



Beyond the BIO



Sugar Land Police Officer Brittany Moreno describes her childhood in Richmond, Texas as “fairly normal, just a little different.” She would go fishing, bike riding, and go karting with the other kids in her neighborhood. But the neighborhood was not a typical one – it was located on the grounds of a prison.

Officer Moreno’s father was a Captain at the Carol Vance Unit, so her family lived in housing on the unit, specifically the prison farm.

“I could go out my front door and look to the side, and I could see the prison,” Officer Moreno said. “It was right there from where our house was.”

The farm had crops, as well as pigs, cattle, and horses. The inmates would work the farm during the day; in the afternoons, once they were back inside the prison, a horn would sound, and the kids would know they could go outside and play. Officer Moreno said she never felt afraid or unsure. The kids knew not to talk to people in white uniforms (inmates), and if there were any problems, they could talk to people in gray uniforms (prison officers).

Because of her unique upbringing, Officer Moreno was aware of the criminal justice system from an early age, which influenced her eventual career choice.



Officer Moreno with her class at the Police Academy

“Growing up, I always wanted to work in law enforcement,” Officer Moreno said. “The joke would be, ‘maybe I can catch the bad guys and get them to [my dad], and [he] can help keep them and help them.’”

She went to the University of Houston to study criminal justice and psychology. After graduation, Officer Moreno went to the Police Academy in Fort Bend County and eventually joined the Sugar Land Police Department as a patrol officer. She always had an interest in mental health, and while working at Sugar Land PD, applied for the University of Houston’s graduate-level forensic psychology program.

Part of the program was a practicum where Officer Moreno provided counseling services, administered assessments, and helped guide people through group therapy. At the time, she thought she would leave policing to work at a psychiatric unit or a unit that provided rehabilitation services in prisons.

“But after I completed the program, I felt like my calling was hopefully to try and reach people before that,” Officer Moreno said. “So I wanted to stay in policing,



Officer Moreno receiving her master's degree

because before you have to go to prison or jail, one of the first individuals you're going to [come into] contact [with] is a police officer.”

She brought what she learned at U of H back to Sugar Land PD, where mental health was becoming more of a focus. The idea for a Mental Health Team started gaining traction two years ago.

Sugar Land PD started having community meetings with hospitals and mental health facilities, determining best practices, and creating a process that officers could follow. Officer Moreno now serves as a full-time Mental Health Officer and Crisis Intervention Coordinator. In her role, she educates officers about mental health and gives them tools to use when encountering someone on patrol who is facing a mental health crisis. All Sugar Land PD officers have completed mental health training, and all crisis intervention team officers are equipped with a tablet which they can use to contact Texana Center, the county’s LMHA, for assistance.

Officer Moreno’s dedication to this field come from personal experience, as she saw friends and family members struggle with mental health concerns.



Officer Moreno and her team at the Sugar Land Police Department

“When I went through training as a police cadet, and then later again as an officer with experience, one of the things that really stuck with me was [being asked], if you had a loved one go through this, how would you want that loved one treated?” Officer Moreno said.

Officer Moreno first contacted the JCMH when she was beginning her work as a Mental Health Officer at the suggestion of a JCMH Collaborative Councilmember Lt. Scott Soland with the Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office. Officer Moreno has now become a member of the Collaborative Council herself, as well as a member of the Substance Use Disorder Committee.

“I just hope I can convince people and officers [to] give mental health a chance, to have a little patience,” Officer Moreno said. “[In] the state of Texas, we’re always improving,”

Outside of her work with Sugar Land PD, Officer Moreno volunteers with the Fort Bend County Rodeo Association as a committee chairman. Her committee raises money for scholarships, as well as other committees that benefit people with mental health needs or intellectual and developmental disabilities.

She is also an avid horseback rider; Officer Moreno has four horses of her own.

“I have been in love with horses, probably since birth,” Officer Moreno said. “My mother went horseback riding while she was pregnant with me.”



Officer Moreno at the Fort Bend County Fair Rodeo