

2008

Patrolman Michael Bruening

Mentor Police Department

When a person is born to be a law enforcement officer, it's sometimes said that "he bleeds blue." This is the type of officer that just seems to have the proper genes, the gut instinct, and the necessary mindset to succeed in the profession. Sometimes family background adds something to that mix of traits. In the case of Mentor Police Officer Michael Bruening, the fact that his father and brother preceded him in law enforcement may have led him down the path, however, it is his own makeup that formed the police officer who received the Jorge Medina Award for 2008.

Patrolman Bruening was nominated for the award by Mentor Chief Daniel Llewellyn for his actions in saving a suicidal male on June 30, 2008. The Mentor Police Department had received a call that a 29 year old male was threatening suicide and had parked his car at the Mentor Super K. The subject was nowhere around, however, friends located him on the Center Street railroad overpass, where he was threatening to jump.

Bruening, a trained negotiator, responded to the scene. The subject was sitting on the outside of the bridge railing against a light pole. Bruening established a dialogue with him. He learned that the subject had been struggling with mental issues for some time and was exhausted. He told Bruening that he intended to end his life as soon as the sun came up. The conversation continued for over an hour, during which the subject resisted all efforts to talk him back over the railing.

As daybreak neared, Bruening noticed a change in the subject's demeanor. He kept looking out in the distance and then at the ground as if preparing himself. He then began to take his personal belongings from his pocket, and asking Bruening to take them. Sensing that the time was now critical, Bruening waited until the subject's back was turned momentarily and then grabbed him, pinning him against the rail until assisting officers were able to assist in dragging him to safety.

In his letter of nomination, Chief Llewellyn stated that "this action put Patrolman Bruening at risk of falling over the edge of the bridge, either accidentally falling with the male during the struggle or having the male pull him over with him. Bruening is a leader among his peers and is an asset to the Mentor Police Department."

Bruening is one of the most highly decorated officers on the Mentor Police Department, and has been honored for his actions on numerous occasions. Of this incident, he stated, "I'm just glad things worked out. That's the bottom line. We all went home in the morning."

Bruening received his award at the LaMalfa Center at the Blue Coats annual meeting and dinner banquet on February 11, 2009. He has retired from the Mentor Police Department and is currently employed as a school resource officer with the Lake County Sheriff Office.