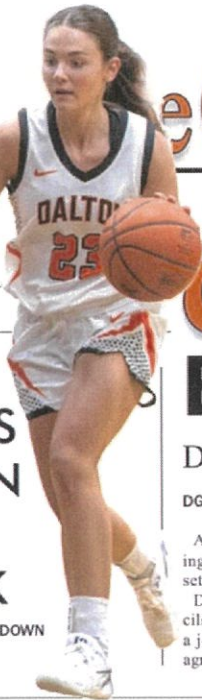


Dalton senior
Grace Dorffer

PHOTO BY LISA
McGINTY | LMC
Photography

LADY DAWGS ARE ON A HOT STREAK

DALTON GIRLS TAKE DOWN
HUSKIES, FALCONS
STORY ON PAGE 10



DALTON The Gazette & News KIDRON



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EWFD lawsuit settled

Dalton, Marshallville agree to terms on fire district dissolution

DGKN staff report

After about two years, a case involving East Wayne Fire District has been settled.

Dalton and Marshallville village councils and their lawyers met last month at a joint council meeting and came to an agreement during executive session.

A news release issued from the village of Dalton states that "following thoughtful mediation and collaboration, a settlement has been reached in village of Marshallville v. East Wayne Fire District et al., Case No. 2023 CVC-H000427. The villages along with East Wayne Fire District, by and through its appointed receiver, agreed to perma-

nently divide all assets of the Fire District, including fire and EMS equipment and cash on hand, to assure the provision of uninterrupted fire and EMS services to their constituents."

According to the settlement agreement, the villages agreed that:

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PHOTO COURTESY OF APPLE CREEK PD
Apple Creek PD Ptl. Woods helps to take groceries to local families at Thanksgiving.

Apple Creek PD takes extra steps to connect with community

By CHRISTINA McCUNE
DGKN managing editor

APPLE CREEK A local police department is taking extra steps to put smiles on faces, make connections, and help out the community it serves this holiday season – and year-round.

When policing a municipality of just more than 1,000 residents, getting to know the community is important in this small southeastern Wayne County village.

Heading in to 2026, Apple Creek Police Chief Doug Miller – a law enforcement officer and training instructor with years of experience serving many police departments and academies – is in his second year at the department.

SEE PD, PAGE 8



PHOTOS BY ROBERT McCUNE | DGKN
Check out 16998 Fox Lake Road, Marshallville, with 100 inflatables and people can stay toasty in their vehicles and follow the path, or park, bundle up and walk along and take photos in Whoville, look for Mickey and friends, Snoopy, snow people, funny scenes and more. Visit "Peppards Memorial Light Display" on Facebook for updates and the story behind this annual tradition.

WHAT YOU HAD TO SAY

We asked on Facebook: What is your favorite Christmas/holiday song? Here's what some of our followers had to say:

- Valerie Steed McGreal: "Hark the Herald Angels"
- Eva Sibert: "O Come All Ye Faithful" - my Dad sang it all the time
- Elaine Marie: "Good Christian Men, Rejoice!"
- Christina Marie: "Silent Night"
- Rita Schwartz Palaski: "Too many to choose just one! So I will go with 'Silent Night'"

- Martha Zamperli: "O Holy Night"
- Diane Weisgarber: "O Holy Night and Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer"
- Sarah Rossiter Nussbaum: "The Wexford Carol"
- Donna Welch: "Blue Christmas" by Elvis
- Bonnie Winkler: "O Holy Night"
- Sara Danner: "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"
- Mike Vance: "Silver Bells White Christmas"
- Lisa Sommerfield Zuercher: "What Child Is This?"
- George Winkler: "Silent Night"

- Peggy Linder: "White Christmas"
- Randy Forst: "It wouldn't be Christmas at the Forst house without the Carpenters Christmas Album with my favorite Merry Christmas Darling. I do have to say the Christmas Canon by the Trans Siberian Orchestra is moving up the list."
- Laura Rafferty-Smith: "Peace on Earth/Drummer Boy by Bing Crosby and David Bowie"
- Josh Gordon: "Christmas Song" by Nat King Cole. It's a song, yet I'm somehow warmer after I've listened to it.
- Ellen J. Russell: An Old Christmas Card by Jim Reeves

PD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

His goals for the New Year are for the department to continue making those all important connections and working to keep residents safe. That's a wide range: this department does it all from ticketing speeders to chasing criminals to making sure families have enough food on the table.

And recently, Miller made sure a family also had a table so they could sit together for the meal.

Everyone faces tough situations in their lifetime. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It's smart to ask for help - especially with family members to consider. Miller said it takes courage for a resident to reach out for help so when they do he takes it seriously and he's all ears. So are other businesses, churches and organizations and individuals in the Apple Creek area.

"It takes a strong person to reach out," Miller said.

At the same time, Miller does his own reaching out to make sure people have what they need. During the government shut-down, Miller posted on the police department Facebook page that if any Apple Creek residents were affected and needed food assistance they could contact Miller. "I will not let you go hungry!" the post states.

On a lighter note, Miller and other ACPD officers also have fun with residents. Miller began a free ice cream for "Being Awesome" program in the summer and handed out "tickets" good for ice cream at The Golden Bear. Thanks to donations officers also gave out freeze pops if they spotted kids wearing bike helmets or for just playing outside with no electronics in sight.

Back in July, the village of Apple Creek issued a letter of commendation to Miller for his leadership, dedication and serv-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF APPLE CREEK PD

The Apple Creek Police Department works to make sure residents are safe and also is active in the community to make sure basic needs are met such as food at the holidays. From left, back row: Lt. Ryan Pearson, Lt. Lyle, Ptl. Heiser, Chief Doug Miller, Ptl. Cappello; front row from left, Ptl. Woods, Aux. McVay, Ptl. Cox.

ice. The letter of commendation noted how Miller recommended appointing and promoting over 10 officers thereby achieving nearly 24-hour police service, was recognized as Department of the Month in March by the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, spearheaded many accomplishments in a short period of time including soliciting and receiving donations for equipment, and also highlighted the chief's communication and transparency.

Along those lines, the Apple Creek PD has an active Facebook page to keep residents informed

and aware. The Facebook page came in handy around Halloween when Apple Creek shared a video regarding a petty theft case they were investigating.

At Halloween, the department had a pumpkin carving contest and entrants received \$50 gift cards to purchase Halloween costumes.

"Everyone won," Miller said.

The department made a donation of 40 stuffed kittens to Wooster JAG Healthcare also around Halloween and earlier donated teddy bears to the Avenue, a long-term care facility.

In November, the Facebook page recognized how nearly half the Apple Creek police force are military veterans.

For the second year, Miller set out to help a family at Thanksgiving. This year, he helped four families with meals, which included turkey, stuffing, sides, milk and dessert.

"I have a lot of local businesses that see what I'm doing," he said.

Miller highlighted Fairlawn Mennonite Church and East of Chicago Pizza in Apple Creek. He said Walmart provided the department with candy at

Halloween to hand out to trick or treaters. The department participated in a Trunk or Treat with other departments at Walmart.

Recently a family contacted Miller about extra help at the holidays. He provided them with groceries and also bought them a table the day before Thanksgiving at Mission: Thrift in Wooster so the family could enjoy the holiday meal together.

The police department hosted a Breakfast with Santa Dec. 6 at Mayer-Carson Hall and for the second year Miller will be sponsoring children for Shop with the Chief. People are welcome to donate and assist with the police department's programs.

The department has about a dozen officers - only three full-time - and the rest are part-time and auxiliary officers.

Miller shares statistics about the high number of crimes that go unreported in the United States, especially domestic violence. He emphasizes the importance of his officers connecting with residents so in the unfortunate case that a crime occurs, they feel comfortable making the report.

"You have to be approachable," Miller said.

He and his officers aim to do whatever is needed to help the community. Scrolling through the department's Facebook page, posts honor fallen officers from other departments, offer important reminders, announce special events and share photos of officers doing everything from handing popples to kids in the summer to rescuing a couple of lost goats on the side of the road to return to their owner.

The department will do what needs to be done for the betterment of the village's residents.

"It seems to be working," he said.

Miller said he would like to thank everyone for their support and hopes to continue to see support in 2026. Visit the new website at www.applecreekpolice.org and follow on Facebook.

EWFD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

1. The Temporary Asset Allocation previously agreed to and ordered in the litigation in 2023 became permanent. Among others, the LifePac Monitor purchased by Sugar Creek Township now became the property of Dalton. In exchange for this permanent asset allocation Dalton shall pay Marshallville the sum of \$110,000.00.

2. Other items purchased by the Fire District from state and federal grant funds will be divided equally.

3. All non-grant items will be owned by their current holders.

4. The remaining funds on hand, in the approximate value of \$450,000 as of August 2025, such as General Fund, EMS Fund, Levy Funds or Collections, and Contractual Payments will be divided per the Villages' 2024 tax duplicates: Dalton will receive a share of 78.25% and Marshallville will receive a share of 21.75%.

A timeline is provided in a news

release from the village of Dalton:

■ Dec. 1, 2023: Litigation began when Marshallville filed a complaint for declaratory judgement, injunctive relief, preliminary injunctions, temporary restraining order, and breach of fiduciary duty, against East Wayne Fire District, Jarra Underwood, in her official capacity as the Wayne County Auditor, Patrick Sword and Dan Matz, in both their individual and official capacity as East Wayne Fire District board members, District Board Member, Andrea Uhler, in her capacity as receiver of the East Wayne Fire District, Dalton Volunteer Fire Department, and the Village of Dalton.

■ Dec. 28, 2023: the Wayne County Court of Common Pleas issued an order of Stipulated Injunction for the Interim Allocation of Assets.

■ Feb. 2, 2024: Dalton filed its answer and counterclaim for declaratory judgement, injunctive relief, preliminary injunction, temporary restraining order, and breach of fiduciary duty.

■ Feb. 29, 2024: Dalton filed its

answer in response to Jarra Underwood's amended claims.

■ March 22, 2024: Marshallville filed its answers, counterclaims, and cross-claim in response to Dalton and Jarra Underwood.

■ Oct. 18, 2024: Marshallville voluntarily dismissed Matz and Sword.

■ Aug. 25, 2025: The last and most current filing took place when the Wayne County Auditor issued its determination and order for the division of some but not all assets of the Fire District. This Auditor's Determination divided only the ambulance and EMS funds as collected levy funds (approximately \$300,000) and ordered only the non-grant items (approximately \$209,000) to be transferred to Dalton with Marshallville retaining the fire truck. The auditor did not apportion any cash from contractual payments with the value of \$152,547 or any grant items with the value of \$1,071,751. Instead, the auditor opined that "this would be a province of the court or by agreement of the parties."

"Thus, as the litigation

remained pending with uncertainty to whether the fire departments will be able to function and operate if the Auditor's determination becomes reality, the Villages of Dalton and Marshallville took the matter into their own hands and settled the lawsuit," the news release states. "This dismissal with prejudice constitutes no admission of liability or wrongdoing by either party, and it reflects the Villages' shared commitment to fairness, transparency, and to prevent drawn-out legal proceedings."

"I'm happy that both fire departments, the village of Marshallville and the village of

Dalton came away in the best of circumstances and that both fire departments are able to function," Dalton Mayor Dave Gibson said. "That was the goal for their mayor and myself as well as our solicitor and their legal representation and both councils. It was good to put that whole period behind us."

The DGKN reached out seeking comment Dec. 12 via email to Marshallville's mayor, solicitor and fiscal officer based on email addresses found on the village website and asked that the email be shared with Marshallville council members to give an opportunity to comment.

YARD HOURS: MON-FRI 8:00AM-5:00PM SAT. BY APPOINTMENT

Lil' John
TRANSPORT

SAND LIMESTONE GRAVEL

330-464-4183