

A Special Rock Star Salute to Mike Hoier

Every so often you meet a volunteer whose passion is inspiring; and when that volunteer is gone, his or her absence is felt all across the community. Through our work with the Disaster Volunteer Reception Center and Homeless Point-In-Time Count, I have crossed paths with Mike Hoier several times. When he passed away this past June, we lost a terrific volunteer and community member.



- Nominating Agency: United Way of South Wood & Adams Counties' Volunteer Center
- Residence / Family: Mike lived in Grand Rapids with his wife, Deb.
- Occupation: Mike worked security and drove ambulance at the Reedsburg Area Medical Center. In 2010 he moved to Wisconsin Rapids where he helped his wife, Deb, who owns the Aquarium Pet Shop & Grooming.
- Hobbies and interests: Mike was a HAMM radio operator; and enjoyed computers, videography, volunteering, and riding motorcycle with Deb.

Mike had been involved in United Way's Disaster Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) since the very beginning in 2012 when we had our first training. During a disaster the VRC mobilizes to recruit, screen and match volunteers to disaster volunteer opportunities. Mike was especially helpful with the Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts that happen every January and July. During PIT Counts we send volunteers out to patrol an assigned part of the community and look for any homeless individuals who are living on the streets. This information is used by local agencies to apply for funding, etc. Mike knew HAMM Radio could help. To date, local HAMM Radio operators participate in every PIT Count, communicating with each other and ensuring everyone's safety.





Mike also volunteered for several other organizations, including the Grand Rapids Fire Department and the Grand Rapids Police Auxiliary. With the help of Wisconsin Rapids Community Media, he videotaped Sunday services at his church, St. Luke's Lutheran Church. But his main passion was working with HAMM Amateur Radio responding to the call numbers KA9PSL. He used this talent to do a number of things from parade control on the Fourth of July in Adams County to safety patrolling on Halloween during trick-or-treating.

When asked why he enjoyed volunteering, Mike's wife, Deb responded, "Because he liked to talk!" She also added, "Mike enjoyed helping people too. He tried to help in the ways that he was able to."

"Mike had polio when he was very young," continued Deb. "It was a killer back then. He had some loss of strength but he was very fortunate. But after he turned 60 it started affecting his hands. Then three years ago, he was diagnosed with cancer."

His health issues still didn't stop him from helping out! "He got a lot of calls from radio friends asking for help with programming and repair. It made him very happy."

When he passed away on June 17, 2018, Mike and KA9PSL became a "Silent Key." A "Silent Key" is a radio operator who passed away and can no longer be heard on the airwaves. Mike's radio friends also remembered him during a special "Last Call" ceremony over the radio. "HAMM Radio members routinely check in weekly with each other," said Deb. "We give our call sign and some basic information. That night, we had over 30 check-ins. It was a special tribute to him."



Volunteers like Mike Hoier truly make a difference in our community.

