

# From Deputy Sheriff to Surgeon



At first glance, law enforcement and foot and ankle surgery may not seem to have much in common. But for Michael A. Coyer, DPM, AACFAS, becoming a foot and ankle surgeon in California after working for 15 years as a deputy sheriff, sergeant and lieutenant in Michigan was a natural transition.

Growing up in a law enforcement family set the stage for Dr. Coyer's first career. "I looked up to my relatives who were police officers. Working in law enforcement seemed exciting to me, plus I would be able to make a difference in my community," he explains.

Yet, even as a child, Dr. Coyer had an interest in medicine, which only deepened through his friendship years later with Gary Baughman, DPM. "While I found law enforcement to be a challenging and rewarding profession,

Dr. Baughman showed me firsthand the positive impact foot and ankle surgeons can have on patients and their care," says Dr. Coyer.

At age 34, after rising through the ranks within the Bay County Sheriff's Office, Dr. Coyer felt ready for a new role that would still allow him to help others and change lives. He enrolled in Kent State University's podiatric medical degree program at age 37 and then moved to Orange County, California after completing his residency training to join a foot and ankle surgery/sports medicine practice.

Moving nearly 2,500 miles was no small endeavor for Dr. Coyer, but his decision to live and work in California was an easy one to make. He felt that Orange County's diverse and active population would offer him ample opportunity to treat patients of all ages and

demographics and to specialize in sports medicine and reconstructive foot and ankle surgery. As an outdoor enthusiast, Dr. Coyer also appreciated southern California's warm climate and admits he felt at home immediately upon his arrival. "After suffering through far too many Michigan winters, I really looked forward to the sunny southern California weather," he adds.

The adjustment from working the night shift in law enforcement to life as a medical student, resident and now attending physician took some getting used to, but Dr. Coyer managed it by following a schedule. "Designating time to study, work or relax was new to me but helpful," he says. Spending time with family and friends also kept him from feeling overwhelmed. He continues to take time each day

**“While I found law enforcement to be a challenging and rewarding profession, Dr. Baughman showed me firsthand the positive impact foot and ankle surgeons can have on patients and their care.”**

—Michael A. Coyer, DPM, AACFAS



Michael A. Coyer, DPM, AACFAS

to plan his professional and personal tasks to help maintain a balanced lifestyle.

Now that he is settled into his new life on the West Coast, Dr. Coyer uses his medical education and training, as well as his background in law enforcement, to treat his patients' foot and ankle conditions. He credits his experience as a police officer with teaching him the value of professionalism and compassion in even the toughest or most unstable situations.

"It taught me how to relate well to others, no matter the circumstances, and gave me an insight very few possess," he shares. He also considers himself fortunate to have trained under Jordan P. Grossman, DPM, FACFAS, Mark A. Hardy, DPM, FACFAS, and other mentors who taught him the

importance of both achieving technical proficiency and advancing the profession.

Dr. Coyer advises those looking to embark on a career in foot and ankle surgery to reach out to an active ACFAS member who can serve as a mentor and can help set personal and professional goals. For foot and ankle surgeons who would like to pursue a new career, he says not to be afraid to make the change when the timing is right. "We often spend too much time thinking about starting something instead of taking action to make it happen," he notes.

From this point forward, Dr. Coyer will continue to use the education, training and experience he gained from both careers to help his patients and to serve as an ambassador of the foot and ankle surgical profession.

### **Dr. Coyer's Top 3 Tips for Making a Career Transition**

- 1. Surround yourself with good people.**  
It is often difficult to make major decisions objectively, so having close friends or family whom you can trust makes things much easier.
- 2. Develop a plan and write it down.**  
It makes it easier to maintain focus when the unanticipated happens.
- 3. Enjoy the journey. Do not look past the present and focus too much on the future.** While the goal is to accomplish something new, the experiences along the way can be equally rewarding.

**"Police work taught me how to relate well to others, no matter the circumstances, and gave me an insight very few possess."**

—Michael A. Coyer, DPM, AACFAS