



Retires On Aug. 10: Kris Tharp Will Leave Lasting Legacy With His Devotion To Family, Sheriff's Office, Work With Seniors

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Soon, Captain Kris Tharp of the Madison County Sheriff's Office will be retiring. He officially retires on Thursday, Aug. 10, 2023, after a 26-year career in law enforcement. Twenty-four of those years have been of service in the sheriff's office.

Kris has not decided on a next move and said his passion lies in serving others and any future pursuit or endeavor will involve that.

"I want to continue to be a big part of the community," he said.

Kristopher “Kris” Tharp has had a remarkable life and career. His story has always served as an inspiration for those who worked with him in the sheriff’s office and everyone around him.

Kris was raised by a single mother in Wood River. He graduated from East Alton-Wood River High School in 1994 and is a local product. After high school graduation, he immediately began serving the community as a law enforcement cadet with the Wood River Police Department at age 18.

Kris said his wife, Jamie, has always been the “rock” in his life and has supported him through each move of his life. His sons, Tyler and Cameron, have been equally important, he said.

“I would not be where I am today with my family and would not have accomplished anything without Jamie and the support of my children and my mother and family,” he said.

Tharp was appointed to the Illinois Senate in July 2022 to represent the 56th Senate Legislative District, a position formally held by Rachelle Aud-Crowe. Kris’s term ended in January 2023 after losing a close, highly contested Senate race in November 2022.

When asked if he would ever return to a political career, Kris said he was uncertain, but “never say never.” He said he loved his time in the Illinois Senate and serving others.

Kris has risen through the ranks of the Madison County Sheriff’s Office and currently holds the title of captain and jail administrator for one of the largest county jails in downstate Illinois.

Tharp has served as Deputy Commander on the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis and served on the Southern Illinois Child Death Task Force. He is a veteran crisis negotiator for the ILEAS Region 8 Tactical Response Team, which covers 11 counties in the region.

Tharp has been awarded multiple meritorious awards by the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis for outstanding performance during a homicide investigation and was named “20 under 40” in 2012 by the Riverbend Growth Association.

One of Kris’ most proud accomplishments is that he is the founder and president of Madison County TRIAD, a multi-disciplinary organization that partners law enforcement with area service providers to provide resources to area senior citizens. Kris’ work with seniors in the Riverbend region and beyond have set a mark of legacy that will never be forgotten.

Of all the things Kris will be remembered for, his accomplishments with Madison County TRIAD and his assistance in helping seniors may be what he takes the most pride in over the two-plus decades of service. Twice he has been recognized as an “Outstanding Elderly Service Officer” by the Illinois Attorney General’s Office. He was appointed to represent law enforcement on the Illinois Senate Elder Abuse Task Force in 2019.

Kris said it was a “wonderful feeling” to establish TRIAD and he said what he will treasure the most is that the organization is community driven.

“I owe all the success of TRIAD to the volunteers,” he said. “All the credit goes to the volunteers.”



Kris also has never forgotten Wood River roots.

“I grew up in Wood River and I am a lifelong resident,” he said. “Being able to give back to this community and the others in this area has been such an honor of my life. I care very much about this community and the community has always been special to me.”

Tharp is one of the most decorated sheriff’s office deputies ever and has been recognized with more than 30 commendations for meritorious police service. Tharp serves as chairperson for the PSA 8 Fatality Review Board which reports its findings to the Illinois Department of Aging in the interest of improving best practices across the state for law enforcement and senior citizen service providers involved in death investigations.

Kris currently resides in Wood River and is married to his wife Jamie, a Madison County Correctional Officer, for 24 years. They have two sons: Tyler, a U.S. Army veteran and a deputy sheriff with the Madison County Sheriff’s Office, and Kameron, who will be a second-year college student in the fall attending Blackburn College.

Kris is known as a first-class detective and has investigated some of the most serious crimes that have hit the area over the past two-plus decades.

He spent the end of his law enforcement career as an administrator of the corrections department and said he thought that was a tremendous thing for him to do to finish his career. He also has been able to watch his son, Tyler, start a career with the Madison County Sheriff’s Office, and he rates that as one of the highlights of his long, historic, career.

