

# PRESS RELEASE

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## De Pere community groups bestow awards to outstanding police and firefighters

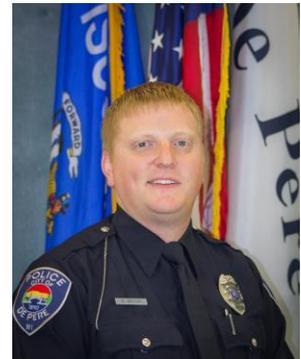
De Pere, Wis. – Ten civic clubs within the City of De Pere honored the brave, skillful and compassionate service of their public safety servants on Tuesday, Feb. 26, during the fourth annual “Beyond the Call & Outstanding Public Safety Member Recognition” banquet.

Among the 2018 award recipients were a police officer whose gut feeling helped protect a De Pere couple’s daughter who was living hundreds of miles away; and a trio of De Pere Fire Rescue members whose compassion – and a friendly stuffed animal - helped a local disabled woman endure a frightening and painful foot fracture.

### PROTECTING FROM AFAR

Honored with the De Pere Police Department “Beyond the Call” award was Officer Nate Mrstik (who has since been promoted to detective sergeant). In Sept. 2018, the De Pere Police Department was contacted by local parents concerned for their daughter’s safety. The daughter lives out of state, and Mrstik was informed about disturbing threats made by a man living outside of Brown County that referenced extreme violence and threats to life and great bodily harm.

The information was credible and even though a report was filed in another jurisdiction, there was little action being taken. The daughter and the man were old childhood friends that re-met on social media a short time before the threats.



**Officer Nate Mrstik**

Officer Mrstik had a gut feeling and took it upon himself to follow-up on the threats, even though he lacked jurisdiction. That night, Officer Mrstik learned the man had traveled to Madison and withdrew a substantial amount of cash. Officer Mrstik tracked the man’s cell phone. He learned the man had already traveled through several states in the direction of the woman’s residence. It became clear this was a serious incident. After Officer Mrstik completed other calls for service, he returned to this incident to continue to investigate. Further tracking showed the man further progressing directly toward the woman’s home state. Officer Mrstik notified the local authorities in their jurisdiction.

Because the female was aware of the situation, she had another male friend with her. The man did, in fact, eventually arrive at the female’s address and a physical disturbance took place with the suspect and the

male friend. The suspect fled. A nationwide warrant was issued by courts in this jurisdiction. The suspect was taken into custody in Wisconsin and extradited back out of state for trial.

According to the De Pere Police Department, “This situation involved an incredibly motivated suspect who was truly infatuated with this female. The threats towards the female were disturbing and life threatening. This situation could have ended tragically if it were not for the dedication by now Detective Sergeant Mrstik towards his profession and his initiative to protect the safety of our citizens.”

Mrstik joined the De Pere Police Department in May of 2013 as a Patrol Officer. In Sept. 2016 he was selected as the Department K-9 handler, and after completing training in New Mexico, started working with his K-9 partner “Kurt” in November of that year. In Sept. 2018, Mrstik was promoted to Detective Sergeant and currently serves in that position.

### **THREE NEW FRIENDS - AND STUFFED ANIMALS, TOO**

Honored with the De Pere Fire Rescue Outstanding Members of 2018 award were Lieutenant Todd Hendricks, Firefighter/EMT Dan Hermans and Firefighter/Paramedic Dan Lotter.



**(L-R) Lieutenant Todd Hendricks, Firefighter/EMT Dan Hermans and Firefighter/Paramedic Dan Lotter**

It all started when an inspiring local woman and Syble Hopp graduate, who unfortunately admits she’s endured far too many encounters with others throughout her life who could not match the kindness in her heart, needed help. She was in immense pain last May from a fractured foot, and admittedly scared and fearful – not just from the injury, but for the unknown of who would help her and how. Living with a disability, she was used to this fear. People can be mean - and often are, she said.

But people like Lieutenant Todd Hendricks, Firefighter/EMT Dan Hermans, and Firefighter/Paramedic Dan Lotter were different. These three individuals helped calm her nerves in a moment of extreme panic, help tend to her immense physical pain with tremendous skill, and handled the entire encounter with professionalism, compassion and humanity. Not to mention, they also received aid from an unlikely but helpful, calming source: a stuffed animal.

As a result, not only has the fractured foot of this young woman healed, but her outlook on parts of the world is on the mend as well.

“I wanted to say thank you so much for helping me. That means a lot to me. Thanks to all of you, I’m not scared of ambulance and paramedic noises anymore. It also helped me realize that not everyone in this world will be mean to me,” she said.

Present to except the award were Hermans and Lotter, who noted their encounter with this woman had also helped their outlook as well, reminding them that even the small things in life – a stuffed animal or a kind word – can make a big impact on the lives of others.

Lieutenant Todd Hendricks was born and raised in De Pere. He began his career with De Pere Fire Rescue as a Paid-on-Call Firefighter in 1979. He was hired full-time as a Firefighter/EMT in 1990. He became a Paramedic in 1992 and was promoted to Lieutenant in 2012. After a wonderful career of 39-years, Hendricks retired from De Pere Fire Rescue in June of 2018. He is currently serving as the Fire Chief for the Town of Ledgeview.

Firefighter/EMT Dan Hermans served four-years active duty in the United States Coast Guard and two-years as a reservist in the U.S. Navy Construction Battalion. While going to school for his Fire Fighter/EMT, Hermans, volunteered at Allouez and Bellevue Fire Departments. After graduating from Fox Valley Technical College, he joined De Pere Fire Rescue as a volunteer, then began his full-time career in 2003.

Firefighter/Paramedic Dan Lotter served in the Army Reserve for seven years, which included one tour of duty in Afghanistan. Lotter began his career with the De Pere Fire Rescue in 2015. He has also been a member of the Bellevue Fire Department since 2014.

## **A COMMUNITY COLLABORATION**

The awards night is a growing tradition in De Pere, thanks to the collaborative efforts of 10 local civic groups.

Among the groups hosting the “Beyond the Call & Outstanding Public Safety Member Recognition” banquet were the Rotary Club of De Pere; the Kiwanis Club of De Pere; the De Pere Optimist Club; the Woman’s Club of De Pere; the Men’s Club of De Pere; De Pere Knights of Columbus; Pink Flamingos; Celebrate De Pere; De Pere VFW Post 2113 and its Auxiliary and the De Pere Lions Club.

These civic clubs use the event to thank and recognize an outstanding De Pere police officer(s) and an outstanding De Pere fire fighter(s) for their unselfish service to our community during the previous twelve months. Lee Meyers from the De Pere Men’s Club called the event to order.

Others in the community contributed to the event as well. Chaplain Sheldon Miles offered a prayer, Mayor Michael Walsh gave opening remarks, and Brittany Falkers, Local 5 This Morning Anchor WFRV-TV, served as Master of Ceremonies.

The West De Pere Middle School A Cappella Choir also performed several musical selections honoring the public safety members and their families.

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