

Intell Dec 2, 2006 p. 1

Merle attended Massassaga school and then BCI. He played hockey and coached ball when his son and daughter, Brandon, 26, and Lindsay, 24, became old enough to play.

He and his wife, Stephanie, have been married for 27 years.

They met when Foster was a fairly new addition to the force. A woman went missing and he asked some girls he saw if they knew anything about it. They didn't, but Stephanie was one of the girls and later the romance began.

Police officers are in the public spotlight and it can be tough to turn the light off when not on duty.

"I try to leave it behind."

He and Stephanie live in a rural setting and have done a lot of home renovations themselves.

Merle likes to garden and he is a walker — about 40 kilometres a week, although he has trimmed that down at present. Walking offers Merle his most relaxing moments.

When asked if he cooks, he answers, "I eat. My wife's a great cook."

The affable inspector and Stephanie like to hold dinner parties — eight people are coming to their home in a couple of weeks.

They enjoy travelling. Merle is also a reader and gobbles up anything written by John Grisham, lawyer/murder mystery novelist.

Foster was a constable for five years, worked under the RCMP for another five, was promoted to detective returned to the Belleville force and become an inspector in 1991. He has even taught at the Ontario Police College in Aylmer.

Foster helped resuscitate Operation Red Nose, a free service where volunteers provide transportation for those who have imbibed during the holiday season.

"It started in 1997," he said, but was mothballed. Someone mentioned to a police services board member that the program should be revived. Foster was given the task.

He advertised for volunteers and Rick Watt and others stepped forward and it was reinstated in 2004.

When asked what he considers the most satisfying aspect of his job?

"When things happen to bad guys."

•
Contact Barry Ellsworth at:
newsroom@intelligencer.ca