WHITESTOWN P.D. FAR EXCEEDS AVERAGE FOR FEMALE OFFICERS

Studies Show Many Benefits of Women in Law Enforcement

For Immediate Release:
February 23rd, 2017

WHITESTOWN, Ind. – Of the eight new police officers the Whitestown Police Department is welcoming to its growing department, three of them are women. While that shouldn't seem out of the ordinary in 2017, it is. In fact, Whitestown is bucking a national trend that shows the hiring of female police officers either stagnant or declining. This despite the decades of research showing the benefits female officers bring to policing.

"We did not tailor our selection process towards attracting women applicants, but we were very fortunate that women applicants sought us out for this hiring cycle and some turned out to be among the top candidates for the job." said Chief of Police, Dennis Anderson.

Nationwide, women make up just 11% of law enforcement, according to 2008 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, and only 8.1% in small or rural departments. With our new hires, female police officers make up 15% of WMPD's police force – nearly double the number of female officers in many departments our size.

Studies show female officers bring a strength in communication and problem solving to scenes. Those studies point out that women in law enforcement are less likely to use deadly force and less likely to be involved in fights or acts of aggression on the job. Women in law enforcement are also credited with being able to defuse and deescalate potentially violent confrontations more often than their male counterparts. This emphasis on communication goes a long way in the modern approach to policing known as Community Policing.

As an additional benefit, female officers often respond more effectively to incidents of violence against women, a crime that represents approximately half of all violent crime calls to police. Effective police response to domestic violence calls has been found to both improve self-esteem of battered women and increase the likelihood that they will leave abusive relationships. One study shows battered women who had contact with a female officer rated the police response as more helpful than those without such contact. PSO Kirsten Gibbons witnessed those reactions first-hand when she worked as an EMT. She says domestic violence victims would often want to speak only to her instead of the male police officers called to the scene.

"As a mom, I feel like I can relate more to children and females in the field, and those victims feel more comfortable talking to me." said Gibbons. Gibbons was one of only six females out of 144 new recruits at her recent police academy physical exam. But she doesn't mind breaking

barriers. "I've always been one that, if you try to tell me I can't do something, I'll try even harder to do it. I loved that it was a challenge." said Gibbons.

PSO Elizabeth Campbell, who left a job with Eli Lilly to become a Whitestown police officer, says her gender in no way deterred her from pursuing her dream.

"As far as being a woman in law enforcement, I don't really think about it. All I know is I want to serve people in this capacity and I will meet any set standards in order to obtain that goal." said Campbell.

PSO Melissa Trump knows all too well what it's like to be a minority in her field. She was one of only five females in her police academy class of 95 recruits. And she was the only female police cadet who was also a mother. "I am beyond excited to be serving the town of Whitestown as a female police officer." said Trump. "I believe female officers bring something a little extra special to the profession. I feel very fortunate that the male officers I work with also see a benefit to having female officers on the department. Ultimately, the job is the same for both males and females, it is not gender specific. Police officers have to be the same regardless of gender. I hope to serve as encouragement to other females interested in a career in law enforcement."

The Whitestown Metropolitan Police Department's five-month long hiring process started with 116 applicants. All eight new officers will be on the streets patrolling by this summer, serving and protecting Whitestown's 8,000 residents.

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