



**Woodmere Village Police Chief, Sheila Mason**

*One of the nation's few black, female Police Chiefs shares leadership philosophy*

Woodmere Police Chief Sheila Mason was recently elected sergeant-at-arms for the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives. She is one of just ten black female police chiefs throughout the country.

**Cuyahoga County, Ohio** (July 16, 2018) –Woodmere Village Police Chief, Sheila Mason is one of just ten black female police chiefs in the country. She has served as the Village Police Chief since 2012, and her impact on the community and the police department has been significant.

Chief Mason began working in law enforcement at Tri-C in 1979 as a dispatcher. There, she went to school for security and began working both jobs. “There were only two other female police officers at the college. I was the only black female,” she states.

Chief Mason says women were just beginning to join law enforcement in Cleveland even though more women are in the field today, “the slow change is in command staff,” she says. “It’s less likely to see women as sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and things like that. Women are now getting more involved in special fields of law enforcement, which is now allowing them to take activate command positions in law enforcement.” After a few years in security and dispatch, Chief Mason decided to attend the Police Academy in 1983. Mason officially took the position of Woodmere Village Chief of Police in 2012 and has continued to make a great impact since, both within the police department and within the community. “I believe in order to be a successful department, you have to network with other departments. You have to be out there, and they have to know who you are because that gives you legitimacy,” she remarks, noting that they try to take part in community events whenever her department is asked to participate.

Moreover, Chief Mason stresses that this involvement strengthens the communication and teamwork within the department. “We work as a team here. I sit down and talk to the officers. If they come to me with a question and I don’t know the answer to—because I don’t know it all—I have enough resources out there that I can call to figure out a solution,” she says.

Open communication, teamwork, and transparency have been key to her approach as Chief since her swearing-in. This philosophy extends outside department walls. Chief Mason firmly believes that good communication and strong involvement between the residents of Woodmere and Police is equally important. "If someone is doing something in their neighborhood, I want the guys to ride through and say, 'Hey, how are you doing?'" she states.

She also started a "selfie program" to see which officers could get the most pictures taken with residents. She likes officers on patrol to drive with the windows down and speak with the residents. "I try to come up with fun things to do," she admits. Strong communication does not end here. "I will gladly take the time to talk to anyone. Good or bad or indifferent, you will hear from me."

Chief Mason believes law enforcement should approach community involvement with a "guardian mentality" as opposed to a "warrior mentality". "Back in the 70's and 80's, we were simply on patrol with little to no interaction with the residents. Usually, you only saw the officer riding in the car or when a situation was happening. But the guardian must get out and be a part of your life. The guardian looks over you and not just called to respond when something is happening," she states.

With this approach to police work and with her extensive experience, it is no surprise that Chief Mason has become a highly regarded leader, and her leadership role is one she takes seriously. "I try not to be a boss, but a leader. I try to be positive and motivate. I listen; I'm not going to tell you I know it all, but I'm going to be that ear if you come to me with a problem," she admits, noting that a good leader is able to create a team of people who each have their own skills, and know to follow them when necessary.

Chief Mason hopes to extend her reach to a larger community when she runs for Sergeant of Arms of NOBLE, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives. The national conference will be held at the end of July 2018. This would be quite a historical moment, as she would become the first female in that position since the organization's founding in 1976.

This role would entail keeping order and peace at meetings, something Chief Mason has proved to be more than capable of in her many years of service. Though it would be a new role for Chief Mason, challenging and improving herself is something for which she continually strives. "I tell the officers to always find something to improve," she states, and she tries to do the same.

With her upcoming election and with her role in the Woodmere community and police department, it is abundantly clear that Chief Mason is doing just that.

The NOBLE Election takes place on July 28, 2018, and the swearing-in on August 1, 2018. We wish our guardian and leader all the best of luck.