



2009 Youth Scholarship Program Third Place Winner

"How Your Father, Mother or Guardian Helps Us Protect Our Community"

By Ryan M. Maloney

I always have to laugh whenever someone brings up the subject of tasers around my Dad. Once he starts a conversation about tasers, wild horses couldn't drag him away from the subject. I have always been fascinated when he talks about how relatively new tasers are as a law enforcement tool. I know that tasers have been used to reduce officer and suspect injuries, save lives, and actually make our community much safer. I want to tell how my Dad became so actively involved with promoting tasers as a wonderful law enforcement tool.

My Dad has been a police officer for over twenty-four years. He works for the City of Spring Lake Park Police Department and currently holds the rank of police sergeant on the department. In November of 1999, while working for the Spring Lake Park Police Department, he came across an article in a police trade magazine on tasers. The article intrigued him because it described tasers as a tool that could be used to control dangerous suspects from a safe distance, thus reducing the likelihood of officer and suspect injuries from a fight. Wanting to find out more about tasers, he began to gather as much information as he could about this tool. My Dad was pretty disappointed when he found out that no department in Minnesota or the upper Midwest used this tool. He knew with just that information alone, it would be difficult to convince his Chief to look at the technology.

After gathering as much information as he could on tasers, he went to his Chief and presented why this tool would be a valuable resource for their department. His Chief was intrigued by the information my Dad presented, but wanted to know more about the product. He requested my Dad to find an Instructor Course to go to, so he could learn more about tasers and how they worked. There were not a lot of instructor courses being taught in the United States, because of how new tasers were to law Enforcement. My dad finally found an Instructor course being taught in Iowa. To complete the course and become a certified instructor, he was required to take a hit from a taser. That was the first of many voluntary taser hits my Dad would take over the next ten years to show how safe tasers actually are. After that first hit, he became an instant believer on how well it works. He immediately knew the taser was something every police officer should have available to him or her.

After completing and passing the taser instructor course, my Dad again approached his Chief. He presented all the information and research he had to the Chief. At the conclusion of that meeting, his Chief told him he thought the taser would be a good tool, but was not completely sold that the city should invest that type of money on the project. He did give my Dad an option though. He told him that if he really wanted to start a taser program, he could go ahead and buy his own taser and equipment to deploy on duty. He told him he would have to also develop a policy for the department. My dad spent over \$700.00 of his own money to buy the equipment and start the program. After several months of working and revising a policy, my dad finally was able to carry his taser on duty for the first time.

As luck would have it, several months went by with no opportunity to deploy his taser. One evening my Dad and our family were watching a movie at home. He received a phone call at home that a neighboring police department was currently out with a domestic situation. A drunk male was holding his wife hostage with a knife and was threatening to kill her. The department had heard about my Dad carrying a taser and asked if he would come to the scene to see if he could help. My Dad unselfishly left our house and responded to the scene on his day off. During the course of the situation, my Dad was able to get a shot off on the suspect. The taser incapacitated the suspect and the wife was able to

get away unharmed. The suspect was arrested and had not been injured. The next day the sergeant on that department sent a letter of commendation to my Dad's Chief. After his Chief read the reports and the letter of commendation, he agreed to buy each squad on the department the equipment to deploy tasers. He told my dad that his forethought, persistence, and expertise paid off and had proven to the community on how important tasers were to protecting the public.

Since then, my Dad has been involved in the direct saving of two lives through the use of tasers. He has been awarded the John H. Cover Medal for Non-lethal Heroism in saving a life through the use of a taser. For the past 10 years, my Dad has been a Taser Master Instructor actively teaching several agencies all over the upper Midwest and Canada in taser technology. He has been actively involved in teaching other police officers, security officers, and military personnel as Taser Instructors.

I have sat in on some of my Dad's taser classes. There is no doubt in my mind that tasers are probably one of the most important tools to keeping our communities and police officers safe. I know my Dad loves being a police officer and serving his community and the people around him. I am so proud of what he has accomplished and hope to see him continue doing what he has loved to do for the past 24 years. He has truly inspired me and I hope to one day be able to serve my community just like he has.