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Teamwork, Hard Work, and Woodwork



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It has been nearly two years since you were appointed as North Dakota's Homeland Security Division Director. What would you say has been the greatest accomplishment for you and your team?

The first thing that comes to mind as my team's greatest accomplishment is sticking together and putting up with all the "good ideas" I bring back from NEMA events! From an operational perspective, among our most exciting accomplishments is our recent transition to 24/7/365 operations with our new Watch Center. We received tremendous support during my first legislative session, which allowed us to add the necessary staff to form the Watch Center, and I believe that will be transformational for our agency and how we can serve the citizens.

In your time as a NEMA member, and now the Region 8 Vice President, what would you consider to be the most beneficial aspect of your membership?

Easily the best part of NEMA for me is the relationships we continue to build and are able to leverage when we need to phone a friend. None of us have all the resources we would like, so the ability to be at a forum with the best emergency managers in the country to exchange ideas is invaluable. To pull on that thread a little further, I get the benefit of hearing the challenges other states are having and how they are overcoming them, so I don't have to solve every problem myself.

You previously worked in finance for eleven years. What skills or lessons from that time have been beneficial to you today? How did you transition into the field of national security and emergency management?

Let me start by saying thank you for reminding me about how I took the classic route from banker's hours to emergency management hours! Being able to serve my community is worth it, but it still stings a little to look back at all that golfing. Now that I've got that out of the way, I think there are actually a lot of lessons I learned that made the transition pretty easy. The first skill I was able to develop and transfer is the ability to build relationships with diverse people and to then find a way to influence their behavior. Sure, you could just call that "sales"! Emergency management is a relationship business just like finance. At the more tactical level, there is a lot of analysis in finance, a skillset which is helpful when making the data-based decisions we try to use in our agency. As to how I transitioned, I had recently returned from a deployment overseas with the National Guard where I ran an intel section and was part of the operations center. When I returned from that deployment, banking had lost a bit of its luster, and I was subconsciously being drawn to public service. I just wanted to help people, I think. I saw an interesting job posting for a position in the state's fusion center, and—without a lot of forethought, frankly—I applied. Fortunately, upon arriving, I discovered the position fit my skill set and I had a supervisor who brought me into a variety of emergency management operations positions. I certainly wouldn't be where I am today without her leadership (thanks, Amy!).

It must be noted that you served in the Army National Guard for over twenty years. Thank you for your service. How did your time in the Guard shape you into the leader that you are today?

The National Guard provided me the opportunity to learn leadership theory and then the opportunity to put that theory into practice. Once again, I had the benefit of serving with, and for, several great leaders who helped me grow as a leader as well as a few poor ones who taught me how not to lead. It also gave me the opportunity to spend 18 months in law enforcement in Alaska, fight a forest fire in Montana, and spend nearly a year working in intelligence, operations, and communications overseas. The more experiences you can collect, the better you can relate to new situations and draw from previous experiences to make decisions. Joining the National Guard was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Let's talk about woodworking! What's been your favorite project and why?

Woodworking is one of the ways my family has always bonded, but particularly it is something that my dad always did with us. We still try to plan woodworking projects when the family is all home for the holidays. It's also how the guys get away from the gals and the chaos of the Hanson residence during holidays. We've had some good projects like toy boxes, quilt racks, and an eight-foot buffet. We've also had some tremendous failures, like the great toboggan incident of 2017. My favorite project is the built-in combined Murphy bed, desk, bookcase, and window seat in my home office. I did the whole thing by myself with, let's just say, the best tools an entry level public servant can afford!



As 2023 is wrapping up, who would you list as your top five most listened to musical artists this year?

Now this is a trick question. The truth would be all sorts of YouTube songs/artists my 5-year-old makes me listen to (*everyone has a boss, am I right?*). That being said, I've been making some headway with teaching her a few classics. Here are the songs and artists that are at the top of the playlist this year:

- "Hold On" by Wilson Phillips (*yes, we jam out in the car and I'm the loudest singer in the group*)
- "Come and Get Your Love" by Redbone (*the first Native American band to reach the top five on the Billboard Hot 100*)
- "I'll Never Let You Go" by Steelheart
- "Waiting for a Star to Fall" by Boy Meets Girl
- Zac Brown Band & Electric Light Orchestra tied for 5th (*because how can you narrow it down to 5?*)

**Can you hold on for one more day?
Things'll go your way (Things'll go your way)
Hold on for one more day**

— "Hold On" by Wilson Phillips

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