



Media Release

International Association of Women Police – Excellence in Performance Award, 2021 Staff Sergeant Valerie Gates, Barry Police Service, Ontario, Canada.

Staff Sergeant Valerie Gates began her policing career in 1997, joining the Barrie Police Service in 2002. She was promoted to sergeant in 2009 and to Staff Sergeant in 2018.

S/Sgt Gates has made extensive contributions to initiatives for her police service and community. Committed to relationship-building, supporting victims of crime, and improving overall community safety and wellbeing, she has implemented numerous innovative projects, some of which are highlighted below:

My Word Counts - Reducing the Barriers for the Reporting of Sexual Violence. In January 2021, the project launched an anonymous reporting system, using the app, Speak Out, to report abuse. A second phase of the project focuses on expanding counselling and medical services to victims of sexual violence.

Safer Communities Through Collaborative Justice, aims to identify best practices and provide the framework necessary to create a sustainable justice alternative through the establishment of a Justice Centre. The Justice Centre aims to provide a more holistic approach to accused persons in areas such as mental health and addictions support.

Front Line Response - An Evidence Based Approach. Partnering with academics from Western University, this initiative undertakes systemic research projects to determine the efficacy of current practices and develop or enhance strategies to address areas in need of improvement.

S/Sgt. Gates helped develop the **Child Advocacy Centre of Barrie**, which coordinates the systems response to child sexual abuse and provides a single, child-friendly location for agencies to utilize, reducing youth trauma.

S/Sgt. Gates has also initiated several projects to assist victims of human trafficking. **Project Safe Horizon, Project Safe Horizon - Eyes Open**, and **Project Speak Up** are all her projects that focus on the safety and care of human trafficking victims. Having recognized the importance of victim advocates she secured a grant to fund a full-time Human Trafficking Advocate. Her projects leveraged technology to assist police services in identifying those involved in Human Trafficking. Another initiative was aimed at minimizing the trauma experienced by victims by providing the ability to testify from the comfort of the Advocacy Centre. S/Sgt Gates' dedication to prevent human trafficking, support the victims, and train police officers on the subject is truly inspirational.

IAWP President Deborah Friedl, "The IAWP is so pleased to recognize the outstanding work of our colleagues in law enforcement. These stories exemplify that with the right tools, training and opportunity, women excel in policing and keep our communities safer."

The **Mission** of the IAWP is: To strengthen, unite and raise the capacity of women in policing internationally. The **Vision**: IAWP envisions a world where police reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and where human rights are protected.

For more information about IAWP visit www.iawp.org

For further information on the 2021 recognition programme, permissions or award sponsorship opportunities please contact executivedirector@iawp.org