

It's not all about the bad guy, says incoming Deputy Police Chief



By Brock Weir

Aurora's Andre Crawford will officially take the reins as Deputy Chief of the York Regional Police next week.

Mr. Crawford was appointed to the position by York Region's Police Services Board earlier this month and will formally be invested into his new role on Wednesday, November 5.

It is a significant step in Crawford's career, which took him from the world of banking into policing when he decided a career change was in order.

"I was looking for a different challenge, and something more challenging than the banking world," Crawford tells *The Auroran*. "I also thought it would help out the community."

He stresses he was never one of those kids who always dreamt of being a police officer, chasing down the bad guys, or walking a beat, but when he was looking for a job with the Toronto Police Force during a hiring freeze nearly three decades ago, a cousin who already had his foot in the door in Toronto suggested he look northward. He remains with the York Regional Police 27 years later.

"I have always been in athletics, so part of [what made me want to stick with it] was being part of a team once again," he says. "More than that, it was the fact you were helping the community, giving back to the community even if you were working. You were helping folks as well and, well, sometimes you got to chase some bad guys!"

Crawford was born in Jamaica. He came to Canada in 1972 at the age of 13 when his family left the Caribbean looking for further opportunities. They eventually settled in Willowdale and then Thornhill.

When asked if his policing choice turned out to be everything he hoped for, he replies in the affirmative, noting he has been "blessed" not only with a great career, but tremendous opportunities within the force to get a handle on a wide variety of areas.

His work with the police later gave him the opportunity to get into the intelligence field for eight years.

“That opened up my eyes to organized crime and I worked with youth gangs, did security work, witness protection, and different projects that were really interesting,” he says. “Those are opportunities not everyone gets. Then, I started getting into investigations like sexual assaults, crimes against children, homicides. Those units enlighten you, but at the same time it can be very gratifying when you look back on certain things as they come to fruition; you take some drugs off the street, you put some bad guy away for a little while and it's all good and you're helping the community.”

In dealing with those particularly tough cases such as crimes involving sexual assault, and even children, Crawford says he learned how to deal with those situations by always keeping the victim in mind, a principle which he says he believes to be the hallmark of policing.

“The endgame for me was ensuring the victims were okay, but we did the best we could to assist them in whatever way we could, whether it was providing them services to help them get over trauma they may be going through, or whatever they are dealing with physically and mentally,” he says. “If you can find the bad guy and put their minds at ease, that also helps.

“For me, the victim part was, and is, a big part of how I think we should be doing business because it shouldn't be all about the bad guy. It should be about the good people.”

It is a philosophy he lives by outside of policing, having been recently appointed to the board as treasurer of the Aurora Film Circuit, a local film society which brings in and screens small, independent, and international films for Aurora audiences. He has also chaired the York Regional Police's Black History Month initiatives and served on the now defunct Race Relations Advisory Committee for the York Region District School Board, waiting to ensure there was equity in the workplace at the Board, and also ensuring students could relate to people within their schools.

“I felt it was important to be on a committee like that where we're looking after young people,” he said. “We deal with a lot of youth and I really believe our youth are our future. We need to take care of them and give them any opportunities we can for a safer community and teach them how to make positive lifestyle choices.”