



# **Louie Dreith leaves lasting impact on Bethalto area**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**BUNKER HILL** - The popular **Lewis L. “Louie” Dreith**, 81, former chief of police of Bethalto and past owner of WBGZ Radio Station in Alton, died Thursday evening at his Bunker Hill home.

**Mike Dreith**, his son, said the key thing he learned from his father was about overcoming adversity. Mike, inspired by his father, has gone on to great things in the area of college administration and has been a junior college president at multiple institutions.

“My dad suffered through polio as a teenager but did not let it prevent him from accomplishing much in his life,” Mike Dreith said. “I have learned a great deal from that kind of determination.”

Mike Dreith said he believes his gifts and success as a broadcaster were because of his father.

“Dad and his brothers took a big chance in 1984 to purchase WOKZ and made it into WBGZ,” he said. “That certainly made a difference in my career.”

Louie Dreith founded the Boys and Girls Club of Bethalto, which has helped hundreds of young children achieve success from the region. He also began the Explorer’s program for the City of Bethalto.

“He had a very gregarious personality,” **Bethalto Mayor and also former Police Chief Alan Winslow** said. “He was so outgoing and everywhere he went was very popular. He was a charter member of the Madison County Police Association and Southern Illinois Police Association and very active in creating those organizations. Those organizations enhanced the professionalism of policing at that time.”

Winslow said much of the reason he became a police officer was the Explorer’s group that Louie Dreith started in Bethalto.

“I was one of the Explorers when he was here and I worked part time for him at the Bethalto Police Department in one of my first jobs,” Winslow said. “I was 16 years old and he employed me to wash police cars on weekends.

“There is absolutely no way I would be where I am today if it weren't for him. It all has to do with him starting that Explorer program. I went through it and ended up being a career law enforcement officer. It also led to me being in the mayor position.”

Louie Dreith had a huge impact overall on the Bethalto community, Winslow said.

“He was one of the founders of the Boys and Girls Club in town and that has had tremendous impact here,” he said. “Many who have gone through the Explorer program have gone on to law enforcement careers. He will be remembered for his impact on the community as a whole and kids in particular.”

**SEE DREITH OBITUARY:** <https://www.riverbender.com/obits/details/lewis-l-louie-dreith-bunker-hill-obituary-11927.cfm>