

# "MARYLAND LAW ENFORCEMENT: A COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY"

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I never realized how much officers of the law had to sacrifice for their jobs. I never realized how much they could actually care for people. I never realized how much fun they were to be around. I never realized how truly human they are.

In the early years of my life I thought law enforcement officers were people who came to school to tell us about drugs, violence, crimes, and guns and who chased the "bad guys" to put them in jail. As I grew to become a young adolescent I realized that they could get hurt doing their jobs and that they had to face many dangerous situations. Now, as I am near to becoming a young adult, I realize that a law enforcement officer is not just some distant person protecting me from threats that don't really pertain to me. I have learned that these friendly people can be the neighbors across the street or that nice lady you always see at the store or the guy who is forever walking around town with his family. Law enforcement officers are regular ordinary people who give something a little more, something a little extra, something a lot more significant back to our communities and our country.

I never realized how much a law enforcement officer could sacrifice for strangers, until I met Deputy Robinson. I never really thought of myself as making friends with a police officer, not that I was bad or anything, it was just that words like "police officer" and "fire fighter" and "sheriff" all seemed to portray a distant, figure, not someone I could be close to. Last year, Deputy Robinson came to my school as our school police officer. I remember hearing about her starting a dance squad at school, but other than that I didn't really know anything about her except that she was a cop, she was a woman, and that she spent most of her time at our school. Then this year I heard about a sorority being started. At first I was wary and unsure about joining. A sorority? In high school? That is going to be so lame, it's not going to be fun at all, no one is going to join, it will be some boring get together with three other kids where they talk about dating dangers, community service, and world peace. What a drag! Then I began to really think. Well, I always wanted to know what a sorority would be like and maybe this would give me a glimpse, even if it would be a small one, of what it could be like. Besides, I told myself, if I don't like it I can always quit. I went and saw Deputy Robinson during my lunch time. I shyly approached her and asked about the sorority. She told me some basics, handed me a permission form, and asked me if I had any questions. Naturally, I did what I always do, being the confident person I am I asked thirty questions, signed up, and told her I'd be there at the end of the week. As if! In reality I just shook my head and hurried back into the cafeteria to look at the permission form and introduction letter. As much as I hated to admit it, I was beginning to feel excited about this new sorority. I casually asked some of my friends if they were joining, none of them were. They had the same mentality I had previously had. When the time for the introductory meeting came, I stayed behind

in my class and didn't go. Half the girls, I learned later, decided not to join and this, strangely, motivated me to attend the next meeting. I was hooked, this was going to be so awesome! And so it was. Through this sorority I began to slowly build brand new friendships while having loads of fun. The person with whom I had the strongest friendship and the most fun however, was the head of the sorority, Deputy Andrea Robinson. Even though she was a police officer, she never seemed threatening or intimidating or cruel or distant. She was a kind, honest, caring person who turned out to be one of the coolest, most fun women I know. She took time out of her life to stay with a group of us after school, to organize activities, and to just hang out. She spent some of her own funds and sacrificed some of her time that could have been spent with her family, just for us. She would let us know when she had other duties and she would tell us about her job and her life, to a certain extent of course. One day, when there was a horrible fight in school, she was forced to spray mace in the cafeteria hallway to control a very violent boy. When I learned of it, I found myself having no sympathy whatsoever for the hoodlum, but worrying deeply if my law enforcement friend was okay. Deputy Robinson has opened doors for me that I never would have even seen, let alone looked through. And the most amazing part? She is a police officer, one of a group that I used to call "distant".

As of this point my assessment of an officer of the law is of a kind, caring and yet determined person. A person determined to overcome all obstacles to protect not just friends and family, but also complete strangers from harm and to help them in any way possible. An officer of the law is a person willing to selflessly give of him or herself everyday of every week of every month of the year in order to ensure the safety and tranquillity in the surrounding areas. These people often give their spare time in order to be present at public functions and to instill good values into the people they come in contact with while doing their jobs. These people give of their spare time, of time they could be spending with friends and family in order to help others develop good characters. Enforcers of the law risk their lives to stop crime, enforce laws, and settle disputes, not because they have to, but because they want to. For this I stand in awe of these great people who are often underestimated or degraded by the citizens of today's society.

My assessment of a law enforcement officer may still not be entirely accurate, but I am sure that, as in all things, I will continue to learn surprising things about these brave people who do their best to protect us. As I continue down life's road, I hope that each new thing learned will bring myself, as well as everyone else, one step closer to truly knowing, what it really means to be a officer of the law.