

Police lieutenant has mixed feelings about retiring

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"Life is pretty simple. When it's time, you move on. It's time." Lt. Dennis Green has been counting the days until his retirement on Jan. 14, but it's not fair to say he's really looking forward to it. A 26-year veteran of the Farmington Hills Police Department, he has felt a little conflicted about leaving a job he loves.

"This is a great place to work," he said. "I actually have very mixed emotions about leaving."

The people who have worked with Green the longest, however, don't have any trouble at all identifying how they feel.

"Dennis has been a great asset to the department, and besides that, he's a great friend," said Commander Dennis Rochford. "I'm really going to miss him."

Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer complimented Green's leadership skills and praised him as a man of high integrity, a self-starter and someone "I have been able to count on to get the job done."

"You have motivated and inspired the people under your command to the level that has brought recognition to the entire department," he said in a letter acknowledging Green's retirement.

While Green appreciates the compliments and understands why his co-workers want special attention paid to his retirement, he's a little uncomfortable in the spotlight. To him, police work has always been a matter of teamwork within what he calls "the finest department in the state."

Green was among the last group of officers hired by Farmington Township, despite a "handicap" that kept him from working in a job he'd wanted since childhood.

"I wear glasses," he said. "Back then, they had stringent requirements."

After earning an Associate degree in engineering and serving a hitch in the Army, Green saw an advertisement placed by the Farmington Township department. They were willing to accept candidates who weren't quite perfect.

Over the years, restrictions like the one that kept Green out of police work have changed. What hasn't is the level of dedication required, from officers and their families.

Green recalls many nights and weekends when family events took a back seat to being a police officer. At first, his work shifts rotated every seven days—one week of mornings, one week of afternoons, then one week of midnight shifts.



STAFF PHOTO BY DEANOR LEMKE

Time to stop: Farmington Hills Police Lt. Dennis Green is retiring on Jan. 14, ending a distinguished 26-year career with the department. Green was honored during a reception last week.

"The credit has to go to my wife for putting up with police work," Green said. "It's a family sacrifice to do this kind of job. I've had about every schedule you can imagine."

Sacrifice went both ways as Green tried to blend his work and family life. Sometimes, he'd work a midnight shift, then get up a few hours later to take his

son to a ball game.

However, he pointed out, it's nothing every other officer, paramedic, firefighter or other emergency services worker hasn't had to do as well. Far from complaining, Green said he wouldn't trade his experiences as an officer for anything in the world.

"I've been vpry, very fortunate

here. I really had a diverse career," he said.

That's something of an understatement. Green has served in virtually every aspect of the department, as well as repre-

sented Farmington Hills in multi-jurisdictional task force units.

"We do deal with hard things, and you have to do the best job you can to be effective and as sensitive as you can."

Lt. Dennis Green

—Retiring from Farmington Hills Police Department

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"Dennis has been a great asset to the department, and besides that, he's a great friend. I'm really going to miss him."

Cmdr. Dennis Rochford

—Farmington Hills Police Department

For four and a half years, he worked with an organized crime unit based in Pontiac and, in 1990, was assigned to a narcotics squad that included officers from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Michigan State Police and U.S. Customs.

"I appreciated those opportunities," he said. "I feel like I earned them, too."

He'll end his career in the traffic unit, in charge of 10 patrol officers, several clerical workers and a number of volunteers. Green takes great pride in the caliber of the people with whom he works and stresses what a tough job they have to do. In addition to handing out more than 10,000 traffic citations every year, his department handles the majority of death investigations.

As supervisor, Green goes to every scene in which a life is lost, and he tries to counsel the younger officers that death is just part of the job.

"Some of the things we see are terrible," he said. "We do deal with hard things, and you have to do the best job you can to be effective and as sensitive as you can."

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