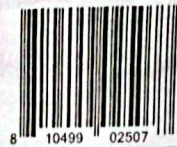




## YOUR GUIDE TO HOME IMPROVEMENT

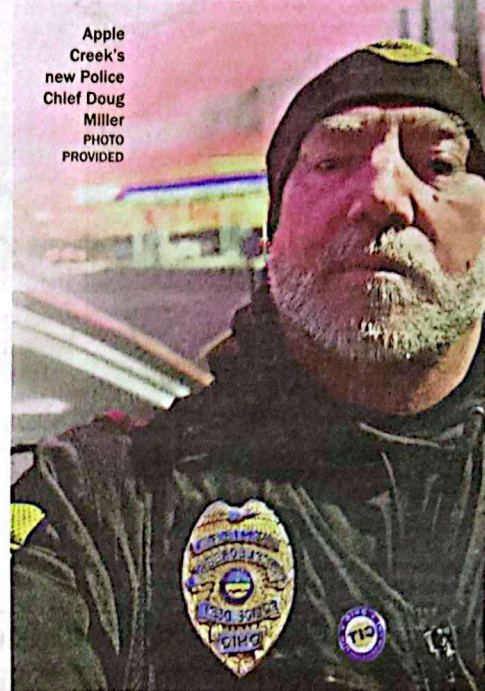


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# The Dalton & News

Apple  
Creek's  
new Police  
Chief Doug  
Miller  
PHOTO  
PROVIDED



## 'I'm going to 'chief' like the place is full' New Apple Creek top cop brings wit, wisdom, experience, care

By CHRISTINA McCUNE  
DGKN managing editor

**APPLE CREEK** As a U.S. Army medic, Doug Miller discovered the difference a tiny tube of ChapStick can make to someone hunkered down in a foxhole.

Miller enlisted in the military before he even graduated from high school. As a young combat medic with his 50-pound Aid Bag, his job was to check on com-

bat arms soldiers. These were men and women selflessly focused on doing their assignments and serving their country. They may not have had a hot meal for a while or even a fresh pair of socks for days. Miller had pain reliever and medication and other essentials, but he learned that sometimes offering an unexpected extra item – like lip balm for chapped lips – helped individuals feel cared for and boosted their morale.

SEE CHIEF, PAGE 13

## Kidron community unites in fundraiser

By JACQUI L. HERSHBERGER  
DGKN contributor

**KIDRON** During the two terms Harry Weaver was on the Kidron Council, he didn't realize that he would help start something that would benefit him and his family years later.

In the early 2000s, Weaver was part of the committee that started the annual Kidron United Fund to help nominated members of the Kidron community who are struggling with various problems.

SEE FUND, PAGE 7

## Dalton pet parents missing cats start petition

By CHRISTINA McCUNE  
DGKN managing editor

**DALTON** Wolfy has gone missing. Oreo, a 10-year-old friendly black and white cat that is neutered, also hasn't returned home.

A fluffy long-haired black cat and a

young slim black cat both went missing last week.

Other Dalton residents also have been missing their pet cats the past few weeks.

Alissa Conrad has even offered a \$500 award for her pet cat Wolfy's safe return. The well-loved, neutered fat black cat with a white marking on his chest has

Wolfy, Alissa Conrad's friendly, neutered black-and-white cat that she raised since he was a kitten seven years ago has gone missing. Others in Dalton also are missing their pet cats. They are seeking answers from village officials and doing everything they can to get their furry felines back and prevent more pets from being relocated.

PHOTO PROVIDED

# CATASTROPHE

SEE CATS, PAGE 8



DAMN YANKEES PHOTOS BY KATIE GOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATIE GOOD PHOTOGRAPHY  
NEWSIES PHOTO BY DGKN STAFF

It's spring musical season and theatre lovers have been filling local high school auditoriums to sit back and be entertained with singing, music, acting, dancing and creative set design. Talented students put on "Sound of Music" at Central Christian earlier this month. This past weekend, Dalton hit the stage three times following a dress rehearsal for the community for the popular class "Damn Yankees." Waynedale put on four action-packed performances of "Newsies." With casts of all ages, high school seniors took their final bows and young thespians got a taste of the spotlight.





# CHIEF

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I learned at a young age how beneficial little things can be to people who are in need – guys in the infantry unit in the middle of nowhere," Miller said. "A ChapStick can make the difference. I kept that with me in the police world. It's the little things that really matter."

After the military, the Northeast Ohio native continued on the road of serving people. He became a nurse and then went into law enforcement. He went on to earn associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees and he graduated from the police academy. He has worked at eight different departments over the years and for the past 15 years he has been able to do one of his favorite things – teaching – at six police academies.

For the past six months, Miller has brought all of this experience to his position as chief of the Apple Creek Police Department. In just half a year, Miller has been making quite an impact on the department and the village.

"Make good decisions on behalf of the public you serve," he said. "I say that probably 1,000 times throughout the academy."

In November, the department swore in five new officers and the recently promoted lieutenant was recognized at a village council meeting for his quick actions during a mental health standoff.

In December, patrolman Chad Hostetler was sworn in and just a couple months later he was recognized for his quick actions responding to a rollover crash just outside of Apple Creek's jurisdiction.

This month, the Apple Creek PD was recognized by the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police for its community policing efforts and was named the March 2025 Agency of the Month. The OACP's Community Relations and Engagement Committee has recognized "dozens of deserving agencies for the Sharing Ohio's Best Program. Each month, a different agency is selected from the submissions received. The agencies that are selected are then eligible for small grants to help them with their ongoing community policing strategies," according to a news release.

"Chief Doug Miller and his staff have created a culture of involving themselves into the fabric of their community when their community needs to see them the most. They have provided a Shop With the Chief program and have also included different programs around Halloween and Thanksgiving. We wish Apple Creek all the best as they continue to build upon their success!"

The news release continued: "The Apple Creek Police Department strongly embraces the philosophy of Community Engagement in all its daily operations."

A list of community programs includes: donating a Thanksgiving meal and dessert to a local family; sponsoring 14 children at the holidays for Shop with the Chief (thanks to donations from the community); offering free safe rides New Year's Eve; registering residents' outdoor cameras to help with crash/crime investigations by providing video; providing news and updates over social media; remaining visible and vigilant through daily residence and business checks.

Miller was sworn in as the Apple Creek Police Chief Sept. 19.

"Since that time, he has transformed the Apple Creek Police Department by recruiting and hiring quality police officers that have a strong community policing focus. The Apple Creek Police Department is committed to providing the community with the highest quality police services possible to maintain the quality of life that is cherished by those who reside, work, and visit there," the news release states.



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA MCCUNE  
Patrolman Chad Hostetler, left, and Chief Doug Miller are among the personnel on the Apple Creek Police Department who make it their goal to have at least 10 positive interactions with the public each shift.

"I am extremely humbled and so excited for our department to be recognized for our efforts," Miller said in the news release. "Apple Creek Police officers are community focused, vigilant in deterring crime and enforcing traffic violations to keep our community safe. I want to personally thank the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police for this honor. I would also like to thank my officers and the community for all of their support. May God bless all first responders and keep them safe."

## SMALL BUT MIGHTY

While he has never been shot during his time serving on more than half a dozen police departments, Miller has been shot at, beaten up, bitten by dogs and more. He has hours of video footage he uses in his classroom from his own experiences and others. He wants to make sure his students are prepared for anything. He teaches his cadets how to apply tourniquets blindfolded. The first video he shows students who are fresh to the police academy is real bodycam footage of a police officer in Oklahoma. After a traffic stop on an elderly driver for missing a taillight on her pickup truck escalates, the officer ends up firing a taser at the woman. Miller asks each student whether they agree with the officer's actions. He then tears the situation apart. He goes through the video step by step detailing how the officer could have handled the situation with respect and care and the woman could have left with a citation for an equipment violation – not with injuries and humiliation.

"The ultimate goal is compliance," he said. "Our approach and how we talk to people and deal with people can really set the tone."

Miller teaches required law enforcement skills and tactics but also offers an approach to policing and a philosophy and lessons anyone could use in daily life. He talks about how interactions can be treated like a bank account: making deposits versus making withdrawals. Being motivated to work hard and make positive interactions pay off. Miller said he aims to motivate his students to "go out and do good." His goal is to maintain a positive culture at the department as well as out in the community.

Police officers have a range of duties any given day on top of making split-second decisions to stop crime and enforce laws. They may help a stranded motorist change a tire one day or use an AED on a loved one experiencing a heart attack, Miller said.

"It's a thankless job and you know that when you come into it," Miller said.

Miller rewards officers and publicly acknowledges when they go above and beyond.

Recruitment is important but retaining

highly trained and experienced officers is key especially in a time when hiring is a challenge. Police work isn't as popular or glorified as it may have been in the past, Miller said.

The department has nine officers and three are full-time. When a full-time position opens up he likes to promote from within.

"We take care of these guys," he said. "I care about them immensely."

Previously, the Wayne County Sheriff's Office covered many days. He said one of the reasons it's important for a village to have its own police department is to improve response times.

"It's Apple Creek. It's small," he said. "The best thing about having your own department is response time is less than 2 minutes."

Wayne Local School District is outside of Apple Creek's jurisdiction and has school resource officers through the Sheriff's Office, but Apple Creek officers are prepared to assist swiftly if needed.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this village in East Union Township in southeastern Wayne County has about 1,200 people. Busy U.S. 250 runs through the village which sees traffic ranging from semitrailers to Amish buggies to bicyclists.

In a recent ridealong on a pleasant sunny weekday, Miller drove from the east to west of town. He passed by a sign that he changes regularly to remind drivers to slow down, or to announce upcoming events, or important updates for residents and visitors. He spotted a teenager sitting alone on the side of the road in the middle of the school day and the chief radioed Officer Chad Hostetler who was on patrol to check on the young man. He stopped to talk to village street crew workers. He slowed as a couple of deer ran across the road and seemed to chase each other playfully through the cemetery.

A man walking his dog and calling the dog warden on his cellphone got Miller's attention and told him about a dog running loose. Miller attempted to make contact with the owner but no one appeared to be home. When he circled back around to head back to the department he pulled up to Hostetler's cruiser as he was making sure the 15-year-old student was OK. Hostetler offered to provide a courtesy transport home.

Apple Creek officers don't sit around. Miller makes sure his department is proactive and motivated.

While other departments may have duty logs and write down everything they do on a shift, what Miller asks of his officers is to have 10 interactions with the community per shift.

Each officer also completes continuing education and training each year at the station.

"The police don't get a whole lot of positive interactions with the public," he said. "It's usually a traffic stop or a call. We do lockouts here. We'll unlock your car for you. We've got a jump box, we'll help jump your car for you. It's a couple things we can do that's positive. We do a lot of welfare checks."

Miller said officers may only receive a couple calls a day but being seen deters crime and traffic infractions.

"You've got to take care of people," he said. "Even the little tiny complaints."

While Apple Creek is smaller than city departments he has worked on, crimes are similar but not as often. Since he has been on the department, officers have handled breaking and entering, domestic violence calls, hit skips and OVI crashes.

"Just because we're little doesn't mean that this stuff doesn't happen," he said. "It just doesn't happen as frequently as like Wooster or somewhere else. So everything happens here. It's just not in the frequency."

The police station is in the heart of the village housed in the same building as Village Hall and council chambers where Miller regularly provides reports and updates to council members at each council meeting.

Apple Creek Fiscal Officer Stephanie Bateman said council members thank Miller during council meetings for his work.

Miller said he feels blessed to receive support. He thinks it's because of his motivation.

"He gets a lot of compliments," Bateman said. "The council members thank him endlessly at each meeting. ... He also does stuff personally for his community. He has sponsored a family for Thanksgiving, Shop with a Chief and a safe drive program ... He does a lot out of his pocket for this community."

A couple months ago, Miller cleaned out a storage room and found boxes of new stuffed animals. While they'll keep some on hand to give to children or someone to provide comfort in a stressful situation, he donated some to a nursing home in Wooster. The residents got a kick out of a local police chief visiting them and handing them a stuffed animal, he said.

In the future, Miller would like to start an auxiliary unit.

Miller admits it may sound cliché but he feels lucky to be where he is and he wants to perform at the best of his abilities.

"If you're a band and you play a show and only five people show up you're supposed to play like the place is full – you know – give them the show," he said. "I feel even though ... some people say we're tiny. I'm going to chief like the place is full. ... I feel lucky to have been considered for the job. It's an important job and I'm making the most of it."