



**ROMEO  
COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS**

## **GOOD NEWS ACROSS 'R' DISTRICT**

November 7, 2024

### **Meet Our New Safety and Security Director**



Our district has made a continued investment in safety and security. This has included a partnership with Secure Environment Consultants (SEC). SHIELD is SEC's school security staffing division that has provided security staffing at our three secondary buildings.

This past spring, the Board of Education approved expanding our contract with SHIELD to create a new director of safety and security position. After undergoing a thorough hiring process in August, Mr. Mike Thomas accepted the position.

Mike has spent the bulk of his career in law enforcement. He graduated from Ball State University in 1991 with a degree in criminal justice. After serving two years with the Ball State Police Officer Reserve he got a full-time position at Ball State, where he remained for over a quarter of a century.



In 1998, he moved to Michigan and was hired by the Auburn Police Department. After two years, he was promoted to the detective bureau and assumed a role in a new department, now known as the Special Victims Unit, that specializes in juvenile crime and crime prevention, child physical and sexual abuse, vulnerable adult abuse and elder abuse.

While protecting the most vulnerable was where his heart was, Mike says it also wore on him.

"By 2017, I was pretty burned out," he admitted. "We had a new detective I knew I could trust. I trained her and handed it off."

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Mike spent the next two years handling fraud cases. In 2019, he reached the age of full retirement and left the detective bureau. He then accepted a position as director of risk management for Havenwyck Hospital, the largest psychological hospital in Michigan. His focus was on helping the hospital implement advanced crisis prevention and intervention, bring clarity to their policies, and create better emergency response plans.

Mike had agreed to take the job on for six months to help the hospital get on track, but then the pandemic hit. Suddenly he found himself working 60 to 80 hour work weeks. While it was hard work, he is proud of the hospital's success in surviving the pandemic without losing a single patient to COVID.

His next post was as investigator for the Oakland County prosecutor. When this position "came calling," the pandemic was over and Mike jumped at the opportunity.

"If you're a detective in Oakland County, it's the ultimate retirement job," Mike said. "And you don't get that job unless you've proven yourself over many years. It's a badge of honor."

He was assigned to the juvenile division. Among his duties, he delivered subpoenas, helped prepare cases for court and, as a certified forensic interviewer and trainer, interviewed children before court to ensure proper protocol was followed.

He would have happily continued in this role, but everything changed after tragedy struck at Oxford High School. Mike was asked to join the investigation team, with his primary focus on analyzing the electronic evidence.



This turned into an immense and time-consuming challenge, but Mike learned so much from the process about the pathway to violence that he participated in a presentation in Washington, D.C. with the goal of educating school counselors, teachers and administrators about how to identify common denominators and red flags.

By the time the investigation concluded, Mike had seen enough

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tragedy for a lifetime and was ready to shift to the prevention side.

“I have this body of knowledge now and to me the most logical place to apply it is schools,” he said. “I’ve known this school district and its reputation for years. When the opening came up for a safety and security director, I thought maybe this is where I’m supposed to be.”

Mike also knew Superintendent Dr. Todd Robinson when he was an SVU detective at Auburn Hills and Dr. Robinson was a middle school principal in the Avondale School District.

“Knowing Todd and knowing the reputation and pride of Romeo, I haven’t had a second of wondering whether I made the right move,” Mike said. “The school district is in such great shape. Everything else I’ve ever been handed I have felt I needed to step up and fix it. This is the first thing I’ve ever been handed that I don’t need to fix; I just need to make it better.”

Mike’s day-to-day duties include supervising and managing the district’s security team. This includes both the day-to-day business, training and monitoring of the services they provide. Mike works directly with our school resource officers, building administrators and district administration.

“Having a dedicated director position allows the district to take on special projects and implement new initiatives that will enhance the safety of our school facilities,” Dr. Robinson said. “Mike’s experience and background are directly connected to some of the most relevant work we need to do.”

*Top photo: Mike with his K-9, Amber, when he worked for the Ball State Police Department.  
Bottom photo: pictured with his wife, Sue, and four children.*

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