



Thembi Duncan, Director of Arts Engagement and Education

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SHEA'S PERFORMING ARTS AND BUFFALO POLICE DEPARTMENT ATTRACTS NATIONAL ATTENTION FOR BODY LANGUAGE TRAINING

From Stages to the Streets: Collaboration Introduces Cadets to a New Approach for Body Language

Buffalo, NY, April 6, 2021 – Shea's Performing Arts Center and the Buffalo Police Department are pleased to announce their collaboration to bring body workshops for all new police recruit classes. This program has garnered national attention for its innovation and premiere community engagement and has been featured in *The New York State Chief's Chronicle* March 2021 issue.

The body language workshop, led by Thembi Duncan, Director of Arts Engagement and Education at Shea's Performing Arts Center, was added to the curriculum for new cadets in May of 2019. Duncan leads this module with an actor's approach. Officers were led through theatre exercises and taught lessons on character, emotion, and how being mindful of body language can enhance existing skills for de-escalation techniques.

"I am always looking for innovative ways to strengthen the relationship between the BPD and the community. This unique training program provides our officers with a variety of non-verbal tools to build mutual trust and increase positive engagement with our citizens," said Commissioner Byron C. Lockwood. "I am proud of the broad range of community policing initiatives that are currently thriving in our department, and I look forward to continuing to develop and expand our body language training with Shea's in the coming years."

In the program, Duncan builds off a variety of real-life scenarios that the police will face on the job. She instructs officers on methods and tactics in how the actor (officer) will approach the 'scene' and engage the audience. From there, she walks officers through basic acting principles, objectives, obstacles, and resolution.

"The successful use of theatre-based principles to increase capacity in law enforcement is an exciting paradigm shift in community policing. I am proud of this collaboration with the Buffalo Police Department, and I hope that, together, we can be an exemplar of innovative cultural and civic partnerships," said Duncan.

The program will continue to be a part of every BPD cadet class going forward and will evolve with input from both Shea's and the Buffalo BPD. Duncan plans to explore similar programs with other law enforcement agencies in the WNY region, taking a collaborative approach to program design that will include ride-alongs, officer interviews, and community conversations.

"The impact of this program proves that the arts can be an essential tool of building and maintaining meaningful community connections," stated Michael G. Murphy, President of Shea's Performing Arts Center. "My long-term vision for Shea's includes the development of many unique partnerships with a variety of populations throughout WNY. The arts are for everyone, and I look forward to cultivating this and other significant initiatives across the region."

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ABOUT THE BUFFALO POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Buffalo Police Department was established in 1871. Their mission is to serve and protect residents and visitors; uphold the law with integrity, respect, and professionalism while preserving the rights and dignity of all; and maintaining peace by providing for the safety and security of the community.

ABOUT SHEA'S PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

The Shea's Buffalo Theatre was originally built as a "picture palace" by Michael Shea in 1925. Today, the Shea's Performing Arts Center is comprised of three modern theatres in the heart of the Buffalo Theatre District, bringing the best of live performance through touring productions and local collaborations to Western New York. The Shea's Buffalo Theatre is the historic crown jewel of the Performing Arts Center and is one of the top touring theatres in the country with over 3,000 seats. It was designated a National Historic Site in 1975. Shea's 710 Theatre is the latest space to be added to the campus. Once home to Studio Arena, this 625-seat thrust theatre offers Broadway productions and plays produced by local and international theatre companies. Shea's Smith Theatre is a 200-seat black box theatre and plays host to Off-Broadway productions, comedy and collaborative productions with local theatre companies. Shea's Performing Arts Center is committed to keeping true to the history of Shea's Buffalo Theatre and to the future of the Western New York region, bringing the best of Broadway theatre and beyond to Buffalo, NY.

For more information on Shea's Performing Arts Center, upcoming shows, and other programs, visit www.sheas.org and follow Shea's on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).