toledo, Ohio, where I spent my last years of high school. After high school, I went on to study at Bowling Green State University, where I majored in criminal justice. Upon graduating from college, I started at the Ohio Peace officers training academy, and shortly after, in 2001 I received my first policing job in Oregon, Ohio.

## Why did you choose a career in law enforcement?

Growing up, my parents were a huge inspiration because they were very hardworking. They instilled the principles of hard work, gratitude, and empathy in me. I always knew that I wanted to do something that helped benefit the community, and I saw what my father did. It wasn't just that he was a police officer, it was how he served. It was the compassion and care he showed for his community in Willard. How he did it was what inspired me. I realized if I am going to do good in the world, this is the path that I want to take to make it a better place.



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*My family has taught me more than they'll ever know, more than I could ever teach them*

My family is certainly important to me. Having 5 kids teaches you a lot of lessons. Our kids are fantastic, which is just a testament to my wife. She has been phenomenal in helping me grow, develop, and become a compassionate and empathetic leader. One of the things we talk about with our kids is that we're not here on earth to get as much as we can but to give.

## What other experiences have shaped your life and career?

While my parents and grandfather instilled the principles of hard work and gratitude, my perspective on life was changed while watching my father go above and beyond to seek new opportunities to make a better life for himself and others. My desire for my career in leadership has been doing exactly that. To work well with others, and make life a little easier so that people can take advantage of what opportunities are in front of them, and hopefully, they will pass that on to others. In my career in law enforcement, I've been very blessed to be around exceptional leaders and great mentors

who have shared with me what they know in this profession. I've used that to make myself a better police officer, leader, administrator, and community member. As I get to the back half of my career my hope is to share that as much as I can with the police department, and members of our community.

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*There's no limit to what you can do and accomplish together*

## Can you describe your journey to your current position as chief?

I started my career right out of college. I'll always be grateful to the City of Oregon, Ohio for giving me my start. I felt like I was needed and had a good impact on the community. In 2003 I got a call from Lieutenant Tom Hirschy, who asked me to move to the city of Dublin with my family. There I became a member of the Police Department as a patrol officer. Following that, I've had experience as a patrol corporal first-line supervisor, sergeant, and accreditation manager in the professional standards office. Eventually, I was promoted to lieutenant, and I was over our entire bureau, serving in operations and our support services department. Last year, in 2019 I was promoted to Deputy Chief. Two months later, our Chief retired and I became interim Chief. Last June, I was sworn-in to my current position as Chief of Police.

## What has motivated you the most throughout your career?

I've had a number of opportunities within the organization to work in different functions. What has motivated me is seeing opportunities in front of me and being able to serve in new capacities. I've loved sharing my ideas and perspectives for the direction and trajectory of the organization as we evolve. I've gotten the chance to work with so many different individuals who all have a unique story. Bringing together and building their ideas collectively has been my



Click on the image to see Chief Paez address the recent protests in the community.

## How has the Police Department adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic?

This year has had unique wrinkles. It's a whole new arena of how we have to respond to our community and ensure public safety in ways we haven't had to in the past. What makes our organization special is the resiliency of the members. Where there is a problem they want to be called to solve it. We've come to work every single day and have had to adjust to how we interact with the public to ensure safety. We've introduced telephone reporting, online reporting, learning new safety protocols, wearing our masks, and figuring out how to navigate service without exposing or spreading the virus.

passion at this organization. Figuring out how we can push ourselves to become a better version of our police department helps to serve, protect, and build a partnership with members of our community.



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*I take a lot of pride in the members of our Police Department. We currently have a fantastic membership and amazing support from the community.*

## What comes to mind when you consider the increased attention to policing around the country?

I want to be sure that we are actively engaged in the community as a public safety entity, and that we lean in and lead as professionals. We have been fortunate to have community conversation and a partnership in Dublin. I was able to attend the protests in June to meet with community members. It's important to me to truly understand what questions, concerns, and desires they have. I think it's crucial right now that we hear voices who are feeling empowered to share their truth, perspective, and passion for positive change.



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*We are only blessed to do what we get to do because the community permits us to do it.*

## Can you share with us change you've implemented at the Dublin Police Department which stands out for you?

When I look back at my career and I realize that there is so much I had a hand in to help guide. Since my start as Chief, I have had the chance to revise the mission statement and core values of the department. We also had many promotions by adding new supervisors. Moving members into new positions allowed them to see their full potential. Anytime as a leader, I am able to empower others is a blessing. I really hope that when I am done here, that the community knows that I deeply cared for my opportunity to work as Police Chief. That extends to the members of the department as well. I have big shoes to fill but my hope is to continue the legacy of my mentors by honoring their careers.

## Can you share with us some of the exciting upcoming projects you are looking to implement at the Dublin Police Department?

I'm very excited about some of our upcoming projects. Currently, we are having an ongoing conversation about social justice, inequality, and discrimination in America. Our City Council recently passed a resolution to enact two community groups that would allow us to continue that conversation. One is the Chief Advisory Committee, a group of 10 stakeholders that represent minority groups throughout the City of Dublin. We started this to share perspectives and recommendations on how we can discuss

policing in America and specifically in Dublin. It allows us to lean in and better protect and serve in Dublin, our state and our communities. Also, recently the city has started with the Community Task Force. This is an organization where the Council, the city manager, and other stakeholders will engage in dialogue regarding the community as a whole, whether that be public safety, the school system, or city council adjustments.



CHIEF PAEZ EMBRACING A COMMUNITY MEMBER DURING A BLM PROTEST

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*I am so blessed for the opportunity to move to Dublin with my family and I'll spend the rest of my career trying to repay that debt for all of the blessings we have received here.*