

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: March 20, 2019

City of De Pere
335 South Broadway
De Pere, WI 54115-1199
www.de-pere.org

Contact: Andrew Pantzlaff
Communications Specialist
Phone: 920-339-2371
apantzlaff@mail.de-pere.org



Unexpected path: Captain Haagen retires after decades of service in De Pere

DE PERE, WIS. – A penchant for keeping the peace as the middle child of three boys? Or perhaps enjoying cops and robbers television shows as a kid? Was this the genesis of what would become a lifelong journey in law enforcement?

Captain Dale Haagen reflects on this for a moment, pondering so many fleeting, small moments that can profoundly influence the path of a child.

But in the end, he thinks not.

Instead, Haagen, who is retiring now after nearly three decades of service with the De Pere Police Department, said his reason for getting into this line of work is simply unexplainable. Good fortune and fate, being the most likely culprits.



What is explainable, though, is the singular reason he remained committed to this career once fate led him to it.

“You view every day as an opportunity to have a positive impact on someone’s life or in the community. To make it a safer or better place to be,” Haagen said.

Indeed, where there was once uncertainty, this profound and continuous opportunity to do good for others brought everything into focus.

“I kind of fell into law enforcement. I hadn’t planned on this. It wasn’t a childhood dream. I went to college and had taken courses in several different topics before discovering my interests clearly were in serving others, and the best fit was law enforcement,” he said, before admitting “I’ve always said that if a better career or opportunity presented itself, I would certainly take a look at it.

“After 32-plus years, I haven’t found a better opportunity than this.”

Haagen's 32-plus year journey began on Oct. 6, 1986 in the City of Milwaukee. He worked for Milwaukee 5 ½ years as a patrol officer and then accepted a job in De Pere, where he's worked ever since.

He started with the City of De Pere as a patrol officer on May 16, 1992. Haagen then started his role as Captain in the department on Nov. 1, 1999 - giving him just shy of 27 years of total service in De Pere.

During this time, there have been so many moments – some tremendously good, and some chillingly bad – that he's had to process. And, overall, there's been too many people, too many situations, too many encounters over more than 10,000 days on the job to pick out a most memorable moment, or most meaningful.

It's all been important to him.

But, then, once more, Captain Haagen reflects on this, pondering so many fleeting, small moments that can profoundly influence the path of a child.

And something hits home.

"You never know when you're going to make that impact. It's not always the big calls. A lot of times it's the little things you do that people remember that really didn't seem like a big deal, but was a big deal to them," Haagen said. "I've participated in Shop with a Cop for 20 years. Officers are paired with a child to take them Christmas shopping to buy gifts for their family members. One of our officers had a traffic stop recently, and the child in the back seat asked: 'Do you know Captain Dale?'"

"When the Officer replied they did, the child said: 'Can you tell him, All Hail Captain Dale!'"



Haagen had the child as a shopping buddy for Shop with a Cop a few years back, and from this encounter, an ongoing mantra of "All Hail Captain Dale" was born – and carried on far beyond Haagen's expectations.

"It was hilarious," Haagen said, reflecting with a smile. "That the child remembered this - and relayed this to the officer - is amazing. That's one of those moments that doesn't seem significant but is definitely one of those moments for me, as well as the child."

After three decades of service and helping in both big and small moments to make De Pere a safer, better place; Haagen wraps up the final moments of his storied, enjoyable, and completely unexpected career in law enforcement this Friday, March 22.

###