

## Heroic deeds

### Hills officer extends lifeline on his beat

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

As a police officer, Brian Bastianelli signed on to protect residents. He saves a few of them, too.

His training as a paramedic has allowed him to save two lives in Farmington Hills, including that of a 1-year-old child. Bastianelli, who only joined the department 1 1/2 years ago, was named as a VFW Police Officer of the Year for 1997.

The former Grosse Pointe Woods public safety officer was honored at the VFW Recognition Banquet Feb. 14. Chief Bill Dwyer praised the officer, "whose actions are in the highest tradition of the Farmington Hills Police Department."

Bastianelli only did what came naturally when he heard a call on the radio about a baby who had stopped breathing. When he arrived, the child's face was already blue.

Using his training as a paramedic with Livingston County EMS, he immediately opened the child's airway. The baby started breathing.

Bastianelli continues to visit the family to see how the boy is doing. "The baby is doing real well," he said.

Followup visits are not required, but Bastianelli does so anyway.

"Whether the outcome is good or whether the outcome is bad, it adds a personal touch and shows the police department really cares about their community," he



Brian Bastianelli

said. "It shows we're not just a badge or just a uniform, it shows we're people too."

Besides, "It helps me cope with the situation," he said.

Not all lifesaving incidents end happily.

Hills Officer John Haupt and Bastianelli were at the end of their shift when they voluntarily responded to a call of a man in full cardiac arrest.

Bastianelli provided CPR, which was credited in prolonging the elderly man's life. He died later.

"I checked up on him a week later and he seemed to be doing well," Bastianelli said. "They had moved him from intensive care to the step-down unit."

In addition to two lifesaving awards, Bastianelli also earned commendations for his work in the arrest of a drive-by shooting suspect and for taking the gun off a man who threatened to kill a woman.

The 1988 Bishop Foley graduate became a trained paramedic and worked as a volunteer firefighter in Troy with one goal — to become a police officer. At the time, police departments were not hiring, so he thought he'd try to the public safety route where firefighting and police work are required.

"I thought that it would make me more marketable," he said. As it turned out, Bastianelli was hired out of 1,000 applicants for his Farmington Hills police job, which now includes working in the city's north side as a community liaison officer.

He's a go-to guy for residents who may have complaints about speeders or other problems in their neighborhood. He thrives on it.

"All I ever wanted to be was a police officer," he said. "Even when I was a child."



### Gallie gathering

Firehouse visit: French exchange students listen to Farmington Hills firefighter and Quebec native Robert Picard explain the inner workings of the department. The students are staying with Farmington area families through an exchange program for middle school students.

STAFF PHOTO  
BY  
SHARON LEMAY

### Restaurant worker's dash tracked down purse thief

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Nick Dietzel's best time in the 60-yard dash didn't come as a member of his high school track team: It was when he snatched a purse snatcher.

That also turned out to be the thief's worst time. Dietzel hauled down the man who ran off with a woman's purse at Steamer's Seafood Grill on 12 Mile Road Oct. 1.

Dietzel, who is a busboy at the eatery, was honored with a Civilian Citation from the Farmington Hills Police Department Feb. 16. Chief Bill Dwyer presented the proclamation to the 19-year-old who ran track and basketball in high school.

"When he stole the purse and I heard the lady scream, I just



Nick Dietzel

went after him," Dietzel said. "It was just instinct, I guess."

When it comes to citizens chasing down felons, police prefer that it be left to them. In Dietzel's case, "There was a happy ending," Dwyer said.

His instinct and track ability served the busboy well, since the thief was 60 yards ahead of him. Dietzel caught up and tackled the man near the Comfort Inn while another employee wrestled the purse away.

The purse had the woman's traveler's checks and airline tickets inside.

Dietzel's heroism was duly noted by his bosses, who gave him a \$30 gift certificate to Media Play. A customer also left him a \$5 tip that night.

He didn't receive a reward or a thank you from the woman whose purse he retrieved. She'd left the restaurant by the time Dietzel returned. She did offer a reward to a coworker, who declined.

Despite that, Dietzel said, "I'd probably do it again."

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"We're kind of like the parents at night; the community is the children," Maffesoli said. "I have a responsibility to them."

On that July morning, he was nearing the end of his shift when a severe thunderstorm hit. The ensuing lightning set off a series of alarms when a call came over dispatch about a fire at Echo Valley.

Maffesoli, who was about to respond to the errant alarm, turned into the apartment complex instead.

Flames were already shooting through the roof when he broke a window to get inside. While others were leaving the building, he was told there was a woman still in her apartment.

"I got the door open and I said, 'Can you walk to my voice?' She said, 'No, I can't do that. I don't have a leg,'" Maffesoli said. "She was relatively calm. I was amazed."

He carried her outside and then returned with artificial leg. The woman was grateful, thanking the officer.

"Everybody likes to help people," he said. "Sometimes you're just there at the right time. It always feels good."

As for being honored as the city's top officer, Maffesoli said it's nice.

"I felt I got the reward that night," he said. "When you save a life, that's reward in and of itself."



Officer Maffesoli

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