

# A NEW BEAT



PHOTOS BY RICHARD MARSHALL, PIONEER PRESS

**Pioneer Press reporter Alex Friedrich** fumbled a bit before handcuffing a "suspect" in a Washington County Reserve Deputy Training Program class this month. Volunteer reservists assist deputies, perform first aid and help guard crime scenes and evidence, but they are unarmed and make no arrests on their own.

A reporter steps away from his computer to attend Washington County Reserve Deputy Academy, where trainees learn to keep their composure, strike a “command presence” and “feel the uniform.”

BY ALEX FRIEDRICH  
*Pioneer Press*

I'm struggling to handcuff Roger Tauer — and botching the job.

Let's see: Grasp his hand. Hold his thumb down. Cuff that wrist. Swing the arm around.

Wait. Forgot something.

I need Roger a little off-balance — legs wide apart, arms behind him, torso bent forward — so he can't fight or run away.

Parroting old cop shows, I order: “Bend over and spread your legs.”

Oops.

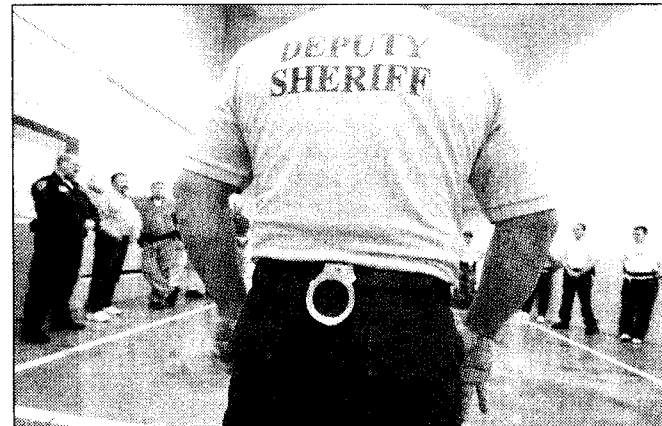
Washington County Sheriff's Cmdr. Cheri Dexter corrects me: “Do not say that — especially when you're cuffing a female suspect.”

“Instead,” she continues, “say, ‘Spread your *feet*, and *lean* over.’”

Man. Sensitivity while handcuffing is about the last thing I thought cops would need to think about.

But in the annual 16-week Washington County Reserve Deputy Academy,

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**Washington County Sheriff's Deputy** Miguel Tellez addresses reserve-deputy trainees at the county Law Enforcement Center in Stillwater. Those who complete the course will join the county's 23 current reservists, going on three patrols each summer month and one per month the rest of the year.

## + A new beat

*(continued)*

I'm learning that policing is much more complicated than I ever thought. And reserve deputies need to learn the nuances.

You can spot these trained reservists by their tan polo shirts in the warm months and dark-brown uniforms in the cold. They ride with deputies as they patrol parks, lakes, rivers and trails throughout the county. They act as assistant deputies, doing such things as issuing tickets for minor offenses, providing first aid, guarding crime scenes and evidence, and helping with search-and-rescue operations.

"I use them a lot," said Sgt. Jerry Cusick, who runs the program. "It would be really hard to get as many water patrols out without employing volunteers. We just wouldn't be able to afford it."

Washington County is not alone in recruiting reservists. Statewide, 67 county sheriffs' offices and city police departments have reserve programs, as do law enforcement agencies across the nation.

They're not sworn peace officers in Minnesota, so they're not allowed to use firearms, make their own arrests or investigate crimes.

But I wouldn't cross them.

They do carry defensive weapons. They can arrest bad-dies when a deputy directs them to do so. And they can call in for more force if a tough guy needs to demonstrate more — as they say in the course — "compliance."

It's eye-opening, some of

what we've learned so far:

- 911 dispatchers juggle cries for help with a focus and cool that few could match. They are the voice of reason. Listen to them.

- Deputies often can defuse a situation merely by showing "command presence" through their voice and body language.

- If you perform CPR on someone, chances are they'll vomit. Be ready when it happens.

Altogether, the work seems like a big job, but fun — enough

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**Reservist trainee and reporter** Alex Friedrich attacks a padded Deputy Miguel Tellez as part of the Washington County Reserve Deputy Training Program.

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to keep the 24 students in this class coming each Monday evening for three to four hours a session.

Many relish the chance to work outdoors. Some are considering careers in law enforcement. Others just want some excitement in their public service.

"I guess I'm just not the Meals-on-Wheels kind of guy," said reserve candidate Jim Hohn, 49, of St. Paul.

My fellow students have a wide range of ages, professions and talents.

Shannon Slater, for example, is a 20-year-old Century College criminal justice student who shoots trap — and was one of the most accurate pistol shots during training at the firing range.

Michael Powers, a 35-year-old nuclear-security officer, has a warning yell that alone would stop a rowdy in his tracks.

And Tauer, who suffered my clumsy cuffing, is a 61-year-old sales manager from Stillwater with 20 years of reserve experience elsewhere.

Even for vets like Tauer, though, the training can be a challenge. In our first exercise on defending ourselves with our batons, Deputy Miguel Tellez grabs some protective padding and comes at each of us like an assailant.

We're not exactly smooth. Batons get stuck in our belts. We fumble helplessly as Tellez advances. One student manages to draw his baton, but it pops out of his hands. The

warnings some of us squeak out wouldn't strike much terror in anyone.

"Talk loud! Use that voice!" bellows Pat Erickson, a retired deputy who's helping train us. "You must have command presence. If you don't act like you're confident of what you're doing, the people around you will sense it."

But we're getting there. Before we graduate May 14, we'll learn a lot more: about drugs and gangs, how to handle boats and all-terrain vehicles, even how to practice something called "verbal judo."

When it's all over, my fellow students will join Washington County's 23 current reservists. They'll go on three six- to eight-hour patrols each month during the summer — and one

## FYI

The Washington County Reserve Deputy Academy is held once a year.

Applications are due Sept. 1.

For more information, contact Sgt. Jerry Cusick at 651-430-7810 or send an e-mail to [jerry.cusick@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:jerry.cusick@co.washington.mn.us). Information is also available at <http://wcsheriff.net>.

Information on the Minnesota Police Reserve Officers Association is available at [www.mproa.org](http://www.mproa.org).

per month the rest of the year — as well as attend meetings and additional training.

Deputy Jim Gribble assures us: "You'll feel the uniform."

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