

Kristopher Tharp Biography

Kristopher “Kris” Tharp was raised by a single mother in Wood River, Illinois. He graduated from East Alton-Wood River High School in 1994, and immediately began serving the community as a law enforcement cadet with the Wood River Police Department at age 18. He continued his service as a law enforcement officer for twenty-six (26) years and later rose through the ranks of the Madison County Sheriff’s Office. Kris retired in 2023 with the title of Captain and Jail Administrator for one of the largest county jails in downstate Illinois.

Tharp was a Deputy Commander on the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis and served on the Southern Illinois Child Death Task Force. He was a crisis negotiator for the ILEAS Region 8 Tactical Response Team which covered eleven (11) counties in the region. Tharp was awarded multiple meritorious awards by the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis for outstanding performance during a homicide investigation and was named “20 under 40” in 2012, by the Riverbend Growth Association.

Tharp was the founder and president of Madison County TRIAD, a multi-disciplinary organization that partners law enforcement with area service providers to provide resources to area senior citizens. Tharp received over thirty (30) commendations for meritorious police service. Twice Tharp was recognized as an “Outstanding Elderly Service Officer” by the Illinois Attorney General’s Office. Tharp served as chairperson for the PSA 8 Fatality Review Board which reports its findings to the Illinois Department of Aging in the interest of improving best practices across the state for law enforcement and senior citizen service providers involved in death investigations. He was appointed to represent law enforcement on the Illinois Senate Elder Abuse Task Force in 2019.

In 2022, Kris was appointed to the Illinois Senate to serve the remainder of the term vacated by Senator Rachelle Aud Crowe. Tharp proudly served in the 102nd General Assembly and zealously advocated for the 56th Illinois Senate Legislative District during his time as Senator.

Tharp serves on the Village of Bethalto Police Commission, was an adjunct instructor at Southwestern Illinois Community College focused on teaching recruits at the police academy and serves as a member of the Criminal Justice Curriculum Advisory Board for St. Louis Community College. During his career at the sheriff’s office, Kris received extensive training and served in various capacities including, but not limited to, field training officer, juvenile officer, forensic child interviewer, elderly service officer, detective, internal affairs investigator, and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) officer.

Tharp put himself through college obtaining an Associate degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Lewis and Clark Community College, and a Bachelor and Master’s degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Lindenwood University. Tharp obtained a Graduate Certificate in Criminal Justice from the University of Virginia while attending and graduating from the prestigious FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

Kris has been a member of numerous professional and civic organizations including, FBI National Academy Associates, Police Benevolent and Protective Association #118, Illinois Rail Splitters, Illinois Sheriff’s Association, Illinois Correctional Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Homicide Investigator’s Association, and National Internal Affairs Investigator’s Association, Wood River Moose, and Wood River Township Kiwanis. Kris is also a dedicated long time member of the St. Louis Guns and Hoses committee.

Tharp currently serves the citizens of Illinois as the Confidential Assistant to the Chairman of the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission. He resides in Wood River, Illinois, and has been married to his wife Jaime, a Madison County Correctional Officer, for twenty-four years. They have two son's Tyler, a US Army veteran, and a police officer with the Madison County Sheriff's Department, and Kameron, a second year college student.