

Paul Bertulis

**“Maryland Law Enforcement: A Commitment to Community”**

Police officers have always played a key role in my life. Ever since I was a little boy, I have looked up to officers for guidance. Not many high schoolers can honestly say that they know what they want to do once out of college. However, whenever someone asks me my career goals, I proudly say, “I’m going to become a Howard County Police officer.” I don’t just want to become one- I know I will.

I didn’t make that decision on my own, however. I can remember a time when I was debating on what I wanted to do. The usual notions of becoming a doctor or a lawyer entered into my head, but one day I made up my mind. I remember my Cub Scout pack was attending a police open house at the Howard County Police Department’s brand new Southern District station. I watched the K-9 and tactical demonstrations with wide eyes like most young boys would. But after the day was over, I decided to walk up to a police officer and ask her something. I had always enjoyed the flashing lights and blaring sirens, and I wanted to know a little more. I recall that I approached her and asked her about grille lights. I remember referring to them as “the lights in the engine.” She laughed and told me the technical term. I felt so special that someone whom everyone looks up to would be treating me with so much respect. She smiled when I asked my questions, and that officer made me feel important. Unbeknownst to me, some time had passed, and my dad, who had come to pick me up, was frantically looking for me. Then, after he finally found me in the parking lot talking to the officer, he took our picture.

I still have that picture with the caption that reads, “This was the exact moment that I knew I was going to become a police officer.” It is ironic because at the time, I had

no idea of all the paperwork and training; yet, I knew in my heart I was destined to wear the uniform and badge. I never asked for the officer's name, but it doesn't matter. She didn't represent just herself that day, but the entire law enforcement community.

When the opportunity to become a Howard County Police explorer occurred, I jumped at the chance. After some time in the program, I really wanted to become like that caring officer, so I could help others with the same giving spirit. Through the explorers, I have come to the realization that police work isn't just about the traffic stops and investigations. It is about the relationships officers build with citizens.

In high school, I have actively followed my dream in many ways. Currently, I am a police explorer for the Howard County Police Department. Serving the community and department for three years has taught me a lot about others and myself. I know that being an explorer puts the proverbial "foot in the door," and I am very happy that I have an advanced look into a career in law enforcement. In April of last year, I was honored as Explorer of the Year by the Howard County Police Department for my service to the community and am currently a lieutenant in my explorer post. I have volunteered over 1,000 hours of service to the community and this summer will be my third year as a youth counselor at Camp BearTrax, a program for the underprivileged youth of Howard County. Also, I am founder and president of the Calvert Hall Military and Police Interest Club that currently has 70 members, and I have networked with police officers and military officers from various agencies throughout the state and country. During college, I hope to apply to be a volunteer Auxiliary Police Officer in Howard County. I make it my purpose to learn as much as I can so that when I begin my profession, I will be the best police officer that I can possibly be to serve my community.