

Hills police chief sizes up 1st year on job

By Joanne Maliszewski
Staff writer

It's been 365 days since William Dwyer took over the reins of the Farmington Hills Police Department from current Oakland County Sheriff John Nichols.

Soon after Dwyer's debut in Farmington Hills Feb. 11, 1985, the new chief of police began interviewing all 156 department employees. Six weeks later, he had met and talked with each one, learning about them and their concerns.

"I spent a great deal of time listening to members of the department and their concerns. I've attempted to resolve their concerns and problems," Dwyer said.

The interviews were the first step in a process that turned into a reorganization of the department — a change Dwyer considers one of the most important accomplishments in his first year as chief.

While other accomplishments — the city's house party ordinance, which resulted in a crackdown on underage alcohol and drugs, and its health spa investigation, which resulted in the recent adoption of a massage regulation ordinance — are highlights of Dwyer's first year, attention to the internal workings of the department have dominated much of his time.

THE DEPARTMENT reorganization, which took place in September, has done a lot to boost employee morale and allowed the cross-training of personnel, Dwyer said.

Creation of a deputy chief's position was among the greatest changes brought on by the reorganization. But promotions were also part of the plan. One inspector, a lieutenant and three sergeants were promoted. That, as a result, led to a lot of transfers throughout the various divisions of the department.

Reorganization also led to a shuffling of personnel — allowing officers who had worked in a particular facet of police work for a number of years to expand their experience.

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police chief



the department. The purpose is to review reported crimes of the previous week and to develop methods of solving and preventing such incidents, he said.

Through this manner, we have been able to help decrease some crimes," he said.

Dwyer is also proud of increased productivity — clearance rate for felony arrests and traffic enforcement has improved — within the department. A lot of that has to do with improved employee morale. Greater attempts are being made to recognize exceptional and outstanding work through department citations, Dwyer said.

WHEN DWYER arrived in Farmington Hills, officers were on permanent shifts while dispatchers and supervisors rotated shifts. Today, all three groups rotate shifts, allowing "for a better level of managerial supervision and better accountability," he said.

What also appears to have helped improve employee morale is creation of an advisory planning committee. The committee is comprised of Dwyer and representatives — chosen by employees — of the various employee unions.

"It's an effort to allow participation in the future planning of the department," Dwyer said. "It brings a lot of problem areas to the forefront and a lot of resolutions are brought through the process."

At the committee's monthly meetings, ideas are discussed that would increase job satisfaction, benefit the department and improve safety conditions. The committee also reviews all suggestions submitted by department employees, Dwyer said.

What has also helped improve morale has been an improved service rating system that allows all employees to be "rated in an impartial manner," Dwyer said.

THE SERVICE rating is important when considering promotions. In addition, Dwyer has changed the process used for giving promotional exams.

In the past, Dwyer said, promotional exams were written and scored within the department. That process allows for a little skepticism among employees, he said.

"We have had an outside professional develop, administer and score the exam. We have had such an overwhelming response," Dwyer added.

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Mixer slated

A business after-hours mixer is scheduled for Thursday, March 20, at the Holiday Inn, 38123 10 Mile.

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce will sponsor the 5:30-7:30 p.m. affair. Meet other chamber members and trade business cards.

Display tables will be available to chamber members.

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