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Eyerly leaves a lasting impact on Springfield Twp Fire Dept.

By Katie Ellington, Staff Reporter

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"Cap" Ron Eyerly has retired after 36 years with the Springfield Township Fire Department.

ONTARIO -- Ask any firefighter in Springfield Township about Captain Ron Eyerly, and they'll tell you pretty much the same thing.

Everyone considers him a friend, and most consider him a mentor as well. He knows everyone in the department, and pretty much everything about it.

After all, he's been there 36 years.

"It doesn't seem like it's been that long, but it has," Eyerly said. "It was a big part of my life."

Eyerly retired from the department at the end of 2019, but his legacy will continue to influence the force for years to come. Whether it was time to buy new equipment, train new firefighters or fix up a piece of equipment, Eyerly was involved.

"He's seen the department transition and see a lot of different things," said Chief Matthew Carey. "He is a part of that place, he is what made that place what it is."

A lifelong Ontario resident, Eyerly attended Ontario City Schools and Pioneer Career Technology Center, where he studied diesel mechanics. After graduating, he worked at a truck repair shop and volunteered with the fire department.

"I can't even tell you how many times he has been voted officer of the year. At least 6, maybe 7," said Captain Mike Mullins. "A lot of people looked up to him.

"He was kind of our go-to maintenance guy."

He went on to work full time for the City of Ontario street department for almost 32 years plowing snow, repairing roads and overseeing crews as foreman. All the while he remained a part-time firefighter, usually working nights and weekends.

Carey called Eyerly "the encyclopedia of the department," but Lieutenant John Gray said that what made the captain stand out most was the way he cared for his fellow firefighters.

"He always worked the major holidays so at least of the guys could home," said Gray.

An avid hunter and fisherman, he was known to bring in food during shifts and prepare meals for the other firefighters.

"He's a pretty darn good cook," said Lt. Jim Kinney. "You could always tell when he had a surplus."

Most importantly, he took younger firefighters under his wing.

“They’re very respectful of him. They care about him a lot,” Carey said. “They looked to Eyerly more as a dad and he took care of him.”

Gray has been a member of the department for 28 years, but he still remembers his first interaction with Eyerly.

“I was told to shut the garage door. I shut it on a fire hose. I didn’t know I wasn’t supposed to do that,” he said. “This mountain of a man came at me and he was furious.”

Nevertheless, Gray grew to respect and look up to Eyerly.

“He’s a very good man, very opinionated, very truthful, very honest,” Gray said. “I’ve learned more from him than I could imagine.”

He now calls “Cap” one of his best friends.

“To see him leave it’s almost surreal for me,” he said. “It’s a completely different atmosphere without him here.”

Eyerly also shared his expertise outside of Springfield Township. He spent about five years teaching at Madison Adult Career Center and helped train firefighters at the Jefferson Township Fire Department in Crawford County.

Now that he’s retired, Eyerly said he’s looking forward to spoiling his grandkids, spending time with his wife and fishing. But that doesn’t mean he won’t stop in for visits at the fire department.

“I miss the guys, not the all nighters,” Eyerly said. “We always had good people. Still do. That always made it enjoyable.

“We were all here for the same reason. We weren’t here to be rich and famous, we were here to take care of the needs.”

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