

Ed Crawford

'80 M.P.A. public administration
Chief, Kent Police Department
Kent, Washington



In front of the mural outside police headquarters. The tiles were created by Kent community members, as well as inmates and staff at the Kent corrections facility, with major funding by the Kent Arts Commission.

Ed Crawford could have retired years ago. As deputy chief of the Washington State Patrol with 25 years of service, it would have been easy. But, he was 47 at the time and had a lot more he wanted to do.

Technically, he did retire from that job, but he moved on to the Kent Police Department, where he has been chief since 1991.

"Sure, there are bad guys and bad things that happen, but what you get to do in law enforcement is to help people, provide for their safety, make society better," he said. "These are good and warm things."

A career serving the public didn't start out on such a positive note for Seattle native Ed Crawford. He enlisted in the Coast Guard as a teenager because, while he hadn't gotten into serious trouble, he knew he was headed that way. "I found in the service the direction I wanted to go in."

At age 22, the first day after being discharged from the military, he started his career with the Washington State Patrol, serving in cities all across the state.

Determined to get an education that would underpin his law enforcement work, he earned a liberal arts baccalaureate degree from Ft. Wright College in Spokane, a master's of public administration from Eastern and a law degree from the University of Puget Sound – all while working full time.

He was impressed by the lengths Eastern faculty went to help him complete his studies, especially when he was allowed to finish up by correspondence after being transferred to Seattle during his final quarter.

"They did their best to help working people like me get an education," he noted.

Not only has the education benefited him personally, he said, but it has provided the kind of credentials that are important as he strives to help the public better understand the role of law enforcement.

What may be the catalyst for that commitment is a moment he terms as life-defining. It wasn't a big thing as police experiences go, but it was for him.

"I was with the Patrol in Spokane and I had stopped to help a grandpa and his wife with a disabled truck. Two boys, maybe 6 and 7, were with them, and I could see they were scared when

they saw me. I took a couple of minutes to say 'hi' to them and to chat. It was a small, gentle conversation, and I think it changed how they looked at the police from that time forward."

Ed said he believes people want to love and have pride in the police who serve them, "but sometimes our own employees don't let that happen. That's a challenge. Still, if we don't have good policing in America, things won't go well for us. When the public knows the police better, they are more likely to seek help and have trust. I'm working on that."

Like he said earlier, the now 62-year-old Ed Crawford still has things he wants to do.

