

Melanie BEVAN

Chief of Police City of Bradenton

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During 28 years at SPPD, she climbed the ranks to Assistant Chief of Police. Taking advantage of training and persevering through three degrees and raising two children, Melanie was appointed the Chief of Police for the City of Bradenton this past February. She was chosen from more than 150 applicants.

And yes, she is the first female Chief of Police.





Sometimes a young person's job instills the possibility that there may be a career in that field later on.

Working theft prevention at a Clearwater Mall store as an 18-year old, Melanie Bevan's eventual career began when female police officers came to the store on two different occasions to arrest shoplifters. That motivated her to apply to the St. Petersburg Police Department at age 19 and enter the Police Academy a year later. During 28 years at SPPD, she climbed the ranks to Assistant Chief of Police. Taking advantage of training and persevering through three degrees and raising two children, Melanie was appointed the Chief of Police for the City of Bradenton this past February.

"At 20 years old, I was writing tickets, carrying a gun, chasing drug dealers, and arresting criminals before I was old enough to buy a gun, bullets, or drink. I spent time in the vice and narcotics unit, on a SWAT team, and as Commander of the canine unit, intelligence unit, and street crime unit. Mentors told me that the time was coming when policing would require additional education. They encouraged me to go to college to be prepared for promotions and supervisory positions," Melanie says.

She attended St. Leo College for six years working all night, driving to St. Leo, sleeping in her car for an hour, attending class, sleeping in her car for an hour during lunch break, driving home, and sleeping four hours. She received her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and later a Master's degree in Public Administration. In 2001 Melanie decided she wanted a family so she refused a promotion—a rarity in police departments—and adopted two sons under the age of two from Ukraine. Being a life-long learner and realizing how much education had contributed to her success, she enrolled in Argosy University. Persevering once again—this time with a young family, she received her Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Organizational Leadership.

Wayne Poston says, "As Mayor and Police Commissioner for the City of Bradenton, I selected Melanie Bevan as Police Chief from more than 150 applicants. She has all the skill sets I was looking for: strong work ethic, unquestioned integrity, well-educated, respect of peers and street-level cops, a strong family life, curious, and a true sense of humor. I want to assure everyone that Melanie did not get the job because she is a woman; she got the job because she was the best candidate. Under my watch, the City has opened our hiring pool so that all candidates get the opportunity to compete for jobs. She had the opportunity, and she won the job. I have not been disappointed a single time since she came to work for the City of Bradenton."

Sitting in her office overlooking the Manatee River, the Chief talks about herself and her allegiance to the area. "I care very much about people and that includes the 120 police officers, 30 other staff, the community, and my co-workers. I am passionate about getting things done; I drive myself hard. I strive to do the right thing. I am ethical and compassionate and use those qualities to make an impact on the community. Mayor Poston is a great boss who provides guidance when asked. I have also had positive interaction with City Council and the City administration."

Melanie says she never set her sights on the next promotion, but rather wanted to effectively perform the responsibilities of whatever her position was at the time. With encouragement from her family and friends, she applied for the Chief of Police position in St. Petersburg, was the "officers' choice," and became one of four finalists. A change in leadership led the new mayor to hire someone else. After extensive research on Bradenton and the police department, she applied for the Chief position and was chosen for the job.

Her daily goal is to have 120 officers show up for work in the morning and 120 come home at night. Other goals include how officers are deployed throughout the city, on the roads, during peak call times, and in specialized assignments. Being a mother of two 16-year olds, she encourages a personal quality of life for her employees. Saying that officers are not resistant to change, she quotes a saying about police officers—they don't like change, but they don't like the way things are either. She operates under "a sense of urgency" and is the first one in the office in the morning and usually the last one to leave in the evening. Addressing every community group that invites her, she is always looking for ways to do more and do it better to meet the needs of the community. She is reviewing technology hardware and software needs to enable the department to work smarter not harder. Employees receive one hour a week to mentor youth in a sanctioned youth program and has joined with the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team to provide tickets to adult volunteers who engage youth in the Bradenton community.

About women in law enforcement, Chief says, "As you climb the ladder in policing the percentage of females in top tier positions drops to less than two percent which is in contrast to the corporate sector where women hold about 16 percent of high-level positions. Recently there were 800,000 full-time law enforcement officers in the United States in about 15,000 agencies. Women account for 15 percent of these positions. I received promotions because I was an educated officer who also excelled operationally and as a tactically-oriented street commander."

Born in Winter Park, Melanie was raised in Largo. Her sons Sergei and Seeley Bevan are seniors at Gaither High School. Her partner of nine years works in investment accounting. Melanie's leisure time is spent on a waverunner, fishing, and attending her sons' track, soccer, and swimming activities. She has been an adjunct professor of Leadership Studies at USF—St. Petersburg and of Homeland Security at the State College of Florida. She is also an authenticator for Major League Baseball witnessing real-time signatures on sports memorabilia by the likes of Derek Jeter and Evan Longoria.

Melanie lives by a quote from author Anna Quindlen, "If your success is not on your own terms, if it looks good to the world, but does not feel good in your heart, it is not success at all." She continues, "No one can define your destiny but you. You must blaze your own trail whatever that path may be because, in the end, you deserve the same opportunities for success as the person standing next to you." 🍷

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