

25 Women: TPD's Major Audrey Smith works to be force for good

When Major Audrey Smith of the Tallahassee Police Department sits back and thinks about who and what have influenced the woman and the professional she has become, she names her mother, her faith — and a high school training film showing what happens to teens who make a few stupid mistakes.

“That film showed how once inside the law enforcement system it can be difficult for teens to get out. I wanted to help do something about turning around kids who showed bad judgment and made a bad choice.” Her own choice: become a law enforcement officer and be a force for good.

With a mother who was a nurse, her father a mechanic, and Smith herself the youngest of seven children, the family's emphasis on education was often put to the test. “I had loans, financial aid, and help from my parents and siblings to go to Florida A&M. Being a police officer was fine, but going to college was a given.”

She earned her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and began work at the TPD as a trainee before completing Police Academy. As a uniformed patrol officer investigating burglaries and financial crimes in 1988, she was one of few women on the force. And then the promotions began: first to Sergeant, then to Lieutenant, and eventually to Captain and Major. During that time Smith became Supervisor of the Crime Prevention Unit; served as the Department's Accreditation Manager; the Watch Commander of



the Patrol Division; and the Assistant Division Commander for Criminal Investigations.

“One of the things you learn as a woman in police work is that being ‘macho’ doesn’t work for you.” Instead, she practiced the art of “dialing it down a notch” and of “actual talking and listening with compassion in a charged situation.” She says that those very skills applied to her rise and leadership inside the department. “The ability to listen and include others in decision-making ... to allow them to participate in the process makes for better outcomes for everyone.”

Smith says that both her mother and older sister are feminine role models. “My mother was a consummate lady... but a determined lady. She was quiet and meek, but she would always fight hard for the right things.”

And Smith does the same thing within the Department and the Tallahassee community. She is in her second term serving on the Tallahassee Human Relations Council and the Lincoln Neighborhood Center’s Advisory Council. She was elected to the Board of Directors for the Riley Center/Museum and the African-Caribbean Dance Theatre. She is active at the Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, the North Florida Chapter of NOBLE, the Mamie J. Strong Order of Calanthe, and the Delta Kappa Omega Foundation where she serves as the chairman of the Global Impact Committee facilitating an annual Human Trafficking Awareness workshop. She was honored by the Martin Luther King Foundation of Florida with the Humanitarian Award in 2015.

Having completed her Master’s degree, in 2014, Smith was sworn in as a Major with the Tallahassee Police Department. She is the first African-American female in the agency’s history to be promoted beyond the rank of Captain. In this role, Smith leads the Operations Bureau which consists of the Uniformed Patrol Division and all patrol ancillary units and programs such as the Community-oriented Policing Squads and Community Relations Unit. She serves as a conduit for the implementation and facilitation of the Mayor’s 2015 “Operation Safe Neighborhoods” initiative.

And the future? “I hope to always be in law enforcement,” she says. “I want to help everyone see that even in the worst of the worst there is always something good.”

Join the Tallahassee Democrat to celebrate the 2016 “25 Women You Need to Know” as well as the “5 Young Women to Watch” at a reception in their honor at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 4, at Goodwood Garden’s Carriage House. Tickets are \$25 for one or \$300 for a table for 10. To order tickets, visit <https://tickets.tallahassee.com/>

Audrey Smith’s connection to the Tallahassee Area Coalition Center of Excellence: Her children were members of the National Achievers Society, she held offices on the NAS Parent Alliance and traveled to the State NAS Summit every year during their membership. She also served as an assistant coach for the Lincoln High School Black History Brain Bowl Team who won several state championships. Her dedication to our organization was unmeasurable. We are proud to know and salute Major Audrey Smith during this 2016 Women’s History Month.