



City of De Pere

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

De Pere detective sergeant retires after decades of helping child, sexual and other abuse victims

De Pere, WI: Offering a humble summary of decades of profound help and support given to our area's most vulnerable victims of abuse - eyes moist - Thomas Schrank sits back in office chair on his final week with the De Pere Police Department, and says quietly, "It's been a good career."

That career comes to its official conclusion today (Thursday, Aug. 2) as Detective Sergeant Schrank retires after 17 years of service in De Pere, and 39 years in law enforcement overall.

And while it unquestionably was a "good career" by any measure, it was also far more than that – and meant far more than that, according to De Pere Police Chief Derek Beiderwieden.

"Tom's professionalism, hard work and high level of excellence was apparent in all he did. Nowhere was this more evident or needed than in his investigations of child victims, some stories of which are purely heart wrenching. His longtime service in this area is commendable, and his service to our community over multiple generations was – and will always be - greatly appreciated," Beiderwieden said.

Schrank first joined the De Pere Police Department in 2001 as an investigator of crimes against children.

Prior to his arrival in De Pere, he first started his career in law enforcement in 1981. He spent 20 years with the Marquette County Sheriff Office (MCSD), beginning as a jailer/dispatcher, then becoming a deputy and eventually a detective sergeant. While at MCSD, he did school programs and started his initial years in sensitive crime investigation and specialized in crimes against children.

In his longtime service with the De Pere Police Department, Schrank also has dedicated much of his career to investigating crimes against children and other sensitive issues. For these efforts and more, he recently was honored this past May at a "Respect for Law Enforcement" Banquet. One officer was honored from each of the 10 law enforcement agencies in Brown County.

This recognition was appreciated, but these types of awards - or any material rewards, for that matter - have never been the driving force for Schrank.

"I always looked at the job, and it wasn't about what I received for income. I viewed a successful week as being one where I received five hugs or more. Working in the 'sensitive' crime area, it's exactly that. Child abuse. Sexual abuse. Elder abuse. You name it," Schrank said. "I feel sometimes people, even in this line of work, forget about the empathy you have to have for these people - and I like to believe that my strongest point was that I had empathy."

Often sitting down with those hurt and struggling with his signature pink handcuffs hanging from his beltline, a calm voice, genuine smile and a tidal wave of empathy to offer, the hugs poured in.



“People felt that. And they felt cared for. I was very fortunate that throughout my career I established many, many lasting friendships out of meeting people at the worst times of their lives.”

And 39 years later, this has fulfilled the purpose that guided Schrank into law enforcement in the first place.

“I believed in my heart that law enforcement was the path I wanted to follow because I felt that I could have the biggest impact on the largest number of people,” he said.

This impact came in many ways.

During his illustrious career, Detective Sergeant Schrank acquired a diverse, wide-spread skill set. This included knowledge in interviewing techniques, death investigations, arson investigations, forensic interviewing of children, sexual assault nurse examiner training, basic SWAT training, child homicide investigations, shaken baby investigations, child abuse/neglect, surveillance and numerous other important facets of law enforcement. He has also trained as a mediator - specifically divorce mediation - along with general mediation. He uses those skills often during case investigations, bringing a different perspective and tact when dealing with situations.

Overall, Schrank said there have been unfathomable changes in law enforcement from when he started nearly 40 years ago.

“I look back after all this time, when I was starting out as the only person on the road covering an entire county, with spotty service and no walkie talkie and I see how things are these days ... the changes have just been mind-blowing from when I started to where we are now.”

But there are a couple things that Schrank has always tried to retain as unwavering constants in his own career, and urges others to as well:

“For the fellow officers that are out there - especially the young ones - the best advice I can give them is to stay humble, and kind.”

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