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University of Dayton

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NEWS

Friday September 11, 2015

Servant Leader and Protector

Executive Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police Bruce Burt arrived in Dayton in 1977 thinking it would be the first stop of his career. Instead, it was his only stop, and it turned into two careers. Burt will retire in February from the University after 14 years of service, capping a 39-year police career.

"I came to Dayton and literally had to get the map out to find out where it was," said Burt, who originally hails from northeast Ohio. "I came to Dayton with the intention of working three years to get some police experience before moving on, but I got rooted here and it resulted in two separate careers totaling 39 years in law enforcement."

Burt's first career was with the Dayton Police Department where he held a variety of positions that included overseeing 350 officers, horse patrol and the hostage negotiation team. He retired from the Dayton Police Department with 25 years of service.

But then the opportunity to become police chief for the University of Dayton came along, and it was too good to pass up.

"The opportunity came up that was pretty unique to take a job like this and not have to relocate my family. I wasn't ready to retire, and I was still young enough," Burt said about moving on to the University of Dayton. "My initial incentive was to provide an educational opportunity for my kids at UD. I soon realized there was an opportunity to really make a difference for the public safety staff and the campus community they serve."

"It's been good. It's been a fast 14 years, but there have been some very long days. It's been a great experience. I really feel like we've made some progress."

When Burt started, officers bought their guns, the dispatch center was pretty much a phone and radio, and personnel turnover was extremely high. Today, officers have state-of-the-art equipment, the dispatch center has access to the Law Enforcement Automated Data System and a network of campus security systems, including cameras, and officer retention is high.

"When I got here, I wanted to focus on policy development, increased training, better equipment and improved employee retention. Our officers now have the proper tools to provide professional police service to our community," Burt said. "We've really come a long way with that, as well as the image we have established as a professional law enforcement agency in the city and county."

Burt said the department has worked hard to move from being labeled "security" to a respected state-certified police agency. Burt helped forge mutual aid agreements with the cities of Oakwood and Dayton where their police could call University police for help.

"We appreciate and will miss Chief Burt's service to the University and his contributions to improving the safety and security of the University community," said Bill Fischer, vice president for student development. "Overseeing a university jurisdiction comes with a unique set of challenges. Chief Burt has managed them admirably and performed his duties with the highest level of professionalism and integrity."

In addition to the police force, Burt oversees the student rescue squad, student escort service, parking services, emergency management and compliance.

"The job has changed quite a lot over the years," Burt said. "Maybe that's why it's time for me to move on. I am leaving on a positive note. We have accomplished a lot."

"We" is what Burt says he'll miss the most about coming to work.

"It's a team here. It's not all about me," he said. "People are what make the organization. You can have all the toys you can dream of to make you happy, but if you don't have good people to enjoy them with, life's not really fun."

But there's another "we" Burt is really looking forward to being a part of — his two grandchildren, his wife and three daughters, and his golfing buddies. He plans to take a couple of trips and tool around his woodshop at home.

"More than anything, it'll be family time and hobbies. I'll spend a lot more time with family. It'll be the first time in at least 25 years I'm not on call 24/7," Burt said. "I'm the type of guy who keeps busy. I don't see myself getting bored."

"Some say going from a position like this to nothing can be a shock. But right now, I'm kind of looking forward to doing nothing, to be honest."

A national search for Chief Burt's replacement will begin at the end of this month. The next chief is expected to be on board before Burt's February retirement.

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