



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

## Kentucky State Police Trooper Cassandra Mullins

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**D**rive, dedication and the desire to be the best are the mantra that surrounds Kentucky State Police Trooper Cassandra Mullins. At only 31, Mullins has experienced and accomplished more than many do in their career. An eastern-Kentucky native, Mullins was the first in her family to attend college. She graduated from Eastern Kentucky University and spent four years as a journalist for the Herald-Leader, where she fell in love with the idea of a policing career. After graduating from the KSP academy in 2009, she was assigned to the Pikeville Post and gained experience quickly. It was there Mullins was involved in a deadly-force encounter while responding to a crisis, where she saved the life of a hostage. In May, Mullins received the KSP Citation for Bravery for her actions during that call.

After leaving Pikeville, Mullins worked for the Electronic Crime Branch, before joining the KSP academy staff. In the midst of her busy career, Mullins also joined the Kentucky National Guard and completed Officer Candidate School in October.

**I never set out to be a police officer.** I grew up in eastern Kentucky, and there were no female police officers. My basketball coach in grade school was a trooper and I looked up to him. He was a hero in my life, but it never occurred to me that's what I wanted to be.

**I love writing and telling people stories.** In high school and college I wrote for the school newspaper. It was there I started seeing female police officers. I declared journalism as my major because I have a natural curiosity about everything.

**The KSP Academy is one of the most difficult things I've ever done.** There were times when I would drive to the exit and I would get sick — physically nauseous — taking that exit because there were so many emotions associated with the training building. Now I work in it.

**I love casework; I love investigations** and put a lot of time into solving cases. I wanted to be a detective. I hadn't set out to be so specific to cases only involving children. But the more I learned about internet crimes against children, the more I thought, 'What a way to really make a difference.'

**“I wasn't raised to shoot someone on their front porch — that's not the norm. I immediately felt the need to help this person.”**

**I can't think of a more important case than one involving a child.** I knew the work would be difficult, and it was. I went into a world that is crueler and darker than most people can imagine. So there were definitely rough, emotional days. But at the same time, it was so rewarding knowing I was making a difference. So with each arrest, I felt like I was taking a truly bad person off the street.

**Working at the Electronic Crime Branch — there are things you can't erase from your mind** once you see them. Sometimes you just have to get up and walk away. There were times I'd get up with tears running down my face and I had to go — just had to drive away.

**It is funny how in deadly-force situations things slow down** and you can hear and see things you normally wouldn't. His face changed and he dropped his shoulders and he reached his finger for the trigger. I thought, 'You're going to get shot.' In training they tell us if you get shot, don't lie down and die. It is ingrained in us to stay on our feet and keep moving.

**I wasn't raised to shoot someone on their front porch** — that's not the norm. I immediately felt the need to help this person. But I still knew he could be a threat. I yelled, 'State police put the gun down. The female said, 'He doesn't have the gun — it's down.' I picked up the radio and said I need EMS. He was making statements like, 'I'm dying,' and I said, 'You're going to be fine.' I lifted his shirt and saw that the bullet went in right below his heart. And then I thought, 'He's going to die.' We stopped the bleeding, EMS got there pretty quickly and he survived. We also got the female hostage the help she needed.

**I'm at the training academy now and those experiences help me.** They give me insight to pass along, when teaching cadets. I moved without thinking; I did what I was trained to do. That's good because you mess up when you start thinking about things. I survived by the grace of God and the training I got at the KSP academy.

**I would say that the most important person in my life was my mother.** She was a housewife.

She didn't work outside the home, but she put everything she had into me and my sister.

**She is where I got my drive,** my dedication and my sense of commitment because she wanted me to be the best me I could be. That stuck with me. She really showed me the importance of selfless service.

**I learned a lot from her about the little things** — you work for other people, and that's where true happiness is, in trying to make the world a better place. Even though she wasn't a police officer, she was courageous and she was all the things I would hope to be some day.

**We are less than 20 females in the agency right now.** When I put on this uniform as a female, I know there are other females watching me. I hope to inspire younger females to join KSP. I know, too, that if one female does something stupid and ends up in the media or suspended — it makes all of us look bad because there are so few of us. That's always on my mind.

**The state police is different from everyone else** — some say in a positive way and some in a negative way. It's a different world. But the reason it's that way is because when cadets leave here, in many cases, they will work two to three counties by themselves. When something goes wrong, they have to take care of it. In cities, the training centers around surviving the fight and holding on until a fleet of people are around you. For us, there's no surviving it for a fleet of people to come. It can take 30 to 40 minutes depending on where you are. The people that leave our academy must have the confidence that no matter what comes their way, they can take care of it alone. And that's a different mindset. I think sometimes that can come across as cockiness because we want them to be confident. We want them to be the best, we tell them they're the best and train them to be the best because they have to be — they have to be.

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