

# MARQUETTE NEIGHBORS

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**GREG ZYBURT  
AT HOME IN  
THE KITCHEN**



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Greg and his mom cooking



# GREG ZYBURT HAS THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS.

BY PATTY PETERSON

**I**FIRST MET GREG in his cramped office at work where he has been a police officer for 36 years, 31 as the Chief of the Chocolay Township Police. Paperwork covers his desk and every available space appears to be occupied. During our time together, I learn Greg is a hardworking man who really enjoys his job and has a deep affection for our community. He has a loving family and long lasting friendships. Despite the serious nature of his job, he has a fantastic sense of humor.

Greg is settled in Marquette, but he grew up in Westland outside of Detroit. He found his way north when he attended NMU along with each of his seven siblings. His dad bought a house for the last of the five kids to rotate through as they attended college.

Greg eventually purchased the house, flipped it and sold it just prior to the housing bubble burst. This would become the first of many real estate flips and the start of a hobby he has a lot of passion for.

He currently resides in an old home he renovated about 12 years ago. His sense of humor first emerges when he describes what he appreciates about it, "I just love the location. If you're hungry you're near Casa and Vango's. If you feel sick, you're near UP Health System and if you're going to die you're right near Canale Tonella Funeral Home. Everything is in walking distance."

Greg's parents eventually moved to Marquette after his dad developed Parkinson's Disease. Greg wanted his dad, who he credits with always directing him and pushing him to do his best, to have the finest medical care possible and so influenced their move in 2003. After his father passed away, Greg's mom stayed and now lives a few miles away from him. They have lunch at least once a week.

When it comes to his job, Greg says, "I'm not a great cop when it comes to the reports and the paperwork. I'm just your average Joe and that's what my dad taught me and that's how I've done it my whole life." He goes on to share a few memorable stories including a grim account of being present for a deadly car accident as well as making a case for a negligent homicide that happened at a local tavern.

He's got plenty of feel-good stories as well. "I once got a call that there was a pig walking down Lakewood Lane. When I arrived, I found a 300 pound animal." "So I'm looking at him and he's looking at me and I carry dog treats in my patrol car so I asked him if he wanted a cookie. His butt started wagging so I knew he was a pet."

He first tried to gather him with a noose but the pig was too big. He ordered the neighbors to get a big bowl and fill it with food. Soon enough, he had a bowl with corn flakes and milk and so on. Rather than shoot the animal to put the neighborhood at ease, he borrowed a horse trailer from a nearby farm. Greg held the bowl full of food and shimmied into the horse trailer while the pig followed. Eventually, the owner was identified as a U.S. soldier stationed in Afghanistan who had left the pig with his grandparents. A week later, Greg received a letter from the pig's owner thanking him for not shooting his pet pig.

One of the many enjoyable aspects of his job is the interview and interrogation process. He likes it so much he attended the FBI Academy for 13 weeks of specialized training. His second major in Psychology assists him in these efforts.

When he's not working, Greg loves to travel. As I'm writing this I have to do a little fact checking. While it's 27 degrees out my window, he informs me that he's running on the beach in Hawaii and temps are expected to be in the 80's later today. He has visited 35 different countries. When asked where he could live besides the UP Greg says, "Probably New Zealand. You go in anyone's backyard and there are 8 different kinds of fresh fruit and beautiful flowers everywhere."

One of his best friends is Oy, owner of a local Thai restaurant. He's known Oy for 30 years and refers to her as his role model. "She's a really honest and hardworking person." Greg visits



Greg in Thailand two years ago

Oy most nights at the restaurant to catch up, cut chicken, make wontons and have dinner. He even gave her away at her wedding.

Greg recounts a trip with her to Thailand two years ago, "She takes all her tip money and buys school equipment, lunch and computers for three different schools. The trip was very humbling. She's from a very poor village. The average income for a farmer in her village is \$25--\$50 dollars per year and they live on very little but they are very proud, hard-working people. Sharing that with her was amazing."

In addition to traveling the world, Greg loves the outdoors. Since coming to the UP he has taken up skiing and, what he calls, "outdoor sports during each of our four seasons." He also has a passion for community involvement and serves on many boards including United Way and Marquette Rotary. In addition, he is a speaker for the Marquette County Victim Impact Panel.

When talk turns to the future Greg confidently states, "A year from now, I'll be the next Marquette County Sheriff." When asked what makes him the most qualified candidate he says, "My experience in rural townships and my reputation. The people here know me. I know them by name."

A few days after our interview I met up with Greg at his tastefully decorated home where his passion for cooking and art are evident in the decor. He lives with a little deaf welsh terrier named Lucy and lends his spare room to a revolving door of foreign exchange students.

If I had to describe him in one sentence I would say Greg is a well-rounded guy with a passion for living his life to its fullest potential. This is part of what makes this Marquette neighbor so special.