



# Encourage diversity

By Matt Bostrom

## Values

- Provide safety through community policing
- Practice fiscal responsibility
- Collaborate with local law enforcement
- Encourage diversity
- Connect with youth
- Improve service through technology

To effectively lead an organization, I have found that a commitment to innovation, partnership, determination, and diversity is required. My current position is Assistant Chief of Homeland Security and Support Services for the Saint Paul Police Department, which comprises 600 sworn officers, 150 civilian employees, and approximately 100 volunteers. With an annual operating budget of over \$70 million, Saint Paul is the capital city of Minnesota and part of a metropolitan area of 2.5 million people. Saint Paul is home to approximately 287,000 people, with more than one-third being non-

white. Saint Paul also boasts a large number of public and private colleges and universities.

Diversity within an organization is fundamental to its success. An organization, particularly a police department, will quickly become disconnected from the community if diversity is not valued. Once law enforcement is disconnected from the community, there is a ripple effect of distrust that can extend to every level of government.

Diversity requires actions, not only words. One example of my actions toward encouraging diversity was during the 2002 Saint Paul Police Academy when I was the director of the Training Unit. This academy was a joint effort between the City of Saint Paul, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU), Minnesota Peace Officers Standards and Training Board (POST), and police department administration. Historically, there have been barriers preventing well-educated and diverse individuals from changing careers and entering law enforcement. These are individuals with non-law enforcement, 4-year college degrees, who feel a call to public service and especially to law enforcement, yet cannot afford to leave their existing job, go back

to college, and attend a POST Board accredited law enforcement skills program. The Saint Paul Police Department thought it would be worthwhile to intentionally pursue these individuals because of their varied backgrounds, experience, and proven work ethic.

There were risks in pursuing this type of academy. First, the city and police department had concerns that a 4-year degree requirement would reduce the number of diverse candidates. Second, the POST Board had concerns about the ability a police department would have to provide accredited pre-employment training to potential police officers. Third, Metropolitan State University and MNSCU had not worked through a police department training unit to provide an accredited college education. However, the potential benefits far outweighed the risks. I was able to overcome a series of obstacles and barriers in a period of 18 months. I obtained the approval of the POST Board and Metropolitan State

University/MNSCU to accredit and transcript the academy curriculum. I was also able to get the City of Saint Paul to adjust the initial examination process and the Saint Paul Police Department to provide a comprehensive college-level police recruit academy. The result of these efforts was the graduating class of the 2002 Academy being the most educated and diverse group of recruits in the history of the department. This

academy was a significant achievement for Metropolitan State University as they were able to place some of their own students in the academy. The City of Saint Paul and the police department also achieved its goals because they found a way to hire and train a highly qualified group of very diverse individuals.

My broad range of experience in law enforcement and city government has resulted in my unique background, where I am comfortable working with the police department, fire department, city agencies, as well as county, state, and federal agencies. I believe that I can be effective



because of my determination, collaborative leadership style, progressive approach to training, ability to build partnerships, and dedication to diversity. If given the opportunity to lead the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, I will remain committed to innovative recruitment and to the encouragement of diversity within all its ranks. ■