SHELBY TOWNSHIP

Fire marshal says ‘farewell’ after 25-year career

By Sean Delaney
For The Macomb Daily

As a boy, Edward Vojtush grew up dreaming of being a firefighter.

“I thought it would be a neat career,” said Vojtush, 57. “I grew up in Sterling Heights and some of my friends had parents who were firefighters, so it was one of those things that was always in the back of my mind. I remember watching (the television series) ‘Emergency!’ and I would see the things that firefighters do—putting out fires, rescuing people, etc.—and it seemed like something that would be a very satisfying line of work.”

Now, after a 25-year career with the Shelby Township Fire Department, including 10 as its fire marshal, Vojtush is calling it a day.

“I’m going to miss the people the most,” he said. “It’s like being part of a team, and not being part of that team anymore is what I’m going to miss the most. However, I’m joining another team—retirees—and I think I’ll enjoy that, too.”

Vojtush’s last day with the department was Feb. 26. A day earlier, he spent a few hours reminiscing with reporters and his replacement, Fire Marshal Steve Henion.

“Ed and all the former fire marshals have all done a great job making sure we’re heading in the right direction,” Henion said. “I just want to keep on with what they’ve been doing, but I want to prioritize a few different things and make a few small changes regarding how we do our inspections. They’ve given me a great template, and I just want to keep moving in the right direction.”

Henion is an 18-year veteran of the Shelby Township Fire Department while Vojtush has served with the department since 1990.

“This is the first fire department I’ve ever worked for,” Vojtush said, adding he joined the department at age 32. “I’ve loved my experience here. Shelby Township is a great community to work for. It’s been an honor and privilege to work for Shelby Township and the residents that live here.”

For Vojtush, serving as a firefighter with the Shelby Township Fire Department represents the fulfillment of a lifelong dream.

“When I was a kid, I wanted to be a firefighter and I wanted to be a baseball player,” he said. “I got to play a little baseball in college, but once that ended I took a job doing something completely different. But in the back of my mind, I was always thinking about the fire service as a career.”

So when he found out the Shelby Township Fire Department was hiring, he signed up and officially joined the ranks of the department on April 2, 1990.

“Back then, our numbers were nothing like they are now,” he said. “We used to run our ambulances out of Station No. 1, and there used to be a ‘closed’ sign on Station No. 3 on Shelby Road if there weren’t enough guys working. We’re lucky enough that we’ve had our numbers increase enough where we don’t have to do that anymore.”

Over time, Vojtush spent about 15 years on the trucks as a firefighter/EMT, and another 10 years working in fire prevention.

“I’ve had a nice career,” he said. “Being able to work on the trucks and in fire prevention, it educates you on the different aspects of the things both sides deal with on a daily basis.”

While he plans to enjoy retirement, Vojtush said he will miss the job—and all the aches and pains associated with it.

“I’m getting a new hip in two or three weeks, and a few weeks later I’m having rotator cuff surgery,” he said. “But that’s all part of the job. It’s a challenge sometimes, but it’s a good kind of challenge. There’s something different every day, and I’ve enjoyed it immensely.”