



## *News Release*

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### **Maplewood Chief Is Century Alum**

Maplewood Police Chief David Thomalla said his plans to pursue a life-long career in law enforcement came together when he was a student at Century College, the former Lakewood Community College.

After getting to know St. Paul Police officers through the St. Paul Police Explorers, Thomalla graduated from St. Bernard's High School in 1979 and then enrolled at Century. He has no regrets about his decision to become a police officer, though he has seen more than his share of tragedy.

Fellow Maplewood officer Sgt. Joe Bergeron, who was tragically killed this summer near Lake Phalen, also attended Century and was a former partner of Thomalla's for several years. Thomalla spoke at Bergeron's funeral and also briefly at his visitation at Maplewood Community Center, which was attended by thousands of well-wishers who filled nine guest books with their names and thoughts. Hundreds stood in the rain waiting to be a part of the somber event.

“Now more than ever, I think people appreciate the vital role we play in keeping our community safe,” said Thomalla, 49, in a recent interview. “I feel fortunate that I always knew what I wanted to do, and for me, the most direct route was to pursue a two-year degree.”

After graduating from Century when he was only 20 years old, Thomalla landed his first job with the Olmsted County Sheriff’s Department in October 1981. He worked there for two years before joining the Maplewood force in 1983. A year later, he enrolled in paramedic school through the former St. Paul-Ramsey Medical Center, where he met his future wife, Carol. Thomalla and his wife have two daughters, Nikki, 22, and Ashley, 18.

A patrol officer until 1992, Thomalla then worked in investigations for four years, when he was promoted to sergeant. Three months later, he was appointed acting captain and had the opportunity to attend the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia, in 1998. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1998, deputy chief in 2000 and became chief in 2002.

Thomalla is a big proponent of advanced education for police officers. “It helps you deal with life on the streets,” said Thomalla. “It makes you wiser and better able to handle all the things that come your way.”

Thomalla earned his bachelor’s degree from Metropolitan State University in 1997 after taking one or two courses at a time for five years. He went on to earn his master’s degree in public safety education and administration from St. Thomas University in 2001.

With all his advanced education, Thomalla said he will never forget that it was Century, the former Lakewood, where he got his start. “I can still remember my instructors – especially Herb Davis - and my classmates,” he noted.

Thomalla said when he hires officers, he looks for well-balanced individuals who have pursued education beyond high school. “The officers I hire are my legacy,” he said. “We always try to find people who have a healthy balance between home and work life.”

Police work is stressful and city politics can be stressful, too. He noted that his department has been through some rocky times, and it takes well-grounded people to keep moving forward during political storms.

“Police officers need to be problem solvers,” he said. “That takes life experience and it takes education.”