

Roger A. Derr



Roger Allen Derr, was born October 30, 1958 in Grand Island, Nebraska to Robert and Norma (Hayse) Derr. He was a part of the Wood River graduating class of 1977. He attended Central Community College in Hastings studying accounting before joining the family farm. He was always studying for something from a private pilot's license to becoming a certified ASE mechanic.

After joining the Wood River Fire Department in 1988, he was issued a certificate as a National Firefighter 1 along with numerous certifications for firefighting responses, Nationally Registered Paramedic, and ARRL Amateur Radio operator. When his health forced him to quit farming he returned to school and became a Licensed Practical Nurse. He worked at New Holland as the nurse and manager of the dispensary and then a Polysomnographic Technologist for Somnos Sleep Disorders Center until he was no longer able to work.

He married Audrey North on March 13, 1982 in Wood River. They had a son, Ethan Hayse Derr. They lived in the Wood River area until 2007. Roger diligently volunteered for the Wood River Fire Department for 22 years leading them to raise the level of emergency medical care to Paramedic providers, as he didn't feel that rural residents should have fewer emergency medical care options than urban residents. He was instrumental in Wood River becoming one of the first all-volunteer Paramedic Rescue Squads in the state. He was honored with the Nebraska Paramedic of the year by NEMSA in 2004. Over the years he held almost every office on the department including serving as Fire Chief for several years.



During his tenure as Fire Chief, the department worked with the city council and the rural fire board and applied for federal grant money which enabled them to replace or upgrade each major piece of equipment including: all of the trucks, the newest turn-out gear, cardiac defibrillators, the Jaws of Life, and M.A.S.T. trousers. He also devoted a considerable amount of time and energy upgrading the radio system so members could communicate while out of the vehicles. The last thing on his list of things he wished to accomplish before dying was to replace and relocate the fire station on the north edge of town. The new site enables members to be able to respond quicker when the state finishes the overpass over the railroad tracks and highway 30. This will eliminate emergency vehicles waiting for trains and traffic that often splits the community from North to South.

He was a member of the United Methodist Church in Wood River. His passion was for the Wood River Fire Department but he also enjoyed photography, HAM radio, any kind of music as long as it was loud, scary movies, traveling and having fun with family and friends.