

Remembering Cheektowaga Chief of Police Michael J. Sliwinski

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By: Ala Errebhi

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CHEEKTOWAGA, N.Y. (WKBW) — The sudden passing of Cheektowaga Police Chief Michael Sliwinski has left a deep hole in the heart of this proud community.

According to police, Chief Sliwinski became ill Saturday morning and died at the hospital of an apparent heart attack.

"Chief Sliwinski truly cared about this community more than himself," said Brian Gould, Assistant Chief of Police. "We at CPD are very devastated at our loss, the community's loss. Not only did we lose our boss but we lost a friend."

If his colleagues could describe him in one word, it would be "caring."

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"If a call happened overnight, you didn't need the captain to call him in the morning and let him know because he heard it. He was always listening," said Gould.

Chief Sliwinski joined CPD in 1991. He became a lieutenant in 2004, and was promoted to captain in 2011.

He continued rising through the ranks, becoming assistant chief in 2018 and police chief just two years later, in February 2020.

Gould said Chief Sliwinski was in New York City on September 11, 2001, and responded to the scene.

"He cared about the men and women in this police department. We were his family. He had a very small family but to us he had a very large family," he said.

Chief Sliwinski had also been a supporter of Ten Lives Club since 2018, donating to the organization's different fundraisers and raffles.

His obituary states that instead of flowers, memorials may be made to Ten Lives Club.

"Our records show that he actually brought a stray cat to us named Harry in 2013. So I think that maybe was the first time perhaps he got acquainted with our organization," said Kimberly LaRussa, Public Relations Manager at Ten Lives Club.

To honor the late chief, Ten Lives is putting a cat, named Benjamin, up for adoption in his name.

"We were just so touched that he wanted to make sure to support us even in his passing. And our hearts to go out to his family and his loved ones at this difficult time," said LaRussa.

In a statement to 7 EWN, Supervisor Diane Benczkowski said:

"He was firm, but he was fair. You knew where you stood with him. He was always very helpful to the Town board members, myself included. We were so fortunate to have him as chief of police, even though it was such a short period. Chief Sliwinski was a vital part in the creation of last year's state-mandated police reform process. He will be deeply missed."

Sliwinski's wake is set for Tuesday and Wednesday from 3 to 7pm at the Sliwinski Funeral Home on Transit Road in Depew.

His funeral mass will take place at 9:30 Thursday morning at St. Louis Church.