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Way cool!



This is a story about a 10-year old boy who wants to become a police officer and a compassionate police officer, who has gone the extra mile to see that the young man's dream comes true _ one way or another. Upon meeting Robbie Barrett 3 ½ years ago, Newark Police Department K-9 Officer Dan Weegar took an immediate liking to and subsequently befriended the boy, now a fifth grader at Kelley School, who suffers with life-threatening kidney and bladder disease and related complications. And who, he learned had always dreamed of becoming a police officer someday.

Thanks to Weegar, someday came March 21st, much earlier than expected. After asking Newark Police Chief David Christler in February if Barrett could be sworn in as an honorary NPD officer for a day, Christler asked Newark Mayor Jonathan Taylor for permission and he granted it. Before the board meeting began March 21st, Newark Village Justice Michael Miller formally administered the oath to Barrett as some of his family members, Weegar, Christler, seven other officers from the NPD; three state troopers from Lyons; Taylor, village trustees and other village officials, and an audience that had packed the courtroom, watched.



While Barrett's official duties as a Newark police officer commenced at midnight March 22nd, they actually began 9 hours later. After reporting for duty minutes in advance of when his "shift" began, Barrett began shadowing Weegar, doing some of the things a typical day on the job could include.

But only after the officer presented the boy with a police department shirt in his size that he promptly put on and wore throughout his day on the job.

It included him:

- Looking over the over night policing activities log book with Weegar soon after their work day began.



- Learning about digital finger printing and how it compares with the older method that employed black ink and white paper. Barrett even helped take a picture of Christler, who graciously allowed himself to be photographed so that the youngster could learn about how people who are arrested are processed and identified. He also toured the police department headquarters.
- Briefly attending a morning session of village court with Weegar that Justice Miller was presiding over.
 - Riding in Weegar's patrol vehicle along with his canine companion "Mac," a Belgian malinois.
- Visiting Wayne County's 911 emergency dispatch center and touring an unoccupied area of the Wayne County Jail.



- Participating in a staged, off-road traffic stop in which he asked the driver, a plain-clothes NPD member, to produce his license, registration and insurance card. Barrett later said that was his favorite part of the entire day. And having lunch out with Weegar at Pizza Hut, who afterward took the tired, but very happy youth home around 3 p.m.. The following day Robbie's dad, Robert Barrett Sr., said his son slept with his NPD shirt on. While Robbie was not feeling well when he awoke March 23rd, his dad said his son was "still smiling" over the events of the previous two exciting days.

Robbie, who takes numerous daily medications and has had several surgeries during his young life, and receives ongoing treatment at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, is often not well enough to attend school. On those days he remains at home under the care of his mom, Lisa. But he is fortunate to participate in classroom instruction remotely via a robot named Penny.

Principal Jeff Hamelinck said the school is able to provide the robot and its companion monitor in his teacher Alicia Nardozzi's classroom at Kelley for Barrett because of a leasing arrangement with Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES.

With mountainous medical expenses, Robbie's dad, who is a maintenance worker, and mom, who volunteers at the Newark food closet struggle to keep up with what their health insurance doesn't cover

To help others in similar straits, the Barrett's have a GoFundMe account _ [Bugaman's Dream](#) in hopes of helping to start a non-profit organization to help other kids with illnesses and whose families are struggling to pay medical expenses that their insurance companies won't cover.

A couple of other things worth noting.

- Since meeting Barrett, Weegar has taken the boy out trick or treating the last few years on Halloween and has accompanied him at Kidney Walk fundraising events in Rochester.

"I think Officer Weegar has done a wonderful thing, not only for Robbie Barrett, but for the Village of Newark, our community and the Newark Police Department as well," Christler said later. "I think his compassion for others goes beyond the normal call for duty."

- Barrett's sister, Ekaterina, 18, a Newark High School senior, wants to become a doctor because of her brother's illness. There are two other children in the Barrett family: Justine, 24, and Landon, 5, who is in Kindergarten at Perkins School. All but Robbie are very healthy, Robert Barrett Sr. said.

- Finally, Robbie also received a "Do The Right Thing" award from Christler at the Newark Village Board meeting March 21st after seeing and quickly summoning help from police for an elderly woman whom he spotted not far from the Newark Municipal Building after she had fallen and was in need of emergency assistance March 19th.



A great big "thank you" goes out to NPD Officer Aaron Dean for providing some great photos!