



### Officer Roy Hicks – A Gentle Giant

Officer Roy Hicks has been a member of the Putnam Police Department for slightly more than 2½ years. He graduated from the Police Academy in Meriden in July 2021. The Community Beat sat down with Officer Hicks to discuss what life has been like patrolling the streets of Putnam and to share his side of police work. Here’s his story in his own words.

**M**y dream since a very young age was always to become a police officer. I was determined to do whatever it took to achieve my goal. As a kid attending Pomfret Community School and later The Woodstock Academy, my dream of working in law enforcement got stronger as the years went on. Attending Manchester Community College, I devoted many hours with my nose in the books on my way to an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice.

Diploma in hand, I realized I still had some ground to cover before becoming a police officer. I worked hard on my physical conditioning while searching for avenues to gain the experience necessary to reach the next step. Along the way I got involved with the Pomfret Fire Department, eventually reaching the level of Assistant Fire Chief. I was fortunate to gain further experience when I landed a position working in Security at Day Kimball Hospital.

Eventually I got my foot in the door at the Putnam Police Department working in the Dispatch Center. One day I put a plan together. I would present myself to Chief of Police Chris Ferace and spill the beans about my dream of becoming a Putnam Police officer. Dressed in my Sunday best, suit and tie, I made an

appointment and unveiled my dream.

Chief Ferace was a wonderful mentor, telling me very directly without glossing things over about my route through the Connecticut Police Academy. I entered in January 2021 and graduated in July of that same year. I’m grateful for the support I also received from my parents, Rodney and Wanda and my lovely wife Tori. They’ve been an integral part of my success.



Officer Roy Hicks and his wife Tori enjoying vacation time together.

At first glance, I can be very intimidating and imposing because of my size. For that reason, as a police officer, I understand the role I play in maintaining and enforcing the law. I also realize that people do make mistakes and some deserve an understanding ear. In dealing with all cases, my first approach is de-escalation.

I’ve been involved in handling a number of narcotic arrests, domestic violence and breach of peace incidents. I’ve dealt with a number of homeless victims, many who are also dealing with alcohol and other addictions. Many of the homeless say they need help but are reluctant to reach out for it. I observe their need for food, clothing and shelter. During my shifts I encounter some of these individuals regularly with my fellow officers Nick Ustin and Chip Carney, and my supervisor Sgt. Kevin Cardonne. I have compassion for these people and I’ve reached out to them with clothing and blankets during the cold weather. I’ll sometimes buy them a pizza and I’ve gone to the Dollar Store to purchase them socks and shirts.



Officer Roy Hicks prepared for shift duty.

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# Chief's Corner

Getting through a New England winter is always tough on everyone. Physically, the wet, damp, dreary and snowy days make it difficult on people but especially the elderly and those with debilitating conditions. Mentally, the short days and long nights can often play tricks on the mind. The anticipation of the 'winter solstice' on December 21 is a day that many look forward to because of the longer warmer days and the eventual arrival of spring.



Putnam Police Chief  
Christopher Ferace

For the members of the Putnam Police Department, the winter season is also taxing. Like the proverbial unofficial motto of the U.S. Postal Service, "Neither snow nor rain nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." The truth being that our men and women work tirelessly, dedicated to the people of Putnam through the harsh months of December, January, February and March.

As Chief of the Department, I'm proud of the job the members of our team do, not only during the raw and rugged winter season, but throughout the entire year.

In this issue, I hope you enjoyed the story of one of our newer officers, Roy Hicks. He's a local young man whose dream was to become a 'police officer.' You'll read about the path he took to achieve his goal and the tireless dedication he put in to reach his goal. You'll also hear firsthand from him about some of his experiences since joining the department.

In November the Department experienced the huge loss of one of its longest serving members, Emergency Dispatch Supervisor Michael "Peach" Campbell. He experienced a 38-year career in the Dispatch Center answering every type of phone call and assisting thousands of people on the other end of the line.

You'll be introduced to Peach's replacement. The death of Peach was followed by the sad news of the death of former Department Detective and Sergeant Tim L. Bly. Tim served the Department for 27 years. He succumbed to his untimely death on January 7, 2024. The news of Bly's passing was felt throughout the Department and our community.

Last year it was announced that the Law Enforcement Council (LEC) was initiating a Police Recruit level Basic Training component in Norwich to supplement the traditional police academy training program that's held in Meriden. We are planning to introduce you to this concept in the next issue of the Community Beat.

As we anxiously anticipate the arrival of spring, the sound of baseball bats and the opening of another Major League season and the warmth of the sun, the mission of the Putnam Police Department remains, providing "a safe and friendly" community to our citizens and those individuals who visit and enjoy the amenities of the Town of Putnam every season of the year.

Remember my door is always open to the citizens of Putnam.

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I'm grateful for everything I have in life but seeing people struggle is tough for me. As I stated earlier many of these individuals don't ask for help but I'm happy they trust me and are thankful for the few times that I've offered assistance.

I have one other law enforcement dream. I love dogs and ultimately would relish the role of K-9 officer in the Putnam Police Department if it again becomes available. My wife Tori and I have two dogs 'Rocky,' a Husky and 'Piper,' a German Shepherd that are a big part of our lives.



Officer Roy Hicks checking his cruiser computer.

*The story of Officer Roy Hicks reveals a police officer who is the epitome of 'community policing'. As he patrols the streets of Putnam, he's a combination of compassion, dedication, ambition and motivation according to Police Chief Chris Ferace.*

## RAIL CROSSING REMINDER

In its heyday, Putnam was a hub of passenger and freight train traffic. Today, the only reminder of the past are the freight trains that rumble through town. Railroad safety however, remains of utmost importance, as Putnam still has a number of pedestrian and automobile railroad crossings.

According to national rail safety statistics and AAA, last year more than 2,200 people in the United States were injured or killed in railroad crossing collisions or trespassing incidents.

Every three hours, a person or vehicle is hit by a train, with more than 60 percent of vehicle/train collisions occurring at active railroad crossings with either crossing lights or gates.

**Remember:** always stop if crossing gates are down or lights are flashing.

**Remember:** when driving, obey signs and signals.

**Remember:** trains can't stop quickly; trains are likely moving faster than you think.



## A Tribute to Michael "Peach" Campbell

Since 1985, Michael Campbell has been a fixture at the entrance to the Putnam Police Department, manning the consoles of the Emergency Dispatch Center. On November 8, 2023, his days at the position he loved dearly, came to a close with his passing at Day Kimball Hospital.

Campbell, affectionately known as "Peach" by all who knew him, was the voice who answered all emergency and non-emergency calls at the Putnam Police Department Dispatch Center for 38 years. As well as he was recognized at the station, he was equally known everywhere he ventured in Putnam, surrounding areas and beyond.

"Peach was a close friend and co-worker my entire career with the Department. He did his job reliably every day and much that he accomplished was overlooked. As the first dispatcher hired by the Police Department, everyone went to him for assistance," said Retired Police Chief Rick L. Hayes.

The remarkable thing about Campbell was that all he achieved in life, whether professionally or in his personal life, was accomplished despite a physical handicap he received in a bicycle accident more than 40 years ago.

According to his brother, Putnam Fire Chief Bob Campbell, in 1978 as a 13-year-old Peach was on his bicycle, which had no breaks, when he lost control after hitting sand and ran into a telephone pole. The accident severed six nerves between the neck and shoulder. Originally doctors wanted to amputate the arm but his mother refused to allow that surgery to occur. Following the accident, he spent many months in the hospital with numerous surgeries and hours of rehab. The result - a plate was inserted and the shoulder was fused, which Peach lived with for the remainder of his life.

"I always admired Peach. He never allowed his physical disability to hold him back or use it as an excuse. He could work a phone, a keyboard and the radio at the same time and never missed a beat," said Chief Chris Ferace.

The death of his mother on June 11, 2022 deeply affected Peach. He was always indebted to her for demanding that doctors do everything possible to save his arm and avoid amputation. Following her death, Peach let himself go and began self-medicating with alcohol more frequently. From the day of her death to his passing he was never the same person.

"The childhood accident and the time spent in the hospital never dampened his spirits. He worked the computer keyboards at the Dispatch Center, played golf and softball, was a regular attendee at Patriots and Red Sox games, home and away, and was one of the most active members of the Knights of Columbus in Putnam," said Bob Campbell.

Peach coached Little League for many years, assisted with the Boy Scouts, was active in the Putnam High School Alumni

Athletic Association, played in the Putnam Lions Volleyball Tournament and was an avid hiker with his buddies Bob Desrosiers and Peter Scruba.

"Peach was instrumental as a leader of the K of C Turkey Dip charity for Muscular Dystrophy. I was always impressed by his tenacity to help others. Peach never let his disability hold him back in life. I think about him every day. He and I were late night texters, primarily commiserating over the losses of our beloved Boston teams," said Bob Desrosiers.

One quality that everyone in his family and his friends noted was Campbell's stubbornness. It wasn't that he was necessarily a contrary person, but everyone notes that when he made up his mind on a matter, he stuck to his guns. As reliable as he was to the Department, it was difficult to unhinge him from his daily routines.

"Peach was stubborn in a good way. Whenever I speak with his fellow officers and friends his stubbornness always comes up. We all laugh and note that this is how we remember Peach, we certainly miss him" said Police Chief Chris Ferace.

He was often asked how a guy with the name of Michael Campbell got the nickname "Peach." According to his brother Bob, every summer when school ended, the boys would have their heads shaved, what was then called a 'brush cut.' His head looked like a Peach. He was dubbed with the nickname and it stuck for the remainder of his life.

Regardless of his idiosyncrasies, Peach Campbell was a well-known and well-loved member of the Putnam community. The final tribute to this affection that the community had for him was demonstrated at his funeral on November 18. As his good friend, Putnam Police Sgt. Louis Cinque escorted his body down the aisle of St. Mary Church, there was hardly a seat to be found in the cavernous building. A tribute that was appreciated by his family and his many friends. One that Michael "Peach" Campbell would have cherished but would never have expected.



"Peach" (standing center) is flanked by his friends Bert Elliot (L) and Bob Desrosiers (R) at a Colorado Rockies game.



Chief Chris Ferace (L) congratulates "Peach" on 35 Years of Service to the Putnam Police Department in 2020.

### Helping Others Is in His Blood

Duane J. Anderson has been involved as a member of the Putnam Police Department communications team on a part-time or full-time basis for more than a decade. Chief Chris Ferace recently announced that Anderson has been promoted to Communications Supervisor, assuming the position formerly occupied by the late Michael "Peach" Campbell.



Duane J. Anderson

"We're very fortunate to have a person of Duane Anderson's quality to step in and fill the void created by the death of "Peach" Campbell. Duane is an experienced individual and has been a longtime member of our communications department. He's been able to step in and seamlessly assume the position," said Chief Ferace.

The 50-year-old Anderson is a resident of Dayville. He grew up in Putnam and graduated from Putnam High School in 1991. Since his graduation, Anderson has devoted his life to a career of being a first responder. In 1991 he became a member of the Putnam Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter. He's a certified Emergency Medical Technician who has done stints with the Putnam-Pomfret Emergency Medical Service and as a member of the K-B Ambulance Service. He's currently a volunteer member of the Dayville Fire Department.

Anderson began working in the Putnam Police Department Communications Center on a part-time basis in May of 2012. He assumed a full-time role on the 2nd Shift in 2021. In November 2023, he was promoted to his current position.

"Working in emergency services as a first responder has been my entire life since graduating from high school. I truly enjoy helping people and being available to assist others during the time of crisis," said Anderson.

As Anderson assumes his new role, in which he has eight individuals under his supervision, he has some goals in mind for his department. He wants to work closely with Chief Ferace in assuring that part-time dispatchers are trained in all facets of handling calls. The Communications Department handles a variety of calls, including home, fire and burglar alarms, missing persons, Amber and Silver Alerts, and responding to all types of criminal acts.

"People answering the calls that come into our Department must be professional and maintain composure in order to assist the caller on the other end of the line. I want to be certain that

everyone is well prepared for any situation that presents itself," said Anderson.

"I'm honored to have been selected for this position. I've managed people my entire life and want to be available to our staff and make them the best they can be. I love coming to work every day and I hope to demonstrate that enthusiasm," said Anderson.

Anderson and his wife Holly are the parents of three children, a 19-year-old son and 13-year-old twins, a boy and a girl.

### Tim Bly's Death Saddens Police Department & Community



The Putnam Police Department and the Putnam community were shocked by the news of the sudden death of retired Sergeant Timothy L. Bly. He died unexpectedly on January 7, 2024.

Sgt. Bly was a well known and respected member of the Department for 27 years. Born in Woburn, Massachusetts on April 7, 1959, Bly began his career as a Patrol Officer in Putnam in 1983.

"During his 27 years of service to the Department, Sgt. Bly made a positive impact on both the Police Department and the community of Putnam. He will be remembered for his professionalism, kindness and pleasant disposition," said Captain Justin Lussier.

In 2003, Bly was promoted to Department Detective, where he was responsible for investigating major crimes or complex law enforcement situations. He became recognized as a well-respected criminal investigator. Bly was promoted to sergeant in 2008, during the time that Rick L. Hayes served as Putnam Police Chief.

"I have fond memories of serving in the Department with Tim. We hit it off when we first met and became close friends. Though he wasn't originally from Putnam, he fell in love with the town and its people," said Retired Chief Hayes.

During his time in the Department and following his retirement, Bly and his late wife, Joan were frequently seen around town patronizing the local dining establishments. He was also an active member of the Cargill Council #64 Knights of Columbus, where he assisted with many of the organizations fundraising activities.

"Tim loved people and enjoyed helping others. He was a big fan of Boston sports teams, coming originally from Massachusetts. One of my fondest memories of Tim was watching the Patriots in one of the Super Bowls together at Cheers in Boston," said Hayes.

Sgt. Bly is survived by his two sons, and two stepsons and a stepdaughter. He also leaves behind four grandchildren.

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