

# Ending his shift

## Commander Cox retires after 28 years of service

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington police Commander Tom Cox is leaving the job the way he found it 28 years ago. That's both good and bad, he said.

After this week, Cox, 47, is retiring from law enforcement. He started with the Farmington Public Safety Department's Cadet Program as an idealistic 18-year-old wanting to make a difference.

In many ways, Cox feels he

has.

"We provide a service and I've developed a large customer base," said Cox, whose last day on the job is Sunday, May 25. "There's been a lot of loyal and happy customers along the way."

At the end of a 12-hour shift, Cox has been content to know he's made an impression by lifting a fallen senior off the floor or by saving someone's life.

Or, it may have been by arresting someone and hoping it's the turning point for a person

to straighten out his life. Some former prisoners have come back to thank Cox.

"That's no less important," he said.

Yet there's a gnawing feeling that some things remain unfinished. Crime is not subsiding. Its victims are still prevalent.

Cox, whose brother-in-law was murdered, is known for his empathy with crime victims.

"I thought I might see some of that change, but I didn't," said Cox, who has been a commander since 1988. "That's probably the downside on any police officer's epitaph."

Cox has worked on patrol and in the detective bureau before becoming a commander. He served as a special undercover officer for two years in the mid-70s as part of a federal crime fighting program and was named Officer of the Year in 1985 and Optimist Club Officer of the Year in 1986.

The graduate of South Lake High in St. Clair Shores responded to a newspaper ad for police cadets in Farmington.

"I got stopped for speeding on



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

New beginning: Commander Tom Cox won't be smiling behind the desk at the Farmington Public Safety after he retires Sunday, May 25.

the way to the police station on Shiawassee," he said. "I thought, there goes my chance. I must have done something right because they hired me."

Coincidentally, Detroit called Cox for a possible job interview on the same day. He turned it down. He would later forgo chances to join Livonia and Farmington Hills departments.

For two years as a cadet, Cox rode with other officers and worked double shifts to get a feel for the job. Older officers gave him guidance, which in turn he's tried to pass onto younger col-

leagues.

Cox's retirement stunned many colleagues. A going-away placard in a hallway of the department is filled with wishes from fellow officers and staff, which is a reflection of the respect he's garnered.

"He's the best I've worked for," said John Foxton, a dispatcher.

Cox sees retirement as a new beginning. He said the support of his wife, Karen, and two daughters, Tara and Brooke, has remained him he's made the right decision.

Cox doesn't have an immedi-

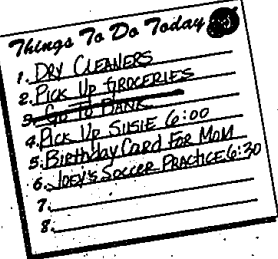
ate plans, though he'll likely pursue a second career. He says he might go into real estate or some other area to tap his people skills.

Of course, it's been difficult saying good-bye to people he's worked with for more than 20 years. "I'm going to miss that bond," he said.

Still, Cox's asked them to be happy for him in his new beginning. His optimism glows upon realization of another slight to his stepping down Sunday.

"I'm going to get to watch the Memorial Day parade," he said.

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The Farmington Observer

## Novatis from page A1

Novatis will be honored as one of the event's top fund-raisers in coming weeks. Her original reward was an airplane ticket to anywhere in the continental United States, but Longacre Elementary Principal Bill Smith said that a gift more conducive to her health situation is being arranged.

According to Novatis, the deci-

sion to retire had little to do with her struggle with cancer.

"That was really secondary," said Novatis. "My husband (John) has been retired for a number of years, and that's a big part of the decision as well. It's just time to broaden out into other areas."

Novatis and husband plan to stay in Farmington, but hope to



Novatis

travel and visit friends in other parts of the country. She also plans to work as a volunteer in Farmington schools.

In the meantime, fifth grade teacher Linda Pollak has served as acting principal at William Grace, and will finish out the school year. Maxfield said that the decision on a permanent principal could be recommended to the board of education and approved as early as June 17.

"That heart and that soul will be missed by the district," said

Maxfield. "It's not easily replaceable."

Novatis will be honored at the annual district retirement party May 30 at Vladimir's in Farmington Hills. In light of both her battles with cancer and her retirement, Novatis said the support from colleagues and students has been heartwarming.

"Unbelievable," she called it. "You develop a lot of positive relationships with the teachers, students and parents you've worked with over the years. I've enjoyed my career in Farmington, and know that I'll continue to keep in touch with people I've had affiliations with, and continue to serve in our community."

"It sounds very corny, but I love this community."

**Farmington Observer**  
Published every Sunday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48209-0915. Periodical postage paid at Birmingham, MI 48209-0915. Postmaster: Send address changes to Observer & Eccentric, Newspapers 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48209-0915. Telephone 844-1100.

ONE YEAR (in Oakland County) \$42.00  
Subscription Rates: Home Delivery Service: per copy \$54 per year \$540

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