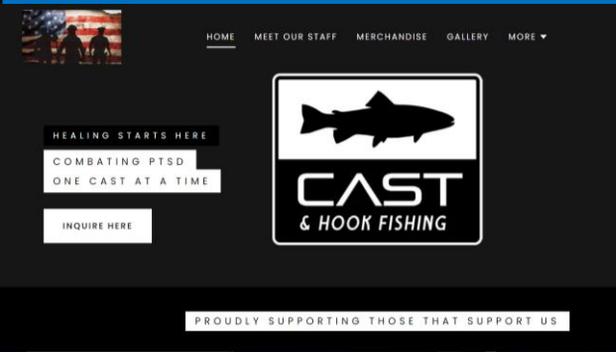


First Responders Features: Officer Richard Puente



Richard Puente and his wife Lindsay run a nonprofit, **Cast and Hook Fishing**, that helps veterans and first responders cope with PTSD through free fishing and kayaking sessions.

A snapshot on Richard & Lindsay Puente:

Richard lost his brother, Mike, to suicide in 2010 after returning home from Iraq three months prior. Puente served in the U.S. Army for 12 years and is currently a law enforcement officer with the SPPD.



Like all officers, he sees traumatic and chaotic situations on a regular basis. He was one of the officers on the scene at the shooting at Truck Park on Oct. 10, 2021.

Truck Park shooting: Puente is pictured on the far right

Photo credit: Pioneer Press

Lindsay served in the U.S. Army for eight years and now has her own private practice as a licensed mental health provider who specializes in working with veterans, health care providers, and those struggling with alcohol and drug addictions.



Helping and giving back to those who serve is something the Puentes are passionate about because they have both had their struggles coping with PTSD and understand the pain and distress that causes in a person's life.

First Responders Features: Officer Richard Puente

“My brother took his own life because of mental health issues, and I battled undiagnosed PTSD for years before getting the support I needed,” Richard said. “Working as a police officer in a big city takes a toll and I see everyday that these officers need help and don’t even realize it,” he added. Richard talked about the stigma of asking for help and how first responders are expected to be mentally strong all the time. It’s a profession where seeking help can be seen as a weakness. This notion is the reason why he came up with fishing and kayaking as avenues for therapy. This model allows for people to ask for help in a way that feels comfortable and inviting. Once they’re on the excursion, they can take a deep dive into their mental health issues or not talk about it all.

Lindsay spoke on how common PTSD is among first responders and veterans and how important it is to catch them before they slip into a suicidal mindset. As she described, Cast and Hook Fishing is the type of organization that says, “Hey, we see you’re struggling. Let us help you. Come get out in nature with us. Join us on a fishing trip.” Richard and Lindsay’s life experiences and struggles with PTSD are what fueled them to create their nonprofit so quickly. It was June 2021 when Richard shared his dream with Lindsay of helping veterans and first responders with PTSD. In a matter of days, the nonprofit was officially formed, and people were ready to join as board members, administrators, marketing/public relations support, and fishing/kayaking volunteers. Their Wisconsin-based home office is the center of operations for organizing fishing and kayaking excursions throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, Florida and Tennessee.



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First Responders Features: Officer Richard Puente

Cast and Hook Fishing Fast Facts:

- Richard also runs "Casting Hope", where members of Cast and Hook Fishing give back to the community. He's passed out over 30 sleeping bags (donated by Give Hope MN), multiple jackets, hats, gloves and socks to St. Paul's shelter-less population.
- Two volunteers, Pat Mancini and his son Nick Mancini have taught a retired army Colonel how to fly fish and now the colonel wants to teach other veterans struggling with PTSD.
- Soapy Joes donated \$1,000 toward the purchase of kayaks and Evan's Transportation donated \$2,000 toward the purchase of their permanent icehouse.
- Brian and Sarah Ingram with Give Hope MN donated a Cobalt Boat and have been instrumental in mentoring Richard. They have also donated a lot of items to Casting Hope.
- A former St. Paul officer, Brian Nowicki donated a bass tender boat.
- Former St. Paul Police Officer Michael McNeil with RE/MAX professionals has raised money on multiple occasions for Cast and Hook Fishing which goes to purchasing gear that is handed out to their participants.
- Sheep Dog Impact Assistance in western Wisconsin has supported numerous events and outdoor excursions.
- Several active SPPD officers are on staff with Casting and Hook Fishing including Mailia Young, Josh Needham, Jayson Singer (Corrections) and many more.

Visit the [Cast and Hook Fishing website](http://www.castandhookfishing.com) and follow them on social media to learn more!



- www.castandhookfishing.com
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)

First Responders Features: Officers Matt Arntzen and Tom Ries

Officer Matt Arntzen



Some people know exactly what line of work they want to be involved in from a very young age. There is no Plan B, and they will do whatever it takes to attain their dream career. This was the case with Arntzen, who aspired to become a police officer throughout his childhood and became one at the age of 21. "I knew I wanted to make the world a better place and I also wanted a job where everyday is different," Arntzen said. "I was an athlete and adrenaline junkie as a teenager, and I enjoyed being a little wild and crazy," he admitted. Therefore, Arntzen knew that sitting behind a desk all day would not work out well.

"The most rewarding part of this career is when you're able to help somebody, see a situation through to a resolution and make that person's day. It could be a kid's bicycle being stolen and you're able to help get it back. Or it could be helping a woman get out of an abusive relationship," Arntzen said. He also touched on the importance of making each encounter with civilians a safe and pleasant engagement. "For so many people, when they reach out, it's their first encounter with law enforcement. I want to create as much of a positive experience as I can," he added.

Officer Tom Ries

Police officers experience their fair share of unpleasant situations and interactions. Unfortunately, they often see the worst in people in their day-to-day duties. Tom Ries had a bit of a different story to share. He was working off duty in December 2021 at a Lund's downtown St. Paul when a sharply dressed gentleman approached him and said, "Hey, you probably don't remember me, but you stopped me here about two years ago for stealing sandwiches. I just wanted to say thank you for the advice you gave me. It helped turn my life around." Ries then remembered. The guy standing in front of him was homeless, using drugs, and hopping on and off the light rails back in 2019. Ries caught him shoplifting from the same Lund's store back then, took him to a back room to retrieve the stolen goods, and issued a one-year trespass.



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First Responders Features: Officer Tom Reis

The man standing in front of Ries at the same store in 2021 was unrecognizable. He was well-groomed, manicured, and in business attire. He had actually taken Ries advice to seek help and turned his life around. “The difference in his appearance was night and day. I never would have recognized him if he hadn’t stopped to talk with me,” Ries said. “It’s refreshing to witness these types of success stories as opposed to the grimmer stories about chronic homelessness, drug use, and cyclical violence,” he added. Reis also pointed out the importance of the city and county aggressively working to alleviate homelessness and dealing with the issue on an individual basis. Reis is known in the community for his compassion toward the less fortunate and is partnered with Catholic Charities to provide security for Dorothy Day Place, a shelter that provides meals, mental health services, medical services and more.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
of St. Paul and Minneapolis

CATHOLIC CHARITIES SERVES THOSE MOST IN NEED.

Officer Tom Reis finds joy in service

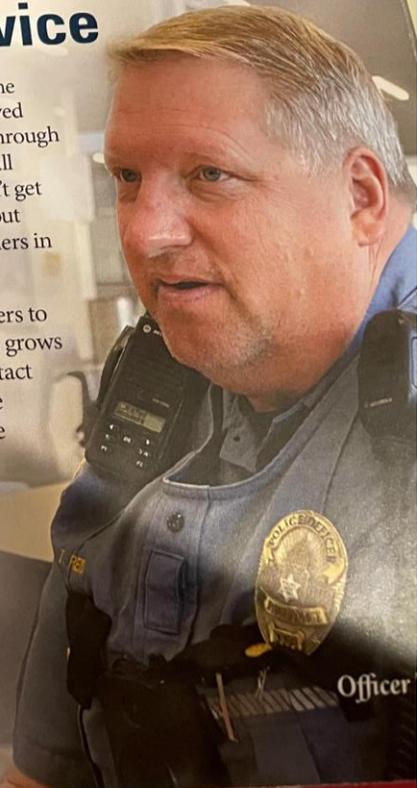
With 21 years at the Saint Paul Police Department, one could imagine Officer Tom Reis a world-weary cop—but that’s not the case. For two years, Catholic Charities has contracted with his department for security support at Dorothy Day Place. “I’ve become a ‘friend cop,’ someone residents can trust.”

This summer, Reis experienced something special. “I walked into the (Higher Ground) shelter and saw all these balloons, and it was so uplifting!” The brainchild of Client Advocate Chez Jones, the August party was the first celebration honoring anyone with a birthday that month. “When I saw the gift bags, I realized how important it is when someone takes the time to celebrate you.”

The party impacted Officer Reis more than he realized. “I knew they were using (some of) their own money, so I decided to help,” he says. Reis’s family and friends chipped in enough to help finance parties through the end of the year. “People get into their own routines, so if someone cares about you... that’s huge!”

Support of Catholic Charities runs in the family: two of Reis’s three children served breakfast at the Dorothy Day Center through a partnership with Cretin-Derham Hall High School. “In those years, I couldn’t get my kids out of bed in the mornings, but they would make it here, meeting others in our community over pancakes.”

When asked what he would like others to know about Catholic Charities, Reis grows enthusiastic. “There is personal contact and support for each individual,” he explains. “If someone wants to have a chance in life, they are at the right place! Catholic Charities can help people with housing, substance abuse, coordinated services and medical care. This organization has the capacity to land people on their feet.”



First Responders Features: Officer Michael McGinn



Michael McGinn has touched the lives of thousands of youth in St. Paul through his charity work and engagement with the public schools. “I have a deep understanding of our role in the community. It’s not just about enforcing the law. It’s about making a difference in people’s lives ” McGinn said. One way McGinn carries out this philosophy is with the St. Paul “Cops and Kids” program. McGinn is pictured to the left as Santa Claus, a role he has played for several years.

St. Paul “Cops and Kids” is a nonprofit program that began in 2001 with the vision of brightening the lives of children battling serious illnesses. St. Paul police officers collect donations on their own time that go toward the purchase of Christmas gifts which are delivered to the children about a week before the holiday. The 2021 event took place on Dec. 16 and the day began at 9 a.m. with a parade procession of squad cars traveling down Seventh Street West. McGinn, dressed as Mr. Claus, and a fellow officer dressed as Mrs. Claus, waved and smiled as they made their way to the St. Paul Children’s hospital. COVID-19 restrictions have prevented the officers from entering the hospital for the past two years, but fortunately, many children could still see the parade because their rooms face the street. The team of officers were also able to spend about 30 minutes at the entrance of the hospital delivering gifts to the families.



The second stop along the parade route was the Gillette Children’s Hospital, where the police officers were allowed to enter the building because the children face different types of diagnoses. McGinn was able to personally hand gifts out. “It’s so gratifying and humbling, but also one of the most emotionally taxing things I do,” he said. “You’re seeing these kids who are just fighters and doing everything they can to get better. You see the parents and families sleeping in the rooms, fighting alongside them. Everyone looks exhausted, but when Santa appears, their faces just light up and you see their tears,” McGinn said. He explained that they spend at least 3-5 minutes in each room and offer to take pictures with the families. They keep the atmosphere light and uplifting but avoid phrases such as “Get Well!” or “Get Better Soon!” because they understand the level of sensitivity that is needed when interacting with people who are dealing with one of the worst types of challenges a family can endure.

First Responders Features: Officer Michael McGinn

"No parent ever imagines they will have to watch their child battle a life-threatening illness. It's such an unfair situation, and we're just glad to be able to alleviate some of their heartache. I've been a part of 'Cops and Kids' for seven years because this program is an extension of everything I believe in and stand for," McGinn said. He expressed his appreciation for all the SPPD officers who actively participate in the program and the power of their collaborative efforts. He mentioned Sgt. Amy Rahlf as the driving force behind the program in recent years, and her oversight of the collection of all the donations/toys and organization of the event logistics.

