

# Durant’s new SRO former Marine, K-9 officer

By Katelynn Toft

Durant’s new school resource officer, Joshua Bujalski, has a varied background, including overseas deployments to Iraq and Japan while serving in the Marines, along with an eight-year stint as a K-9 officer for the police department in Buffalo, Iowa.

The 38-year-old veteran from Midland, Michigan, started off as a Marine in 2004 shortly after graduating from high school. He was deployed to Iraq in 2005. There he did see combat. Soon after, in 2007, Officer Bujalski was sent to Japan and came back in 2008.

“It was a good experience; I enjoyed it,” said Officer Bujalski about his time in the military. “I met a lot of people, a lot of friends that I still talk to to this day.”

Eight years and 13 countries later, Officer Bujalski started pursuing a career in law enforcement.

He started with the Davenport Police Department and spent a little under a year there. In 2015, he got hired by the Buffalo Police Department.

“I spent the last six years when I was with the Buffalo Police Department be-

ing a K-9 handler,” said Officer Bujalski.

Recently, he got hired by the city of Durant as the schools’ new SRO.

“I thought, ‘It’s a new opportunity,’” said Officer Bujalski. “It’s something new.”

Officer Bujalski sees the potential of helping students and being their mentor through high school. He hopes to get to the students who might not be on the right track and help them, so they don’t need that help later on when they’re adults out in the real world.

“It’s been good so far,” he said. “The atmosphere, everyone seems to be enjoying the school year so far. Hopefully it continues.”

Principal Joel Diederichs has been getting to know the new resource officer through the first few weeks of school.

“So far so good,” said Mr. Diederichs. “He’s very good at what he does, very thorough.”

Officer Bujalski is bringing his own touch to Durant. He hopes to install a program called SAFE, a student-run program about seatbelt and distracted driving safety. Twice a year, students would take a survey

about driving safely, and every month, safety announcements would be sent out.

It would be sponsored by either Officer Bujalski or a staff member and is completely funded by the state.

“Just trying to help students as best as I can,” said Officer Bujalski.

Mr. Diederichs talks about how well Officer Bujalski is fitting into the school environment.

“I think Officer Josh is doing a great job,” he said. “He is getting to meet our community and getting to meet our school.”

Back home, Officer Bujalski is a father of three with one more on the way. When he worked at the Buffalo police department, he also got to spend some time at the elementary school.

“When I was working for Buffalo, I would go up when I was working during the day and sit with some of the elementary school students at lunch,” said Officer Bujalski, who will serve all grades at Durant. “I’d be their quarterback for their football game during recess.”

Since he also worked as a K-9 handler, Officer Bujalski was part of demonstrations through some school districts and day-



New School Resource Officer Joshua Bujalski watches recent Homecoming activities. cares.

It seems Officer Bujalski has a wonderful opportunity to really reach out and help kids who need it.

“It’s really interesting to know that if I’m here for the next 12 to 13 years, that the kindergarteners that came in this year, I could potentially see them all the way through till they graduate,” said Officer Bujalski. “Hopefully I’m here till I retire.”

# 2016 graduate competes in Strongman competitions

By Garrett Pearlman

A 2016 Durant graduate is currently turning heads in Strongman competitions.

Sierra Semsch quickly joined the competitive weightlifting scene early this year after only training for it for a couple of months.

“I started training Strongman in January of 2023 and competed in my first competition that following March,” said



Photo contributed by Sierra Semsch  
Sierra Semsch competes in a Strongman competition.

Semsch who now lives in Dubuque.

In Strongman, participants try to move heavy objects quickly or for as many repetitions as they can in a limited amount of time.

When Semsch began, she wasn’t fully sure what she wanted to do but eventually figured out what her passion was.

“I became friends with a powerlifter who talked me into switching from Planet Fitness to this powerlifting/Strongman gym, and I started training powerlifting, but soon converted into Strongman not even a month later,” said Semsch.

Semsch currently competes in competitive weightlifting competitions as a hobby.

“For me this is just a hobby as it helps a lot with my anger issues and mental health,” said Semsch. “A lot of people do this as a job though.”

Semsch continues to lift out of pure love for the competition.

“Sometimes you will get money from these competitions if you win in the big shows like World’s Strongest Man, Shaw Classic, [and] Giants Live,” said Semsch.

“As for the ones I do, I just get a t-shirt and a trophy if I get top three.”

In order to prepare for competitions, she trains normally but takes a week of rest before the event.

“With it being my first year doing this, I’m not too serious or competitive with it because I don’t want to upset myself if I don’t do as good as I hope,” said Semsch.

Working full time as a Starbucks store manager, Semsch goes to the gym four times a week.

“I will go to my gym and train and that usually takes about two hours,” she said. “I then take three rest days a week.”

Her boyfriend is her personal gym trainer, and he is a Strongman participant too. She said she needs a personal trainer to help hold her accountable.

“I cannot just go into the gym and do whatever, and it’s not just going in and setting new personal records on everything,” said Semsch.

Her personal records are 165 pounds for the bench press, 315 pounds for the squat, and 335 pounds for the deadlift.

Her main goal is to break her weight class’s national deadlift record of 605 pounds.

Some of her other goals include making new friends, earning a spot on the podium, and always having fun.

She has currently won three out of the last four competitions she has been in and will be in another competition called Push, Pull, Pancakes.

“In this competition, I will have three attempts to perform a max axle press,” said Semsch. “Then I have one minute to get as many car deadlifts as I can.”

She added, “Following that is a pancake eating contest where you have three minutes to eat as many pancakes as you can.”

The Strongman competitions con-

tain various events. Some she has participated in are the log press, axle press, keg loads, keg press, stones, circus dumbbell, sandbag to shoulder, and truck pull.

“There are always between three-five events in each show,” said Semsch. “The fun part is that every show is different, and the events are always changing.”

Throughout these competitions, she has had to travel quite a bit, and as of writing this article, she is in China supporting her boyfriend who is currently competing in an event in China.

“Since I’ve started competing, I have traveled to Nebraska, Minnesota twice, and then I’ve also done two comps here in Dubuque,” said Semsch.

While preparing to compete in weightlifting competitions, Semsch needs to be on a diet and decide what weight class to try to hit.

Her diet consists of hitting 220 grams of protein to maintain her current weight.

“Once I decide if I want to stay in super heavy weight or cut down to heavy weight, my diet will change up, and I will consume less calories while trying to maintain 220 grams in protein,” said Semsch.

Even though she has a passion for competitively lifting now, she didn’t exactly have that competitive spirit for sports in high school.

“I was not athletic at all,” Semsch. “I played volleyball all four years of high school but wasn’t that involved with it.”

# Last year’s freshmen give MVP program mixed reviews

By Royce Richman

For the second year in a row, 16 upperclassmen will meet with freshman seminars every other Friday in a program called Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP).

The mentors give presentations on a variety of topics, including bullying, being kind, and generally how to be a good student.

After the large group discussion, students split into groups and talk about what they have learned.

The students who are running the MVP program this year are seniors Isabelle DeLong, Charles Huesmann, Katelyn Hansell, Kennedy Schumacher, Kiera Hahn, and Avery Paper; juniors Tayton Felske, Lauren Callison, Connor Schwarz, Garrett Pearlman, Grace Paustian, Mariah

Alpen, Adison Daufeldt, and Mia Berry; and sophomore Colby Gast.

Schwarz said that he was asked to join the program by high school counselor Mrs. Kristy Badtram, and he thought it was a good opportunity to teach the freshmen what to do in tough situations.

The program received mixed reviews from last year’s freshmen, and Schwarz said he is hoping to get the freshmen more involved this year by doing games and other activities.

Bailey Kraklio, who is a sophomore this year, said that the mentors did a great job presenting the material last year.

“I think it was good for the most part,” said Kraklio. “They always explained it from a personal perspective.”

However, she stated that some of

last year’s freshmen didn’t care about the program and continue to be mean to others. Kraklio also said that she might want to be a mentor later on.

Sophomore Ellasyn Clark thought that the program was a great idea, but the freshmen didn’t go along with it.

She said, “They shrugged it off, and I think part of the reason was because it was right before lunch.”

Clark explained that the mentors were very organized and efficient when presenting.

She said that she would want to become a mentor later on if she got the chance.

Sophomore Clay Dierickx said he didn’t think the program had the effect on the freshmen that the mentors were hoping for.

He said that he has “not seen a change in bullying” and that “most kids just shrugged most of it off.”

Dierickx also said that students wouldn’t participate and answer questions when they were asked.

Sophomore Gavin Marth said that he noticed that everyone seemed to be involved in the small groups but were timid when asked to present their thoughts to the class.

Marth stated that he would not want to be an MVP representative himself but thinks that the program should continue to make an impact.

Sophomore Charlie Anderson said the program was kind of pointless because “it was all stuff we already knew about.” He said that most students didn’t pay attention.