

# Commander ends 32-year career

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Dennis Rochford seems a little young to be retiring.

But the 50-year-old Farmington Hills Police Commander does have a 32-year-long career behind him - having started as a cadet even before Farmington Hills was a city.

"I'm maxed out on retirement, so it's time to move on," he said of his decision. "Police work is a young person's profession. You need new ideas all the time."

No one in Rochford's family guided him into a law enforcement career. He tried college, but it really wasn't what he wanted. At the time, he was working in a gas station in Detroit that was a regular stop for police officers.

"These guys looked like they enjoyed their jobs," he said. "So I thought I'd try it." At his cadet with the Farmington Township Police, Rochford answered phones, dispatched and handled the front desk.

Back then, the department had about 25 employees. Today there are close to 200 sworn and civilian staffers.

"It's amazing. I was fortunate enough to watch this area grow," he said. "Grow as a city and as a police department."

That has been largely positive, he said, with the only real negative aspect shared by a city of metro Detroit, that the roads haven't kept up with the traffic. Rochford feels city officials have done a good job of controlling the growth.

"It's a real well-run city," he commented. "It's been fun to watch."

In 1971, Rochford was promoted to police officer and worked patrol. As he worked his way through the ranks, he served in the detective bureau, but returned to patrol, where he has served as a sergeant, lieutenant, captain and commander, with more than 80 officers reporting to him.

During his tenure, he's received many letters of appreciation, citations, commendations,

unit citations, Chief's citations, a professional service award and was the 1998 Veterans of Foreign Wars Police Officer of the Year.

Rochford returned to college in his late 20s, earning an Associate of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from Madonna University. But having been in the field, he found the subject matter a little...well...boring.

"I've always loved math," he said, when asked about the Bachelor of Science degree he holds in accounting. "I'm the type where I'm very orderly and focused. That's one thing that drew me to police work was the structure."

He has also picked up a Masters in Public Administration from Eastern Michigan University and is a graduate of Northwestern University's School of Police Staff and Command and the 177th session of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy. Rochford said it has always been important to him to keep his mind

active, especially on those long midnight patrol shifts.

"When I was younger, I hated school," he said. "The older I got, the more I enjoyed it."

A member of the Farmington Hills Police Department's Benevolent Association, Rochford has been a regular volunteer at the annual "Cops for Kids" 10K run for muscular dystrophy, is a mentor in the Farmington Public Schools' mentoring program, and he serves on the city's retirement board and the board of the Livingston Oakland Federal Credit Union.

Rochford, who is looking forward to spending a month in Florida with his parents and then traveling and golfing, wrapped more than three decades of experience in a few words of advice he's given to young patrol officers.

"Treat everybody the way you want to be treated, and never take this for granted. We're out there to serve the people, and the citizens are our customers."



Staff photo by Bill Baskler  
Top officer: Dennis Rochford retired on Friday, Jan. 26.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

**Sweetheart: Get into the Valentine mood by meeting the Schneiders, a Farmington Hills couple still very romantic after 30 years of marriage. On Thursday in Home-town Life.**

**Back to fifth grade: We continue our "First Bite of the Apple" series about a first-year teacher at Highmeadow Common Campus.**

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**ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS**  
Ankylosing spondylitis causes back pain. In this condition the ligaments that hold the lumbar vertebrae together become thick and lose their elasticity. In addition, the sacroiliac joint narrows and becomes inflamed. As this joint connects the back with the pelvis, loss of its ability to function inevitably stresses the whole lower back.

However, ankylosing spondylitis provides other evidence of its presence; these features allow you and your doctor to realize something more than strain is the cause of your back complaints.

These other features include eye inflammation and joint pain particularly of the hips, knees and ankles. In some people, the back pain is part of psoriatic arthritis or colitis. These separate problems are associated with ankylosing spondylitis by the common thread of disturbed immunity.

The cause of ankylosing spondylitis is the body's reaction against a constituent of the ligaments and joints of the back. In certain instances, the same of its ability to function inevitably stresses the whole lower back.

Doctors are attuned to ankylosing spondylitis. By questioning and examining you, they can determine if your back pain is from strain alone or reflects the onset of an auto-immune condition.

Making a distinction between ankylosing spondylitis and back strain is important. Specific therapy exists to treat ankylosing spondylitis, and this treatment differs widely from that for back strain.

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