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San Mateo's Top Cop Announces Retirement

Chief Susan Manheimer Ending Decades-Long, Accomplished Career in December



San Mateo, CA – San Mateo's "Top Cop" announced she will retire her badge at the end of the year, concluding a legendary law enforcement career that spans more than three decades. Susan Manheimer's appointment as San Mateo's Chief of Police in May 2000 ushered in an era of modernization and created an enduring model of community policing. Under her leadership the San Mateo Police Department earned national acclaim for innovative crime prevention, juvenile, and homeless outreach programs that have been widely adopted throughout the country.

San Mateo County Manager Mike Callagy, the City's former Deputy Police Chief, reflected that "Chief Manheimer's leadership has been transformational, not only for the San Mateo Police Department, but for the County as a whole. She set the highest standards in policing, and in her role as Chief, was an incredible innovator in juvenile justice, community policing and domestic violence to name a few. Susan not only represented San Mateo, but was a sought after and recognized voice for policing throughout the state and country. Chief Manheimer always set the highest standards for others to emulate. As the Chief retires, her leadership throughout San Mateo County will be greatly missed, but her legacy will live on through those who served under her as well as those in the numerous organizations that she lent her time, talent and expertise to."

Manheimer came to San Mateo after a trailblazing career with the San Francisco Police Department where she rose through the ranks and was chosen to serve as both a Lieutenant and Captain in the Tenderloin – the City's toughest command. She was a role model and mentor to many aspiring woman police officers who followed her path to significant leadership roles. Former San Francisco Mayor and Police Chief Frank Jordan commented that "the residents of San Francisco and San Mateo were very fortunate to have a quality person of integrity, sensitivity, communication skills and compassionate toughness to serve the public in such a meaningful way."

Chief Manheimer's passion for keeping youth out of the juvenile justice system and on track is embodied in the establishment of San Mateo's comprehensive Youth Services Bureau. Dedicated to juvenile crime prevention, the bureau supports local youth through school resource officers, gang suppression, contemporary diversion programs and the PAL and Police Cadet Programs. Manheimer's noteworthy stewardship of the famed San Mateo Police Activities League has seen it evolve into a broad-based service agency. PAL builds the bond between cops and kids while enhancing the lives of thousands of our local youth and their families through sports, cultural, and education programs including a highly-effective gang resistance program for every sixth grader.

"The Chief leaves a remarkable and enduring legacy in this City, and few people realize how many young lives at risk have been redirected onto a positive track during her tenure," noted Deputy Mayor Maureen Freschet, who

is also a PAL Board Member. "She has galvanized the community around PAL, and has been instrumental in rallying local support and major funding to expand our reach and invest in the future of our kids."

Manheimer's 19 years in San Mateo have been characterized by an unprecedented level of personal and professional community engagement. She is an active Rotarian, a founding member of the Tongan Interfaith Council, and served on the NAACP Board of Directors and the County's Juvenile Justice Commission among others. She takes great pride in having initiated the highly-acclaimed San Mateo County Gang Task Force and the San Mateo Homeless Outreach Team, both of which are now replicated highly successful programs throughout the County.

Reflecting on their long partnership in reducing crime, San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe stated, "Chief Susan Manheimer has served both her community and county law enforcement with unmatched leadership and service. The police department has grown to one of the most innovative and community-oriented agencies in California under Susan's guidance. The very low crime rate in San Mateo is due in substantial part to her work as police chief. The District Attorney's Office will greatly miss our collaboration and friendship with Chief Susan Manheimer."

The sentiments of San Mateo's diverse neighborhoods were captured by the San Mateo United Homeowners Association, SMUHA, President Emeritus Anna Kuhre. "Chief Susan Manheimer, known to many as a Woman of Steel with a Heart of Gold, seemed to know all, see all, and be in all places at one time. We all believed she possessed super-human skills, and required no sleep. Is there anyone out there who hasn't received an email from her time stamped between midnight and 3am?

Recognizing her unique abilities, SMUHA honored our Chief in 2012, bestowing her with the title of Super Chief Manheimer, and a special red silk cape for her evening flyovers. San Mateans always slept well, knowing that our Chief, watched over us 24 hours a day. It was her vigilance and concern that helped to build strong bonds and relationships between our neighborhoods and our Police Department. Her exuberance and dedication made San Mateo the safest city on the Peninsula. As she retires, she carries our admiration and deep affection. Even super heroes need a rest!" Kuhre said.

In addition to her tireless local activity, Manheimer kept a high profile on the state and national stage where she has influenced law enforcement policy and practice. She was the first woman to serve as President of the California Police Chiefs Association as well as the San Mateo County Chiefs and Sheriffs Association. She also serves on numerous state, national and international boards focused on 21st Century best practices in policing and community engagement.

Current California Police Chief Association President Ron Lawrence said "California is losing a legend with the retirement of Chief Susan Manheimer who is the senior female police chief in our state. Chief Manheimer has a reputation as a strong leader and an outspoken supporter of our organization. She was awarded our top honor in recognition of her many contributions to our profession."

Born in the Bronx, Manheimer was always driven to serve her community and was steeped in the tradition of public service at the knee of her father who served as a City Councilman.

"Ever since I was a young girl I saw the police as our heroes and have wanted to serve in this noble profession alongside our men and women in blue who risk their lives every day to help those in need and enhance the quality of life and safety in our communities," Manheimer said.

While pursuing her storied climb in law enforcement, Manheimer managed to earn her BA and MBA degrees while raising two children – local attorney Sarah Burdick, and her son Major Jesse Burdick, who is currently serving with the U.S. Marines. When asked, she proclaimed these two as her greatest achievement in life, and the Chief is always quick on the draw to share pictures of her three grandchildren.

Reacting to the announcement, San Mateo Mayor Diane Papan said “Chief Manheimer served the City of San Mateo with distinction and then some. She is the consummate law enforcement professional, whose effectiveness is anchored by a boundless humanity she generously shared with every single person she encountered. She has left an indelible imprint on the safety of our city with her innovative ways of promoting a strong connection between the public and our police department. We are profoundly grateful for her years of dedication to our community's well-being.”

Chief Manheimer is a San Mateo resident who intends to remain fully active in serving the community in other roles.

“I’m thankful for the chance to fulfill my dream in this great City,” Manheimer said. “I will always be profoundly grateful for the opportunity to have served with the extraordinary men and women of the San Mateo Police Department who give their all to keep this community safe and promote the quality of life for all its residents. The City of San Mateo, from its leadership, to its wonderful community and dedicated staff who serve them, are second to none! San Mateo County’s Criminal Justice and Human Services collaborations and close coordination have been the springboard for the many innovative programs that have served our communities so well.”

The City will launch a nationwide search for a new police chief. The selection process is expected to take several months and will include extensive community outreach and input.

“Replacing Chief Manheimer will be no small challenge” said City Manager Drew Corbett. “She has been a pillar in her field and vital member of the community. Through her leadership she’s fostered a top-notch and highly-trained organization that will continue to serve our community well.”

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