

▶ Calling all women in the emergency services! Aim high, with success in your sights! Take control over your performance, or someone else will! Here is how.

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# BUILDING WARRIOR WOMEN CONFERENCE

▲ Delivering strikes with power.

Women in law enforcement, step up to the plate.

▶ By Lou Ann Hamblin and Kathleen Vonk

**A**s women in law enforcement, we wouldn't want to leave our lives in the hands of a heinous offender. We wouldn't want to be confronted with a suspect with a gun if we know our pistol skills are lacking. We wouldn't want to hear the words, "I ain't goin' to jail without a fight!" when we believe that our subject control skills or techniques are sub-par. Rather, we would prefer to take our futures into our own hands—even knowing this would take time, money, effort, sweat, tears and in some cases, a little bit of blood.

By getting the down-and-dirty, hands-on, physical performance skills that we need to survive on the street, we are taking control of our lives. Yes, the seminar-based, classroom courses still have value, however it's time we grew out of the comfortable chairs, donned our armor, and put our money where our mouths are.

If you are a female officer, you already know that whenever you go to one of the physical skills participation classes, you are the minority – if not the only one. Does a class even exist – an all-female class taught by an all-female instructor cadre, a class that allows us to achieve better results in a socially comfortable setting, and creates a positive training experience to ultimately reinforce further training in all atmospheres? Yes.

The "Building Warrior Women" training event was designed by, and is being delivered by female law enforcement instructor-trainers, specifically for women in law enforcement. The inaugural four-day event was hosted by the Dayton, Ohio Police Department in October 2011. Women from various positions in law enforcement came from all over the United States and from all walks of law enforcement to attend the first Building Warrior Women training event. The BWW all-female instructional staff brings many specialties in police physical skills instructional areas to include pistol, shotgun, rifle, physical fitness, SWAT, subject control, self-help and buddy aid, and cycling.



▲ Hand, eye, foot coordination skill building.



▲ Participants volunteered to be hooked up to Polar Training Computers.



▲ LouKa Tactical owner/instructor Lou Ann Hamblin demos control tactics for the smaller statured officer.

## BWW Training Event

Highly significant, non-physical skills such as leadership, team building, role conflict, and mentoring were brought by BWW creator Lou Ann Hamblin and Captain Penny Phelps of the Monroe County SO, Fla. (also former deputy chief and SWAT commander of an agency in Michigan). Throughout the day, there was an intense emphasis on understanding the importance of leadership at every level, regardless of rank or position.

At the inaugural event, the “Thin Pink Line” was born via group exercise, and the characteristic Building Warrior Women paracord bracelet was chosen by the class. It is proudly worn by many women in law enforcement today. One participant noted that she made new friends at work when women were hired, however she never considered this to be “mentoring.” She took on a new perspective, enlightened by the fact that she really was a mentor for many other women in law enforcement, even if only for her agency.

## Buddy Care and Officer Rescue

Officer Beverly Price of the Burnsville, Minn. PD, and Officer/Paramedic Vern

Giese of the Woodbury, Minn. PD, guided the group through the increasingly popular topics of self-help, buddy care and rescue. The course included real-world case studies and modern day equipment, technology, application, and hands-on practical applications of timely urban battlefield care and rescue. Some specific topics included blood management and shock treatment, using a common emergency bandage / tourniquet with hands-on practice and there were many visual aids on hand.

Officers learned the “dead weight phenomenon” as well as potential problems with the rescue drag and how to maximize strengths while working together to quickly move a dummy (simulating an officer in need of rescue). The course concluded with a timed competition, which required team collaboration to quickly provide basic immediate care then “extract” or “load-and-go” with a downed officer while maintaining cover from lethal threats. By the conclusion of the course, everyone understood the “how” and “when” to perform a tactical rescue if necessary.

## Fitness and Nutrition

Physiological differences between men and women, and why different training styles may be helpful, was covered in the classroom by Kathleen Vonk. Healthy foods that facilitate peak performance on the street, meal timing, caloric balance, and weight management were discussed, along with tactical vision, and the benefits of using Polar training computers.

Volunteers donned the monitors before the class went outdoors to participate in practical exercises that help develop strength, power, speed, agility and quickness. The class incorporated recurring themes of intense competition, which elicited maximal effort but also provided maximum fun.

## Tactical Shotgun

Although this was also a basic shotgun course covering nomenclature, load, slings, customizing a shotgun for comfort / shooting improvement / deployment efficiency, and shooting stance, Officers Bev Price and Vern Giese still managed to challenge participants with pointed questions about agency-specific carry status. After revealing their own “car carry” status, which varied from agency to agency, the women in the class were encouraged to go beyond the basics to take ownership of their knowledge base with respect to their own police equipment and weapon systems.

Shooting performance improvement was observed on the range, and many comments were made about the comfortable stance that was taught. Since the most common complaint with female shooters was the discomfort caused by the recoil, the instructors instilled an understanding of recoil physics and the counteracting mass behind the stock to manage the recoil with minimal effort. Much of this complaint was mitigated through stance modification by the end of the session.

Many participants commented that they learned a comfortable shooting stance that minimized recoil discomfort,



▲ Team buddy rescue with rear guard.



▲ Team skills and shooting competition.

and they no longer felt intimidated by shotgun qualification and more importantly, combat. With respect to the transition drills, some relayed that they had never been taught what to do, or how to do it, if a shotgun went down with a malfunction or a failure to fire. These drills were described as “eye opening” and “potentially life-saving.”

### Defensive and Offensive Tactics

Led by Lou Ann Hamblin and Deputy Dawn “Red” Reisinger of the Hillsborough County Fla., SO, officers were encouraged to practice rapid cognition and situational awareness as physical techniques specific to smaller statured officers were explored and practiced. “Forcing fumbles” in order to regain and / or take control of the situation were encouraged in certain situations.

Control and deployment of all weapons systems were practiced at progressive speeds until intensities closely resembling real-life close quarter battles were achieved. The importance of being quick, agile and coordinated was covered, and training modalities to achieve these goals were suggested.

### Developmental Marksmanship

In the classroom, Lou Ann Hamblin covered skill-building drills to improve and hone pinpoint accuracy and trigger management. The class was then taken onto the range for some intensive precision pistol skills to include deliberate practice, with emphasis on concentration and focus (at a level that has not been previously required). Sgt. Holly Botts of the Grand Rapids, Mich. PD, assisted not only with skill drills but also the final live-fire team building exercise to conclude the session.

Not only performance improvement was seen, but also the development of self-confidence with respect to being a sniper with a pistol. One of the many engrained philosophies and goals of LouKa Tactical trainers is the achievement of the positive cycle of improved performance through instilling confidence, and back again to reinforcing self-confidence as the cycle continues.

### Survival Pistol

Officers Vern Giese, Bev Price, and Deputy Dawn Reisinger taught this physically and mentally challenging survival pistol course. Timed stressors via Pac



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▲ LouKa Tactical instructor Beverly Price gives personalized instruction in the combat pistol class.

Timers and steel targets (hits only) intentionally incorporated into the course to elicit rejection of the lax “range” mentality that often accompanies police firearms training, and to instill a self-demand of shooting accuracy through audible reinforcement of hits on the steel plates.

Combining speed and accuracy were emphasized whether starting in or out of the holster, fixing a malfunction, shooting / reloading one-handed, shooting multiple targets, or shooting on the move. A competition course completed the day, which combined physical exertion and coordination skills with shooting speed and proficiency both live fire and through the use of Beamhit training systems.

## Networking

Corporate-sponsored networking opportunities made nightly social gatherings possible. One such event was a Black-Hawk! sponsored dinner during which a sneak preview of their new women’s tactical wear was revealed, and all those who were present received one of their limited-edition female performance shirts. Other sponsors of the Inaugural Building Warrior Women training event included ESS Eye Pro, Team One Network, Polar Electro, Inc., and Redman Training and Protective Gear. Many thanks to the Dayton Police for hosting this inaugural event!

By the end of the conference, everyone (including instructors) were physically and mentally fatigued – although everyone had the opportunity to experience

“functional training at its finest” and were invited to exert themselves as hard as they wanted to – or not.

All gave their all, voluntarily. Through confidence, everything was brought to the table – and eventually everything was left on the court – to promote success with not only physical skills specific to women in law enforcement, but also a better understanding of professional and social challenges faced by women in the field today.

The Building Warrior Women training events in 2012 will be held in Woodbury, Minn. (June 4-7); Dayton, Ohio (Aug. 27-30); and Springfield, Mo. (Oct. 1-4). At LouKa Tactical Training, we build warrior women.

Lou Ann Hamblin is co-owner of LouKa Tactical Training. She has been a police officer in the state of Michigan since 1990. She has a master’s degree from the University of Michigan in Human Performance Technology and Instructional Design, and she now specializes in training female officers in physical skills. She can be reached at [louann@loukactical.com](mailto:louann@loukactical.com).

Kathleen Vonk is co-owner of LouKa Tactical Training. She has been a police officer in the state of Michigan since 1988. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Exercise Science from Michigan State University and is a subject matter expert and fitness instructor-trainer for the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and has been the primary fitness instructor for the police academy since 2001. She can be reached at [kathy@loukactical.com](mailto:kathy@loukactical.com).

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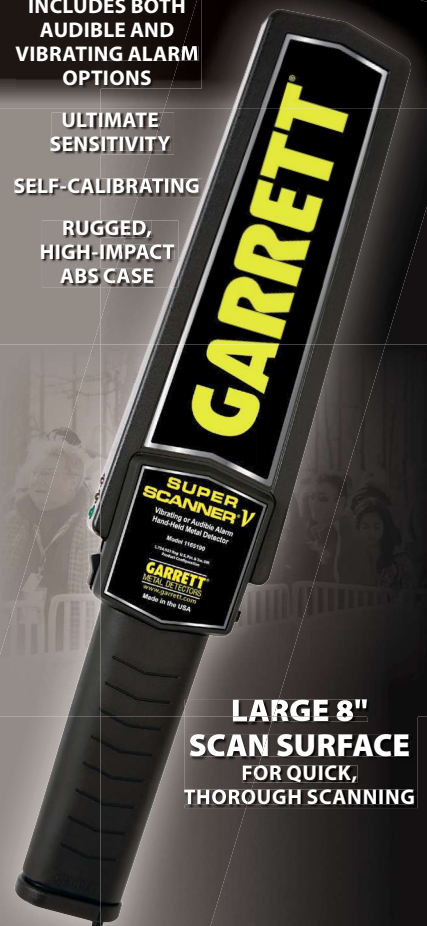
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