

# Brave Hearts is making academy training come alive

by James F. Duffy  
Temple University at Ambler

Cynthia Brown didn't set out to put the lives and experiences of police officers onto the printed page.

After working in a community policing program in Boston in the 1970s – she initially thought she was taking a job at a museum – she felt a strong obligation to shine a spotlight on what officers actually go through on the job through their personal stories; the triumphs, tragedies and everything in between.

“When I worked in the station in Boston, I got to know everyone and I grew to love them all. I saw more acts of human kindness in some very intense circumstances,” said Brown.

Since that initial experience in Boston, Brown has been working with and advocating for police and law enforcement for more than 30 years and is publisher of *American Police Beat*, the nation's largest magazine for and about the law enforcement community.

“I've had the good fortune to meet and get to know members of law enforcement for most of my life. I don't think most people have a clue what police officers go through on our behalf to keep us safe.”

With her book *Brave Hearts: Extraordinary Stories of Pride, Pain and Courage*, published in 2010, Brown sought to “change minds about law enforcement” through the stories of 15 New York City police officers.

The book provides an up close, intimate perspective of all facets of law enforcement including the intricacies of undercover work; homicide and vice; SWAT; and utilizing technology to solve crime.

The stories told are sweeping in scope – from intelligence gathering to stop another terrorist attack to searching for survivors in the aftermath of 9/11 to tracking a serial killer to “the myriad of everyday crime responded to by the backbone of any law enforcement agency – the patrol force.”

“The stories are universal. The main thing of it is that every single person in the book – despite the problems they may have faced – were so proud of what they do,” Brown said. “They have a life of meaning through their life of service. Every one of them expressed that.”

Just as Brown didn't initially set out to change the perception the general public might have about law enforcement, she didn't initially anticipate the acad-

emic applications of her book. Police academies across the country, however, immediately saw its enormous potential to help educate the next generation of law enforcement.

The Temple University Municipal Police Academy, offered at Temple University Ambler, is one of the first to incorporate *Brave Hearts* into its curriculum.

The Philadelphia Police Department and Indiana Law Enforcement Academy are also using the book in the classroom and other academies are expected to soon follow. *Brave Hearts* is a compendium of incidents

from officers in the field that faithfully and accurately describes so many different types of the work that police officers do.

These are stories of successful officers with a strong work ethic and the courage to risk their own physical and mental health to protect and serve,” said Temple University Municipal Police Academy Director Robert Deegan.



It's one thing for an instructor to talk about what they are getting into. It's another to see it in print, to read about the experiences in the field. That's why *Brave Hearts* is so valuable.

dealing with people at their worst, but it also talks about the rewards – doing your work well and positively impacting people and communities.”

As an unvarnished look at the lives of police officers, Deegan said *Brave Hearts* is an excellent tool to help academy cadets think about and reflect on the law enforcement profession.

“It's one thing for an instructor to talk about what they are getting into. It's another to see it in print, to read about the experiences of officers in the field,” he said. “Each cadet receives a copy of the book and

they are asked to prepare a report based on their findings and interpretations. Each chapter opens up a dialogue and encourages discussion. It provides insight into the culture of law enforcement through detailed and thought-provoking questions.”

When police academies began to express interest in using *Brave Hearts* as a teaching tool, Brown developed a chapter-by-chapter lesson plan. “I designed questions based on the chapters that really have no right or wrong answers.

“It encourages the cadets to think and come up with their own solutions to the various problems they'll face day-to-day as an officer,” she said.

“When I wrote *Brave Hearts*, I never expected it would be used to provide this sort of inspiration in the classroom, but I do hope it inspires and encourages aspiration.

“For young people just going on the job, I think it reinforces their choice of career and all of the things that you can do in the profession.”

Deegan said *Brave Hearts* helps the academy develop cadets who are “graduating with a better understanding of the career they are entering into.”

“I think this is a text that the Criminal Justice program at Temple could also effectively use in the classroom,” he said.

“The more you know about what you are getting involved in, the more prepared you are to deal with the problems and the stresses, the better the officer.” Temple began offering police academy training in 1968.

The academy is state certified by the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission. All of the Academy's faculty are either active or retired full-time law enforcement practitioners, including police officers, deputy sheriffs, assistant district attorneys, and members of the judiciary.

The Summer 2012 Temple University Municipal Police Academy at the Ambler Campus begins in May. Individuals interested in applying may contact Robert Deegan at 267-468-8605, 215-204-9028 or [deeganr@temple.edu](mailto:deeganr@temple.edu) or visit [www.temple.edu/cjtp](http://www.temple.edu/cjtp), where the application and information are available online.

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