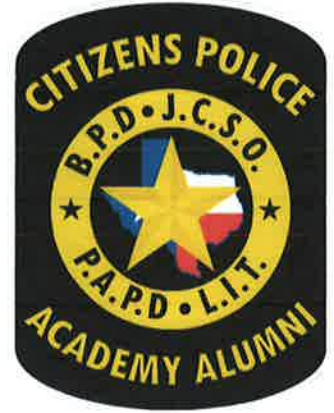


CITIZEN'S DISPATCH

GOLDEN TRIANGLE TRI AGENCY CPAAA

THIS MONTHS GUEST SPEAKER

This months guest speaker
**JEFFERSON COUNTY
SHERIFF
ZENA STEPHENS**



SEE YOU THERE !

**NEXT MEETING
MARCH 21ST
7:00 PM**

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 3

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POINTS OF INTEREST

COOKING FOR COPS
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
REMEMBER TO VISIT OUR SPONSOR
BUSINESSES
A LITTLE HUMOR

ITS ALMOST TIME FOR THE FAIR

YMBL 2017 SOUTH TEXAS STATE FAIR

MARCH 30TH

THRU APRIL 9TH

SEARCH



TexasMonthly

She's the Sheriff

ZENA STEPHENS'S UNLIKELY PATH TO BECOMING JEFFERSON COUNTY'S MOST POWERFUL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.

JANUARY 2017 | *by* MICHAEL HARDY | 2 COMMENTS



PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD SPOTH



n November 8, Zena Stephens, the chief of police at Prairie View A&M University,

O was elected sheriff of Jefferson County, in Southeast Texas, making the 51-year-old Democrat the state's first female African American sheriff.

Stephens, who was born and raised in the county seat of Beaumont, was previously an officer with the Beaumont Police Department and spent eleven years as the sheriff's deputy chief. In December she assumed control of a department that has more than four hundred employees and a budget of \$40 million.

MH: Did you grow up wanting to be a cop?

ZS: One of my cousins was talking about this during the election campaign, and she said, "You were always the person in our family who made us do the right thing." I was always mediating. I never wanted to see people fighting.

MH: What was the Beaumont Police Department's racial composition at the time you joined?

ZS: I graduated from the police academy in 1989, and there was only one other African American female at the time [in a department of about two hundred officers]. Certainly the department has never been representative of the community. I probably never expected it to be, though. You just never saw a bunch of African Americans in law enforcement back then. I did some recruiting for the BPD in the nineties, where I would travel to all these historically black colleges and try to get students to consider going into law enforcement. It was just not an attractive field to minorities. So I hope with my being elected sheriff we can change the view that young people in general—not just African Americans—have about law enforcement.

MH: What was your experience like in the BPD?

ZS: I started out on the streets, and I worked patrol for four years. We answered a lot of calls. Growing up, I was kind of sheltered—my mom was a nurse's aide, my dad was a refinery worker—so I'd never seen some of the things I experienced later. And I loved it. You know, a lot of the people we encountered weren't hardened criminals. You watch *Cops*, and you think it's about taking people to jail. But we did a lot of other things too.

I remember cleaning out our closets at home and giving sweaters to some of the people I had arrested. It was funny, because my husband and I would be driving around, and we'd see people wearing our old sweaters. Many of those people were victims of circumstance. They didn't come from the kind of stable family that I did. Plus, I grew up in that community, so some of the people I was dealing with as a police officer, I knew them.



MH: I'm sure that helped, to have those community connections.

ZS: It did, especially in certain areas of the city. I remember one day BPD had put out a stolen-car alert, and I saw that the car was right in front of me. The guy took off, so we got into a chase. He ended up turning onto a street I knew was a dead end, but he clearly did not. He bailed out and I pursued him. Finally he reached another dead end and turned around. I had my gun pointed at him. He said, "Lady, please don't shoot me." And I said, "Don't worry, I'm not going to." And we just sat there until backup arrived.

MH: Fast-forward to last year, when Jefferson County sheriff Mitch Woods announced that he was retiring and you decided to run for his seat. Had you ever been at the center of a political campaign before?

ZS: Never. It was tough, because my daughter was a senior on the UT-Austin softball team, and my husband and I had always traveled to all her games. I knew I would have to miss some of the games because of the campaign.

MH: What was the campaign like?

ZS: My team consisted basically of my father, who is 82, and my mother, who is 75. They were at my campaign headquarters every day. Along with my treasurer, that was my core group of people. And we included a few of our family friends. One of the things I told my team was, no matter what happens, we're going to take the high road. We're not going to go negative. I was just tired of everybody fighting. I knew it would be an uphill battle. I mean, I got elected in a county that voted for Donald Trump, which means I got crossover votes. I attribute that to the fact that I grew up in the community and people knew and respected me.

MH: What will your top priorities be as sheriff?

ZS: I think we've gotten away from teaching young cops some of the basics of how to be good cops. Everybody keeps talking about teaching cops how to de-escalate, but if we don't hire people who have the ability to show compassion and patience, then we can't teach them to de-escalate. You have to have certain character traits. It's important to hire people who have not just educational achievements but who

MH: That sounds like the kind of situation we've been hearing a lot about in the news these days, except without such a positive outcome. What's going wrong in these high-profile police-involved shootings?

ZS: I think it's a lot of things. I am a proponent of community policing. Part of my plan for the sheriff's department is to get people to reengage in the community. If you know the community, you know the people with mental health issues, the people who are the chronic criminals, and the people who aren't part of that community. Relationships are important. You're less likely to be victimized by people you know. You're less likely to be mean to somebody whom you've had interactions with before.

MH: You eventually moved to the Jefferson County sheriff's office, where you rose to become deputy chief. Why did you leave in 2013, to become chief of police at Prairie View A&M?

ZS: I think God puts you where you're supposed to be. I had worked in the sheriff's office for seventeen years. I had been deputy chief for eleven years. That's a long time to be number two, and I wanted to be number one somewhere. Being number two was the hardest job I've done in my life. That's not a bad thing; it's just that sometimes you see things that you'd like to change, but you're not number one.

MH: How do you figure out who has those traits?

ZS: That's the difficult part. You have to talk to people and see where they come from. I've interviewed people who said, "I just want to take the scum off the streets." Well, I find that a little concerning. First of all, define "scum." So I think we need to ask more than just police-related questions during the interviews. You know, How did you grow up? Who did you interact with? I had one applicant who had never, ever been around African Americans. Didn't grow up with them. And that's not unusual. It doesn't mean that kid's a racist. But now we're going to ask that person to police an African American community?

I also think we need to do better job in training. For instance, it's important to know that you can survive a fight. When I was in the academy, we learned how to fight. We learned that you can take a punch and it won't kill you. Not everything requires us to shoot. We have to put our egos aside and be professional.

MH: You may be a newcomer to politics, but you seem like a natural at it. Would you ever consider running for a higher office?

ZS: Being a sheriff was never a dream of mine—I just wanted to be a good police officer. I love being out there and making a difference. But then Sheriff Woods decided to retire, so this opportunity came up. I'll never say no to anything, because I don't know what the future will hold. Like I said earlier, I think God puts you where you're supposed to be.



MEDICAL BENEFIT LUNCH

FOR

DETECTIVE

ROBERT ENER



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

10:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.

BEAUMONT POLICE STATION

255 COLLEGE ST - BEAUMONT

- TRAINING ROOM -

\$10 PER PLATE

CHICKEN/SAUSAGE GUMBO

with rice, potato salad, bottled water

- desserts for sale on site -

Dine-In or Take Out

AND DELIVERIES AVAILABLE

Pre-orders for take out can be made until 5 pm, Monday, March 20

Payment by cash or check payable to the Beaumont Police Benefit Association

Place an order with Cindy Bloodsworth by phone, email or fax:

phone: 409-880-1092 • cbloodsworth@beaumonttexas.gov • fax: 409-880-3544

Robert Ener is a 29 year veteran of the Beaumont Police Department and is a Detective in the Criminal Investigation Division as a computer forensic analyst in the Property Crimes Unit. Last September Robert was diagnosed with multiple myeloma and has undergone extensive medical treatment. Though the prognosis is good, Robert still has considerable challenges ahead. We look forward to seeing him back at work as soon as he is able.

This benefit will assist our friend and fellow officer greatly with his mounting out of pocket medical expenses. Your support is appreciated!



*Come join us and support
our local heroes*

PHELAN MCDONALDS M

MARCH 18TH

9AM - 12PM

6380 PHELAN BLVD



**GOLDEN TRIANGLE
TRI AGENCY CPAAA**

**255 College Street
Training Room
Beaumont, Texas**

**Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 3827
Attn: D. Vldez
Beaumont, Texas 77704
Fax (409) 880-3835**

**2017
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Vice Pres.

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Yes its that time of year already ! Its time for the South East Texas State Fair

It runs from Thursday March 30 through Sunday April 9th , Just go to the YMBL website for times and special events . As always parking is free . Danny Valdez will be working gate O off of Hwy 124 where Doug used to work . Make sure you use that gate and have your ID with you . The Vegas Gold CPAAA shirts are the uniform of the day . Its always lots of fun and I am looking forward to another great year . My phone 659-2870 is always on if you have any questions .

We still need volunteers for the disaster drill coming up on June 7th . PD would like to have a head count by March 31st . There will probably be a meeting or 2 before the actual event , so bring your family and friends and your dog , ok not your dog but you get the idea , we need lots of volunteers .

As most of you know there is another event set for the same day as our CPAAA regular monthly meeting . The Duty Calls event is set for 6;00 pm on Tuesday as well . We did consider moving our meeting and just going to that . We had already asked Sheriff Stephens to come and speak at our meeting in Feb but it didn't work out . She is very much in demand as a speaker and I think we are fortunate to be able to get her to come and speak with us .I feel like what she has to say is important and we want to show our support for the Sheriffs Dept as well. We really haven't been able to get a foot in the door with Jefferson County and this just may be our opportunity to do just that . I can not tell anyone what they should do but you know which way I am leaning .

BPD still needs help with the fund raiser on March 22nd . If you can help just let us know. If not please come and support the cause . Also if any one wants to bake something to be sold you are welcome to do that ,just make sure its packaged to sell .

Last month we had DEA and they talked about a case in Beaumont down off College St in the Avenues that they had been involved in with BPD . I read an article about a week later saying the person was convicted in Federal Court and received 250 months in Federal Prison . That's a win for all the agencies involved .

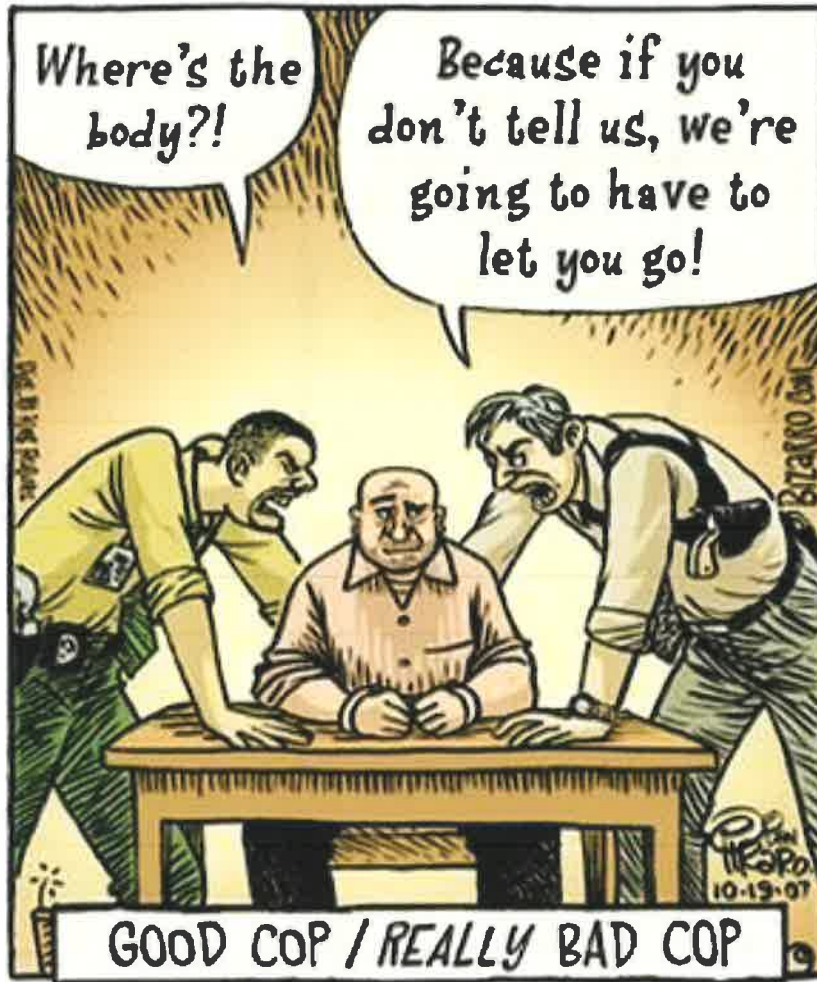
Dont forget your 2017 dues are due by this months meeting . I mean where else can you have this much fun for 10 \$ a year .

See you on the 21st

Roy Mc Grath

President

Picture Pages



"Here's your eighty-fifth Warning ticket, and again I'll have to confiscate this Free Dozen Donut Coupon."