New Chief of Clinton Township Police

*Dina Caringi is the first woman to be sworn in to occupy the top police job*

CLINTON TOWNSHIP – Dina Caringi’s rise to the top rank of the Clinton Township Police Department (CTPD) has been anything but meteoric. Instead, her 26-year career in law enforcement career began with modest ambitions.

“It was just small goals as I grew and advanced,” said Caringi. “Working the road, working nights, interacting with people, answering calls for service, that was always what I loved,” she said.

Township Supervisor Bob Cannon was pleased when Caringi accepted his offer to become chief.

“Dina told me she didn’t walk in the door when she was hired thinking she was going to be the chief,” said Cannon. “She saw herself becoming the best police officer she could be for all the residents of our community, and I know she has done that and more,” he said.

On becoming the first woman to be sworn in to occupy CTPD’s top job, Caringi is grateful. She believes her drive to improve and work with the best has been the foundation of her career, which began with the Detroit Police Department’s 9th precinct, patrolling the city for five years in the mid-nineties.

As a rookie police officer, Caringi describes her first detail.

“We were assigned out from the precinct to the Grand Prix on Belle Isle. So, I get my assignment, and I look and see, Belle Isle? Where is that? The looks I got from people. They laughed and said, oh, geez, Dina, okay, well, this is where you go.”

--more--
Caringi laughs at her inexperience at the time. She gives credit to the mentors and officers who helped her along the way with advice and recognition that she had the experience to advance.

In her five years with the Detroit Police Department (DPD) and 21 years with Clinton Township, the veteran officer has gained a wealth of experience working with the undercover drug unit, road patrol, and as the Township’s first female lieutenant of the detective bureau. In addition, she’s racked up ten years of experience as a use-of-force and firearms instructor, 13 years with the Crisis Negotiation Unit, and has spent the last five years as a unit commander.

It was just last spring when Caringi was promoted to captain – the first woman to reach that rank with CTPD – and was assigned to oversee the patrol operations division. The promotion came on the heels of the passing of Chief Fred Posavetz two months prior. In a department with many young officers, Caringi said there was a lot of change and angst amongst the staff, and she was glad to be in a position to help people through such a difficult time.

“The fact that Captain Caringi has spent her life and most of her career here in Clinton Township makes me proud to have her as our sixth police chief,” said Cannon. “We can truly say she’s homegrown, all the way.”

Dina Caringi grew up in Clinton Township, living with her parents and sisters in a home her father designed and built off Moravian Road in 1976. She went to nearby Ottawa Elementary, where her mother directed the school library for 25 years.

She attended Chippewa Valley High School, excelling as an athlete, playing soccer and basketball. However, after graduating in 1992, she admits to struggling as she searched for her passion and place in life. She attended Western Michigan University, and although she completed a few core classes, she returned home after a semester to tell her parents it wasn’t for her. That winter, she enrolled at Macomb Community College.

“I was struggling to find that path in life, if you will, so I took some classes in math, which I liked, and architecture, with my dad being a retired architect, but nothing grabbed my interest,” she said.

Then she talked with her oldest sister’s fiancé, who was attending the Detroit Police Academy. He’d come from a long line of Detroit police officers and encouraged her to apply with the DPD.

“I was nineteen, and law enforcement and criminal justice really sparked my interest, so I took some classes at Macomb, and lo and behold, that was it,” she said.

--more--
The DPD hired Caringi to begin training at their police academy in June 1995. She says choosing police work was the best decision she ever made. Reflecting on her path, Caringi sees it as an evolution.

“You set a goal, and you say, I can do that, right? You have pride in your work, your work ethic, integrity, and you get support from people who guide you in the right direction.”

Caringi added that it was up to her to follow the signs and listen to the people who offered encouragement. Eventually, she found she liked the responsibility of mentoring others and found a passion for guiding young officers’ development. In effect, she was giving back what she received from her mentors.

“They saw and nurtured that potential and were supportive of me, and that is how I see my job now,” she said. “Being in the position to help to nurture and guide careers is just the biggest thrill.”

Hiking is another passion that Caringi enjoys with her friends. Despite the pandemic putting a damper on travel, she’s climbed rocks in northern Michigan, Arizona, and Alberta, Canada. In addition, she enjoys running, completing a half marathon alongside her sister in October. Other interests include spending time at the family home in Caseville, gardening, biking, improving at golf, and caring for her cat Chloe, a stray that she took in as a favor for her niece. That was 11 years ago.

As her career steadily advanced, Caringi realized she needed to go back to college to complete her bachelor’s degree. So in 2017, after attending Northwestern University’s School of Police Staff and Command, she applied and was accepted to Madonna University. She graduated two years later with a degree in criminal justice.

“Those few credits that mom and dad paid for at Western were not a total loss,” she says with a laugh. “Some of them transferred!”

Currently, she is working towards a master’s degree at Madonna in criminal justice leadership.

Overall, Caringi believes her training and education introduced her to the concept of leadership, giving her insight and the ability to help others with their careers.

“For me, you have to value input from others, and you have to communicate, so others know who you are as a person, not just as the captain or the next chief of police, but me as Dina, as a sister, a daughter, an aunt, who I am, what I stand for.”

--more--
Finding herself in a position to inspire an entire department, to train, educate and encourage has been overwhelming. And with the spotlight looming, Caringi admits that all the attention about her promotion is outside her comfort zone, but true to form, she plans on being well-prepared to meet the challenge. That includes her swearing-in speech.

“I’ll have to write down whatever I say because there’s no way I’m going to be able to get up in front of my friends and family and just wing it,” she said. “I know it’ll be an emotional time because I’ve remained so passionate about this profession and the opportunity with this organization.”

Caringi likes to join her sisters to watch her nephew play football for Chippewa Valley. While attending a recent game, she recalls taking stock of her life after accepting the offer to become chief.

“I was sitting in the stands, looking around, thinking to myself, yes, this is my community. I grew up here and used to play soccer on this field, and as a student, I sat down there in the rowdy zone. That was years ago, and now I’m the chief of police.”

Caringi says she can’t be happier and is thrilled for the opportunity to work with everyone at the Township Civic Center.

“The important thing for me is always to be mindful of where I came from and remember the mentorship I received and the people who believed in my ability not only as a woman but as a police officer,” she said. “It’s beyond anything I could’ve imagined when hired on October 30, 2000.”

Twenty-one years later, almost to the day, Dina Caringi will be sworn in as the new Clinton Township police chief.

###

On Nov. 4, 2021, at 10 a.m., Captain Dina Caringi will be sworn in as the new Clinton Township Police Chief at a ceremony to be held at the Clinton-Macomb Public Library Main Branch, 40900 Romeo Plank Rd, Clinton Twp, MI 48038.

*Photo captions:*

*CTPD Capt. Dina Caringi*

*CTPD Capt. Dina Caringi, third from left, swearing-in ceremony, June 2021.*