



OFFICER RECOGNITION

A TALE OF TWO MOTHERS - RPD PCIC RIDE ALONG PROGRAM-

On a fall October day two mothers set out to go to work. Officer Kate kisses her children goodbye, concerns herself with what is for dinner, the status of the laundry and other domestic child rearing concerns. She puts on her clothes, a freshly pressed uniform, black boots, a Kevlar vest. She arms herself with training, a good attitude and a .45 caliber beretta. Me, commonly known as "Professor Jen" to my students, also kisses her children goodbye. Off I go to a college to teach and prepare students for a career in law enforcement or preparation for law school. I too think about dinner, laundry and domestic concerns and trail off to work with a travel mug and some lesson plans.

On this day, these two women's professional lives convene, in a police car, through a mutual partnership called in the RPD PCIC ride-a-long program. During the first few calls, I watched Officer Kate inhale what seemed to me to be the equivalent of several packs of cigarettes. This hazard of the job most people wouldn't think of. At the college, I enjoy a smoke free environment.

During my experience, I watched Officer Kate negotiate, plan, explain (tirelessly at times) the law to petitioners of 911 and persons that called the police for assistance. I soon found out that Officer Kate comes with knowledge, calmness in comportment but most of all, has the patience of a seasoned mother and seems to have to explain tirelessly, over and over again what is within the parameters of the law and how to be preventative. It is clear to me that she cares about people very much as she is everyone's mother all day as she goes from call to call, almost like a choreographed ballerina, without music, navigating her police car with precision execution. I also know that Officer Kate can drive a car, if Watkins Glen is short a driver, I know where they can find one....

At the end of the day, after Officer Kate makes it out of that car, breathes in all this smoke, fields the animosity and dirty looks from some as she drives down the street to another call, cooks dinner and goes about her family responsibilities, probably happy she is home in one piece, though I am sure that years of negotiating, explaining, protecting, navigating and educating weighs heavily on her mind. I go home and grade papers, prepare lesson plans, reviews materials yet the difference is she is not unloading somewhere, even in her own mind the more obvious hostilities of the public. Two women, same days, getting a paycheck, similar interests, yet the differences, scope and ambiguity of their work lives are remarkable.

Officer Kate is an enthusiastic contributor who never knows from one moment to the next if she will be going home....whereas I stand a greater probability. Both their lives have equal relevance and importance as they both have many to kiss goodnight.

Jennifer Wolfley