

# Chicago Police Foundation's 'True Blue' event raises funds to support law enforcement

By Candace Jordan



Credit: LaCour Images

Chicago police officers attend the True Blue event at the Four Seasons Hotel.

For the eighth annual True Blue Event, more than 300 guests came out on Nov. 4 to support, celebrate and honor our men and women in blue at the Four Seasons Hotel. Police officers were out in force at this event to thank the foundation for its efforts on their behalf.

As supporters arrived, they were greeted by a mounted equestrian unit. The reception inside featured Department divisions, including canine, the bomb squad, SWAT team and the Law Enforcement Medical and Rescue Training, or LEMART, unit.

During the reception, officers displayed weaponry the department has owned since the 1940s, including current models. Guests handled everything from a new semiautomatic striker gun to a Vietnam-era M16 to an original Tommy gun from 1928. Bomb squad members explained the usage of specialized equipment such as a remote-controlled robot and bomb squad suits.

Officer Jacek Leja, accompanied by his Dutch shepherd Bruce, took photos with guests, adding a unique element to the event that was especially appealing to animal lovers. Meanwhile, members of the LEMART unit demonstrated how their equipment contributes to saving lives, emphasizing the need for and importance of the \$100 customized LEMART treatment kits. These kits, provided by the foundation, equip officers to administer on-site aid in emergency situations until professional medical assistance arrives.

Guests followed the Chicago Police Department Pipes and Drums into the ballroom for dinner, led by Superintendent Larry Snelling, foundation board chair Rick Simon and executive director Mary Ann Rose. Simon delivered opening remarks, outlining the foundation's objectives, which encompass funding for safety equipment, technological resources for challenging city areas, advanced officer training and initiatives fostering stronger relations between the CPD and the communities it serves.

Over the years, the foundation has made substantial contributions, including providing over 4,000 LEMART lifesaving kits, supporting officer well-being through the National Alliance on Mental Illness, contributing \$100,000 to the CPD mounted unit, funding quiet rooms at CPD districts and more. This year, the foundation introduced the Ella French Scholarship Fund in memory of the officer tragically killed in 2021. Last month, 21 Chicago-area students became the inaugural recipients of scholarships under this fund.

A live auction generated a flurry of paddle activity to the tune of \$100,000 with standout items such as ride-alongs with the superintendent and a Dick Butkus-signed jersey. Superintendent Snelling shared his extensive three-decade history with the CPD and the foundation's vital role. The theme, "Helping our Heroes," resonated with the foundation's day-to-day efforts, ranging from providing resources and support to organizing hot meals and words of encouragement for officers.

Snelling emphasized the foundation's multifaceted role in safeguarding the city, leading youth and mentoring programs, connecting victims and families to essential services, and serving as peer counselors. The gala raised more than \$350,000 to advance the Chicago Police Foundation's mission to support initiatives such as advanced training, community outreach programs and vital equipment for the CPD.

