

Two Promoted At Police Department

By Tammy T. Pomplun

Two Evansville Police Officers have been promoted. Evansville Police Officer Mike Laufenberg was promoted to Police Investigator and Evansville Police Officer and Acting Lieutenant Jay Koehler was promoted to Police Lieutenant. The men will assume their new responsibilities on January 3, 2009.

Officer Mike Laufenberg has been with the Evansville Police Department since 1993, first as part-time, then full-time since 1997. He took his general education courses at MATC and his police training at the police academy at Southwestern Technical College in Platteville. While attending school he worked in Madison as a house manager for newly released felons, helping them become reintegrated into the community. He was promoted in that position as case manager. Before coming to Evansville, he worked as an officer in the village of Argyle.

In addition to the annual firearms, CPR and emergency driving courses, Officer Laufenberg has taken specialized training in computer crimes, phishing scams, identity theft, crime prevention, child abuse physical evidence collection, white collar crimes, and death investigations. He has also taken several interview and interrogation courses through the FBI and MATC. He has received training in extensive background investigations and has assisted the department with the hiring process. As patrolman, he received a Police Accommodation for his efforts in a shooting at a local bar several years ago. Although he has usually worked second shift, he assisted with community education for the Boy Scouts, which he credits to the late Dale Bryant for coordinating. As investigator, Officer Laufenberg will continue to serve as patrolman part of the time. Officer Laufenberg has been informally acting investigator since Evansville's last investigator, Scott McElroy, was promoted to Chief of Police ten years ago. After Mr. McElroy was promoted to Chief and the late Art Phillips was promoted to Lieutenant, the position of Investigator went unfilled until recent caseload increases demanded the need for formally refilling the position. "Officer Laufenberg was handling the investigations, so we felt it was fair he get the increased benefits that go along with the responsibility," said Chief McElroy.

Chief McElroy continued, "I couldn't be happier with Officer Mike Laufenberg and Officer Jay Koehler's promotions. Jay and Mike have been here 10 years, so it's the next logical step. I was hopeful they would be interested, but not everyone is interested in climbing the supervisory ladder. Luckily when I approached them, they said they were interested. If neither were interested I would have to go outside for candidates." According to police policy, candidates for Lieutenant and Investigator need to have a certain number of years of experience and none of the others with the Department had enough years, although "they would have also made good supervisors," said Chief McElroy.

Officer Jay Koehler, who was promoted to Lieutenant, has been Acting Lieutenant since the Sept. 30 death of EPD Lieutenant Arthur Phillips. Officer Koehler has been with the Evansville Police Department since January 1998. He attended the UW system, Blackhawk Technical College and the Police Academy in Madison. He served as part-time patrolman in Evansville for one year before going full-time, primarily on the first

shift. In addition to taking the annual firearms, CPR and emergency vehicle operation instruction, he serves as a firearms instructor and a gun instructor (separate functions) for the Evansville Police Department. He is also responsible for field training new police officers with the EPD. He has provided community education through suicide information and prevention through the High School Health class and teaching the elementary school children about things such as fingerprinting through mock crime scenes.

In addition to approving Chief McElroy's recommendation for promoting Officers Laufenberg and Koehler, the Police Commission on December 10 also confirmed Chief McElroy's recommendation to hire a new full-time officer, Matt Nankee.

Mr. Nankee is currently a part-time Sheriff's Deputy for Lafayette County. He has also worked full-time as a fraud analyst for US Cellular. He comes to Evansville with experience as a school officer resource. He earned a bachelor's degree from UW Platteville and attended the Southwestern Technical College at Platteville. He is an Army Veteran, having served in Iraq and as a member of the US Army's Varsity Committee. Mr. Nankee will fit in well in Evansville as he grew up on a family farm in Muskogee, Wis.

The addition of Mr. Nankee on January 3 will bring the Evansville Police Department back to full staff, the first time in two years, at times having operated at 75 percent staff. Even with the nine full-time staff members, the hiring process is never-ending, and new part-timers continue to be hired.

In addition to approving Chief McElroy's recommended promotions of Officers Laufenberg and Koehler and the hiring of Mr. Nankee, the Police Commission on December 10 also approved a revised promotional policy. Chief McElroy and Police Commission President Scott Brummond worked to revise the policy, utilizing resources from Rock County and Janesville to create a document that is standard within the law enforcement community.