

https://democratherald.com/corvallis/news/local/elections/linn-county-sheriff-election-2022-michelle-duncan-looks-to-keep-her-job/article_c767007e-3b69-11ed-84c7-4f98cd22a9ef.html

ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK

Linn County sheriff election 2022: Michelle Duncan looks to keep her job

Maddie Pfeifer

Sep 27, 2022



Linn County Sheriff Michelle Duncan hopes voters will officially elect her in the Nov. 8 General Election. Appointed to her current role, she has served as sheriff since January.

Kylie Graham, Mid-Valley Media

Maddie Pfeifer

Editor's note: This is the first of two Linn County sheriff candidate profiles. The profile of challenger Jon Raymond will run tomorrow.

Michelle Duncan wants to continue what she's started as Linn County sheriff. She **assumed the position by appointment in January**, and she's hoping voters will officially elect her in November.

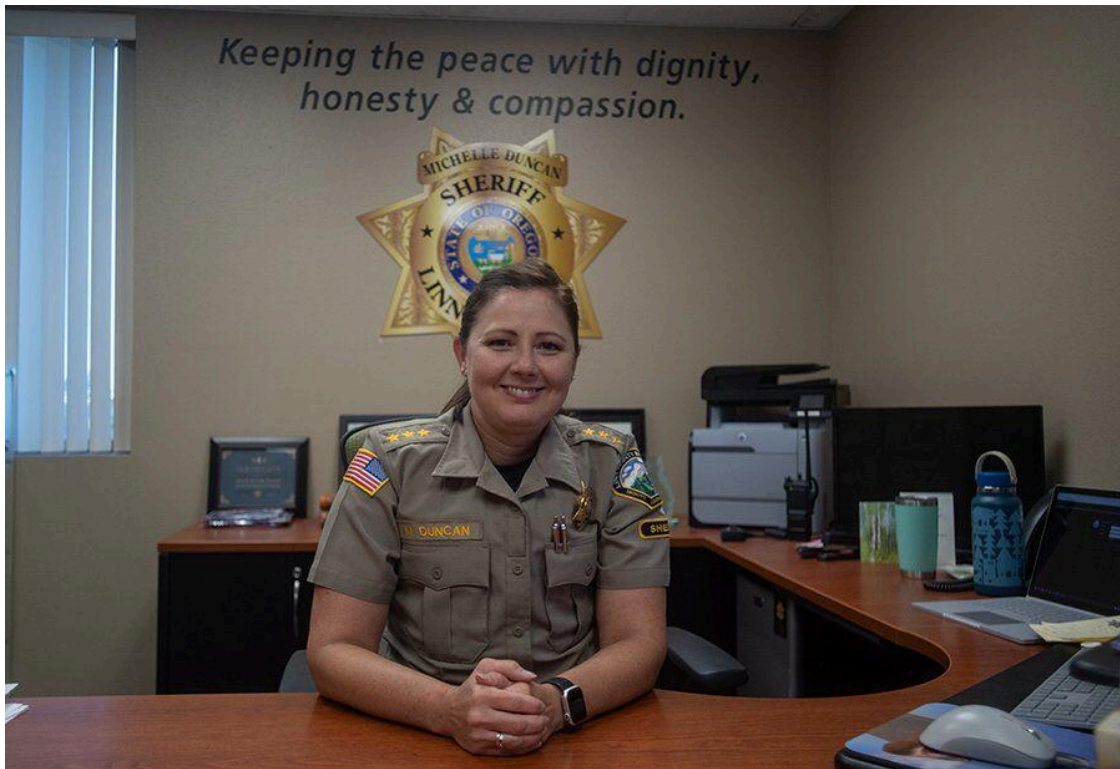
Duncan is the county's **41st sheriff and the first woman to hold the job**. She took the job after former Sheriff Jim Yon **retired early**. This has been the pattern in Linn County in recent years: a sheriff retires early, a new sheriff is appointed (usually the undersheriff) and then runs as an incumbent in the next election.

People are also reading...

- 1 **Linn County comic restorer accused of theft, fraud scheme**
- 2 **Temporary city manager will permanently fill Lebanon post**
- 3 **Trial date set for trucker in multi-fatal I-5 crash**
- 4 **Harrisburg man killed in Coburg-area shooting**

This year's election will be the **first contested general election sheriff's race in Linn County in 26 years**. Duncan will be facing off against longtime LCSO Deputy **Jon Raymond**.

In response to claims she gets an unfair advantage as the incumbent, Duncan said previous sheriffs have not necessarily retired early with the purpose of handing down the job to their undersheriff. She added that incumbents don't always win and voters always have a choice, even in past elections.



Linn County Sheriff Michelle Duncan speaks on what it would mean to her if voters elected her to the position.

Working through the ranks

Duncan's law enforcement passion started in high school when she joined a cadet program that specialized in police.

She started her professional career in April 1997 with the Oregon State Penitentiary as a corrections officer. She had lived in Linn County for a little while as a kid and knew she wanted to return to Oregon.

The Linn County Sheriff's Office hired Duncan as a patrol deputy in July 1997. She ended up as a resident deputy for Mill City, which she said helped her understand the relationship between a community and police.

"Each little community has their own individualistic needs that are important to them," she said. "You learn about having relationships with the city itself and the counselors and listening to their concerns."

A switch to Salem

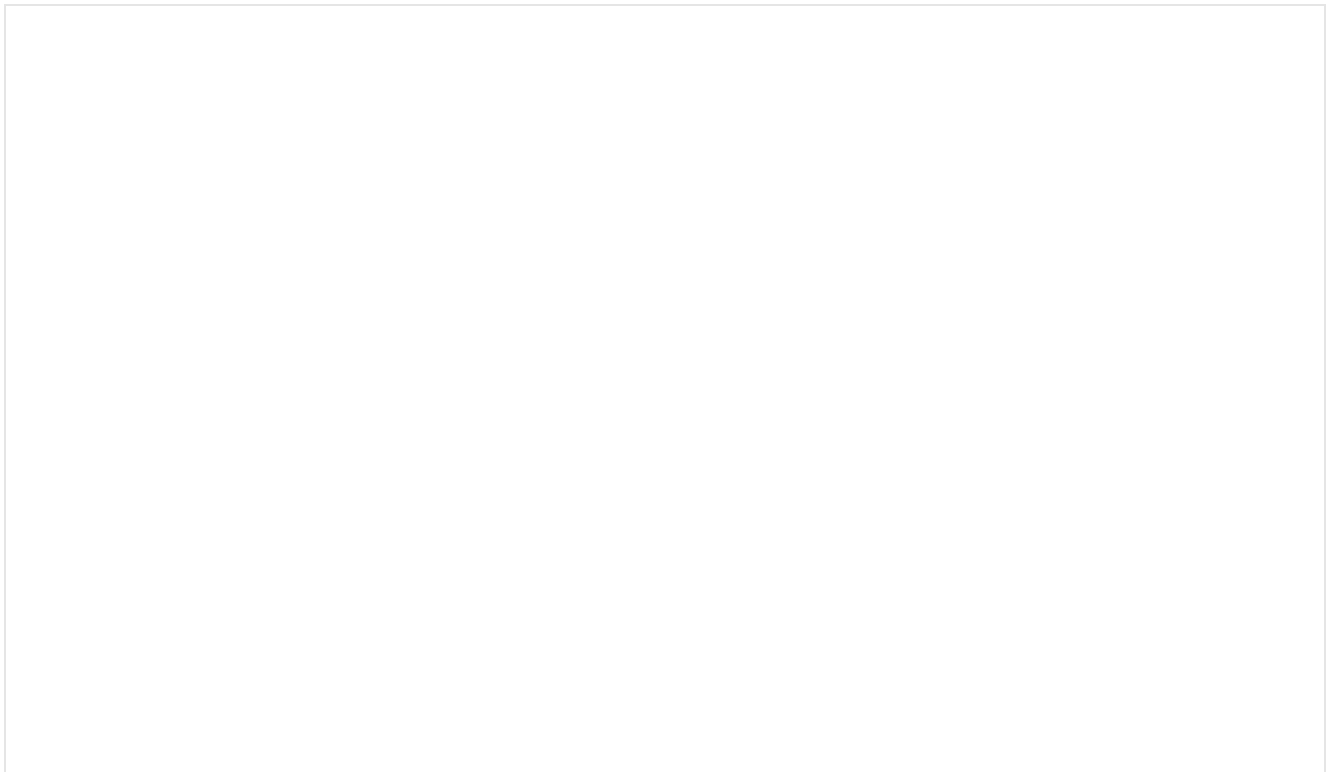
She resigned from LCSO in April 2001 and started working for the Salem Police Department. At the time she was living in Mill City since it was mandatory as the Mill City resident deputy.

Many people she had arrested as a deputy, including a convicted murderer, knew where she lived with her family, she said. Her son was 2 years old at the time, and she wanted to keep his safety in mind.

“I applied and was hired at Salem PD,” Duncan said in an email. “Salem was a good agency but just had a much different feel to it than I had at LCSO — much more disconnected. I missed the family atmosphere and just simply the way LCSO connected with the community. I promptly came back to LCSO and never looked back.”

Months later, in July 2001, Duncan returned to LCSO and eventually took the role of narcotics detective. She said drug enforcement is a passion of hers.

She kept working through the ranks and was promoted to sergeant in 2008, lieutenant in 2015, captain in 2020 and **undersheriff in 2021**.



Quality journalism doesn't happen without your help

Taking on responsibility

According to Department of Public Safety Standards and Training records, Duncan has logged a total of around 2,957 hours of training since 1997.

As she took on more leadership roles, Duncan said she learned skills she believes are crucial for running a sheriff's office.

“I can tell you right now, as a deputy, and I did a very good job as a deputy, I would not have been ready for this position without all those years in between and learning all those different lessons of leadership like employee management, budget, policy and procedure,” she said.

Duncan said the sheriff needs to be able to wear many hats and balance a variety of responsibilities because the sheriff's office is not just a law enforcement agency but a business too.

Creating change

Duncan has a handful of key issues she wants to address should she continue her job as sheriff. These include bolstering hiring, opening up the jail to full capacity, addressing the mental health crisis as well as prioritizing employee mental health.

She said she's already started working on these issues during her time as sheriff and believes her experience puts her in a better position than her opponent and his planned undersheriff — Raymond has publicly stated his intent to appoint LCSO Deputy Travis Boshart his undersheriff — to make change happen.

“Both of those deputies are nice guys, and I think that we actually probably agree on a lot of the same things that are frustrating and the things we can't do,” Duncan said. “The difference between the two of us is I understand some of the reasons why,” she said, adding that neither Raymond or Boshart has approached her in her roles as a captain or lieutenant to better understand those issues.

Duncan said her choice in undersheriff also will help her make good decisions on behalf of the agency and community. Micah Smith is the current Linn County undersheriff.

“I picked my undersheriff because I knew he wasn't like me,” Duncan said. “I knew that he would bring a perspective and have advice that I may not think about.”

After November

If Duncan is not elected as sheriff in November, she suspects she'll likely be out of a job with the regime change. And so will Smith because Raymond intends to appoint Boshart.

“I don't feel that I have done anything as the sheriff or as any other position that I've had to be put in the position to lose my job,” she said.

Running on a campaign supported by five former Linn County sheriffs, Duncan believes her experience and dedication to the agency makes her the right candidate come November. She said those endorsements underscore she knows how to do the job.

Despite that support, the Linn County Deputy Sheriff's Association has backed Raymond. Duncan said she had asked the association to not get involved with the election, so there wouldn't be any divisions among members. She added the decision to support Raymond was not unanimous and not all members participated in the vote.

“I think my track record speaks for itself,” Duncan said. “I have the proven leadership and experience to do this job. I will put my work ethic up against just about anybody's, and I think I've proven that time and time again.”

- **More mid-valley elections coverage**

Maddie Pfeifer covers public safety for Mid-Valley Media. She can be contacted at 541-812-6091 or Madison.Pfeifer@lee.net. Follow her on Twitter via [@maddiepfeifer_](https://twitter.com/maddiepfeifer_)

By Maddie Pfeifer

Reporter
