

# Tomball police chief named chamber Citizen of the Year

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Typically, police chiefs of small towns are not popular. But then Tomball is not a typical town, and Paul Michna is evidently not a typical police chief.

Every year the Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes a special member of the community with its Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award. Michna was presented with the honor Jan. 13 at the Chamber's annual members banquet. Recipients are nominated by members of the community in recognition of their outstanding contributions. Picking someone for the award is not easy, says Chamber president Bruce Hillegeist.

"It's really hard to choose one person per year, there are so many good people in Tomball. I think the people of the area nominated him because he does so many things above and beyond the call of duty. He takes time for children and adults and tries to show them they have a place in this world. His response when his name was called at the banquet demonstrated surprise and that he was really touched. Paul is a good role model," Hillegeist said.

Peter McStravick, last year's winner and chairman of this year's selection committee, said, "Paul is not only one of the finest police chiefs in the overall Houston area, he is an active church member, chamber member, and Rotary Club member. He has made himself available to serve as master of ceremonies for many functions as well. Paul is professional, yet very personable. His work increases our overall confidence in the security of our community."

Michna became Tomball's police chief in 1992 after a more than 30 year career with the Houston Police department where he worked his way up from patrol officer to the rank of Deputy Chief of the Investigative Bureau.

Tomball City Manager Warren Driver notes in his 1999 nomination of Michna that when Michna arrived in Tomball the police department "was in a state of turmoil, but with his guidance and direction the department is the best in the nation."

Driver notes further, "The Tomball Police Department has become one of the highest respected departments in the state. Under Chief Michna, the department has the highest clearance rate (ratio of reported crime to solved crime) in Harris County and has been in the top ten in the state for the past four years. Chief Michna started a bicycle patrol, apartment liaison program, retirement home program, a first responder program, and numerous others. Under his direction as Director of Public Safety for

Tomball a new central fire station was built, new engines were purchased, a new ladder truck is on order, and the ISO (insurance) Rating for the city has improved from 6 to 4."

Tomball Mayor H.G. Harrington also praises Michna's community efforts. "Paul takes a personal interest in all activities of Tomball. He is very concerned with the youth and has initiated programs that help guide our youth," he said in his 1998 nomination.

In that arena is one of the chief's most heralded accomplishments, creation of the T.P.A.S.S. (Tomball After School Special) program which aims at helping at-risk youth. Students are tutored, become involved in positive after school activities, and are exposed to motivational speakers and mentor relationships.

As a member of Tomball Church of Christ, Michna has taught Bible classes since 1977, served as a deacon and on the benevolence committee, has at various times directed the mother's day out program, and instituted a New Year's Eve party for teens.

As a community member Michna has been a speaker for numerous community groups including the Rotary Club, Lion's Club, Chamber of Commerce, Tomball Professional Business Women, the Pachyderm Club, and many more.

He has served as master of ceremonies for the Chamber of Commerce annual banquet, Tomball High School fall and spring sports banquets, TOMAGWA Medical Ministries Clinic ball, and the Tomball Area Day of Prayer.

As a member of the Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce Michna has worked with the Holiday Parade, Business Development, Small Business, FFA Scholarship, and Mobility and Transportation committees. He has been elected to serve as chamber board president in 2002.

Michna says he was surprised when his name was called at the banquet as this year's winner. "It was very touching. I do my job as police chief the way I think it should be done, that's being out there involved in the community. I'm not here just to enforce the law. I believe you must be out there showing people you can do more than just write tickets and put people in jail."

He went on to say, "I never thought a chief in a small town would get citizen of the year. Being chief in a small town often has a negative connotation. There are so many worthy people, I am honored to have been selected."

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