



Supporting Our Local *Law Enforcement*

Tompkinsville Police Chief Jeff Denhard

Law Enforcement in Tompkinsville

A police force, a family serving the community

Thomas Wampler
Jobe News and
Regional Sports Reporter

Tompkinsville Police Chief, Jeff Denhard, loves the city he works in and the people who live there. Denhard was born and raised in the Gamaliel/Tompkinsville area and worked in law enforcement for a decade in Bowling Green before returning to his hometown.

It was not a difficult decision to come back home because his immediate family and the extended family he is striving to build in Tompkinsville is very important to him and his fellow officers. "Often we spend more time with the people we work with daily and my job is to see that they are taken care of to the best of my ability," said Chief Denhard. "That and protecting and serving the community are our top priorities."

Denhard has 24 years of experience in law enforcement. Denhard says the reason he began work as a policeman was "multilayered." He was impressed with the friendliness of the officers in Tompkinsville as a child. An impactful event happened to Denhard at five years old in Tompkinsville. Policeman protected him and his mother when an intoxicated driver rear-ended their vehicle. Their car was hit about six times and they were pushed about a block and a half. "I was terrified," added Denhard.

What was a dangerous situation for them as the drunk driver sought to access their car through their doors and windows was handled by Denhard's heroes. They protected his family. "I looked up to them (the two officers) as something extremely special and helpful," Denhard continued. "Later in life, I was encouraged by a friend and my father-in-law to apply for an open position in law enforcement. I was lucky enough to get hired."

Denhard said the pay wasn't much but he saw it as an opportunity to "get his foot in the door."

He fell in love with the community he was working in and being a, "people person," law enforcement became his career choice.

He arrived in Tompkinsville in 2015.



Chief Denhard participates in Shop with a Cop.

"We recently had a huge turnover (seven officers left the force). "They left for various reasons and we had to work our way through this difficult time of transition," Denhard. "We hold each other accountable as a police family. We must support each other daily as we protect and serve the community. That remains an important focal point."

Denhard says the group he has now is young, but they are also dedicated about doing their jobs and training. Pay affects their ability to hire and keep officers in this area but they remain dedicated to hiring the best candidates available. They try to keep them on the job by offering overtime when available to increase their take home pay to help support their young families.

Denhard says often the ways in which they serve the community goes unnoticed. He cited an example when one of his officers helped a Tompkinsville resident whose electricity was off and needed groceries. The officer helped rectify the dire situation while remaining anonymous.

"The general public rarely see this side of our job," Denhard continued. "We are here to help people not hurt them, but we do have a job to do. That is who we are. I could tell many stories of this current group of officers and the

officers we have in the past, helping people within the community."

Denhard says sometimes you lose hope and frustration can set in when you see families that are broken. Then you get to see them as a functioning family unit. "Just when you lost hope, there comes success," Denhard added citing an example that he recently witnessed.

Denhard had just left an officer meeting at the time of this interview. Denhard says many times the situations he and his officers encounter are when "good people make bad choices." Denhard says they must hold them "accountable" for their poor choices, but they can do so with respect.

Denhard and his officers recognize that the arrest of one person greatly impacts people within his or her family. "We hope that this will eventually lead to people changing and getting a second chance that they will take advantage of. In some way, we have all benefited from second chances."

Serving the community for Denhard includes building relationships within the community and that also means reaching out to the children within the community. "We are proud of the way our "Shop with a Cop" program has impacted the community. Denhard says

the program began under former chief, Dale "Frog" Ford. Denhard also praised Assistant Chief Kerry Denton and his impact, passion and work keeping and growing the program.

The "Shop with a Cop" program is in its 11th year. This past year they took 62 children within the community shopping. Denhard says the "community has married" with the program and they "no longer have to knock on doors or solicit a single individual to get support." On average they spend about \$100 on each child.

Denhard says they do their annual stuff the cruiser event at Walmart and a few other fun raisers but the "community support is overwhelming."

Denhard says their biggest challenge in Tompkinsville is an issue that all communities large and small are facing. "It would be the drug and pill abuse," began Denhard when asked about the future and what his force would face. "It's become so prominent... all over a small community. It is an everyday, every hour on-going challenge for us."

Entire families suffer because of drug abuse and addiction. Denhard says this has led to training in the use of Narcan. Denhard says within the first 6-8 months they received training, they used Narcan to help save three individuals.

Tompkinsville Police Chief Denhard says the department has eight sworn officers hired with one just completing training, one leaving this week, and a third leaving in April with four officers currently certified.

Denhard says he wants to thank and recognize the officers that serve in his department and the community for their continued support. "We are fortunate to have the great people that serve and protect Tompkinsville on our force," concluded Denhard. "I work with great people who work hard for me and for the community. I hope we will continue to have the positive connection we have within the community."

"We are here to help people not hurt them, but we do have a job to do."

Chief Denhard



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GAMALIEL DRUG LLC

Caitlin Brown, PharmD
Pharmacist/Owner
gamalieldrug@gmail.com

405 West Main Street, Gamaliel, KY 42140
Phone: (270) 457-4100

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