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


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Agent's wife uses Internet to assist other patrol mates

Associated Press
Oct. 26, 2002 12:00 AM

YUMA - Vanessa Herron is using the Internet to return a favor to a friend who helped Herron settle into Yuma when her husband was hired as a Border Patrol agent here.

Herron, a former Web site designer, built a Web page, www.bpspouses.com, that features information about the towns along the Mexican border with Border Patrol stations.

Spouses planning a move can log onto a chat room and ask questions or discuss fears, problems or myths about living on the border, Herron said.

"It gives them comfort," she said. "It's nice to be able to correspond with somebody that's already been there."

Newly hired agents arrive from all around the United States and don't always know station assignments until late in the hiring stages. Many must move families on short notice, a stressful task.

Herron, who grew up in Oklahoma, said that she had trouble when she moved to Yuma in 1999.

"Heck, I didn't even know how to get to Wal-Mart," she said.

She said hundreds of spouses have sought advice on the Web site, which is independent of the Border Patrol, since she created it three years ago.

Now, spouses living in the same cities are starting to connect, she said. Herron herself has met with newcomers and showed them around the city.

Mostly, spouses want to know about the schools and where to buy homes but they may vent about the hectic training academy schedule.

"It's a wonderful thing this knowledge is out there," said Angie Plumlee, the wife of a Yuma agent who moved here from Texas.

Plumlee gives new agents and their families a welcome packet that contains helpful phone numbers and "anything we can get to help their transition from point A to point B easier," she said.

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

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