

TOWN OF VERNON

Office of the Mayor

14 Park Place • Vernon, CT 06066

Tel: (860) 870-3600 • Fax: (860) 870-3580

www.Vernon-CT.gov



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Press Contact:

David Owens, Communications Specialist

Desk (860) 870-3574

Cell (860) 494-5973



Daniel A. Champagne
Mayor

Michael J. Purcaro
Town Administrator

Dawn R. Maselek
Assistant Town Administrator

New School Resource Officer Selected for Rockville High School

Police Officer Allison Lawrence Looks Forward to Building Positive Relationships

(VERNON, Connecticut) – A new School Resource Officer (SRO) is on duty at Rockville High School and she is working to get to know students and staff.

Officer Allison Lawrence is taking over for Officer Greg St. Pierre, who is being promoted to sergeant and will move on to a new assignment with the Vernon Police Department.

Lawrence was inspired to become a School Resource Officer as a result of her own experience as a high school student and the rapport she built with her school's SRO.

"I have always enjoyed working with youth and being involved in the community," Lawrence said. "And I had a very good School Resource Officer when I was in high school who I still keep in touch with. When I began my career here, being a School Resource Officer was one of my goals. I was excited to get the opportunity so early in my career."

Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne, a retired Vernon Police Officer, said Lawrence has distinguished herself in her four years with the Police Department, and is moving into an important new role.

"Having a police officer in a school enhances safety and gives parents peace of mind," Mayor Champagne said. "But more importantly, a School Resource Officer builds relationships with our students and their families."

As School Resource Officer, Lawrence will work at Rockville High School. She said she will follow the example of the police officer who worked in her high school, who was a regular presence at athletic and other events.

"He was always around and supportive," Lawrence recalled. "It made an impression on me and my friends. And that's how I plan to do my job. You have to be there, interacting with the students, letting the kids know you care, and that you are somebody they can trust and who will be supportive if they need something. It's really important to be involved and to be present."

Vernon Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary said that he views the School Resource Officer program as one of the most beneficial for the Vernon Public Schools and the police department.

“The SRO becomes an integral part of the school community during their assignment, following a class for four years,” Dr. Macary said. “They also teach a criminal justice class with a social studies teacher, they participate in school activities like Cupcake Wars, and they get involved in athletics. The School Resource Officer becomes part of our family, a school community member we value and a critical link between police and the schools.”

“That link benefits the school, students and the community,” added Rockville High School Principal Jason Magao. “The ability to build those relationships is what we were looking for in a candidate. Allison’s experience as a coach shows she can connect with students.”

As Rockville High School’s first female School Resource Officer, she’ll also be a role model for young women considering careers in law enforcement, Magao said.

Vernon Town Administrator and Emergency & Risk Management Director Michael Purcaro said the Vernon Police Department provides officers with a variety of special assignments that enable them to pursue a special interest and develop an expertise.

“Officer Lawrence’s appointment to this position highlights the diversity of opportunities available to our hard-working and committed police officers,” Purcaro said. “In addition to SRO, these opportunities include working as a community policing officer, bicycle officer, serving in our aviation unit, working in the detective bureau, being K-9 officers, and serving on regional traffic, SWAT and narcotics units.”

Lawrence became interested in a career in law enforcement while serving as a Security Forces Officer with the Massachusetts Air National Guard at Barnes Airport in Westfield, Mass. “I liked that it was something new and different every day,” she said.

As a Vernon Police Officer, Lawrence has distinguished herself, Police Chief John Kelley said. At a structure fire this spring on Union Street, Lawrence and others secured a ground ladder while broken glass fell on and around them as firefighters climbed up to rescue people from the burning building.

“Officer Lawrence was the top candidate for the School Resource Officer position and I have the utmost confidence she will do an outstanding job,” Kelley said. “We have a long tradition of having outstanding SROs at Rockville High School who work hard to build relationships and improve school safety. I fully expect Officer Lawrence to continue that tradition.”

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of approximately 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England’s Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country. Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870- 3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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