

Judge Michael McKay: A True Blue Teacher

He has protected and he continues to serve.

Having shifted from one part of the criminal justice system to another, Judge Michael McKay, of 7th District Court in Paw Paw, understands the importance of investing in those who keep the community safe: law enforcement officers.

Years before being elected to the bench in 2016, Judge McKay graduated from the Michigan State Police Academy and served as a trooper for 10 years. But after sustaining serious injuries from two different incidents on the job—and requiring multiple surgeries—he had to medically retire from the force. After that, he decided to pursue a law degree.

Not long after becoming a prosecutor in 2013, he was invited by Kalamazoo Valley Police Academy to teach some courses. “The academy, which is required to have attorneys teach their legal courses, thought my experience as a state trooper provided a unique perspective and ability to relate the material to the cadets,” Judge McKay recalled.

In addition to teaching at KVPA, he has also taught criminal interdiction at the State Police Academy and participated in MSP report writing exercises.

To say that Judge McKay is passionate about continuing to serve those who wear the uniform would be an understatement. “Our society could not exist without these men and women who answer citizens’ calls and patrol our communities. Police officers routinely have to make complex legal decisions without the benefit of time to do research or consult others,” he remarked. “I know firsthand how difficult these situations can be for police officers and how expertly they have to know the law.”

He also notes how demoralizing police work can sometimes be, having been spit on, bled on, seriously injured twice, had bricks thrown at him in a riot, and having witnessed a partner get shot during a traffic stop. And most difficult of all, attending many, many funerals for fellow officers. Judge McKay is quick to point out that none of these experiences makes him unique among those in uniform, but they remind him how important it is to continue supporting the profession.

Judge McKay shared, “I take special pride in being a part of not just training these men and women to be professionals, but also in encouraging these citizens who choose service over self by becoming police officers.”

In addition to being inspired by his previous profession, Judge McKay is also driven to give back in this way because of his role on the bench. “Judges hold a special position in our system and communities,” he said. “We owe it to those we serve to be leaders in our community and demonstrate that we take seriously the responsibility we are given by the people who elect us.”