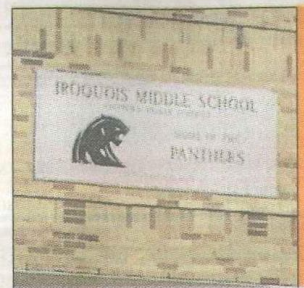




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SHELBY TOWNSHIP



SEAN DELANEY — THE MACOMB DAILY

The Shelby Township Police Department is adding a thin blue line to the sides of its police vehicles as a way to honor the men and women of law enforcement who have given their lives in the line of duty.

Stripes added to vehicles to honor fallen officers, represent mission

By Sean Delaney

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The Shelby Township Police Department is adding a thin blue line to the sides of its police vehicles as a way to honor the men and women of law enforcement who have given their lives in the line of duty.

"It's a subtle difference, but it speaks volumes," Deputy Chief Mark Coil said.

A third generation member of the law enforcement community, Coil worked with Fleet Coordinator Ron Mix to come up with the idea of adding the line to the department's patrol vehicles.

"For me, the thin blue line symbolizes two things," Coil said. "It is a reminder that I am part of something bigger, that I am a defender of goodness, and that I am part of a group who protects others from harm. At the same time, it also symbolizes that we will never forget those who have come before us."

While it originated in the United Kingdom, the thin blue line has become prevalent among law enforcement in the United States and Canada as a way to commemorate fallen law enforcement officials and to symbolize the role of law enforcement as protectors in the community.

"I think it's iconic," Coil said. "Everyone in our profession knows what that thin blue line means, so it resonates with a lot of people."

According to Coil, the blue center line represents law enforcement, and the top black stripe represents the public while the bottom stripe represents the criminal element.

"The idea is that we (the police) are the last line of defense," he said. "We're the thin blue line between good and evil."

While several residents have already noticed the new addition to the department's vehicles, it was officially announced on the police department's Facebook page earlier this month.

"We had 54,000 views within 24 hours," Chief of Police Robert Shelide said. "We also had over 1,000 'likes' on that post in that same period. People were crazy about it."

According to Shelide, the idea of putting the thin blue line on the department's vehicles came about as a cost-effective alternative to an earlier recommendation from the deputy chief.

"Deputy Chief Coil has a passion for cars, and he wanted our cars to have a classic black-and-white motif," Shelide said. "But when we looked it, we determined it would cost about \$800 per car. So (Coil) came up with the idea of putting the thin blue line on the cars, and I thought it was a great idea that could be done at a nominal cost."

For Coil, who previously spent 10 years on the department's Honor Guard, it was also a way to honor his roots while also serving as a constant reminder of the sacrifices that law enforcement officers make on a daily basis.

"We lose approximately 100 officers every year, and we never want people to think that they're forgotten," he said. "It's subtle, but this (the thin blue line) shows that we will never forget the role those officers played in so many people's lives."