

Guest Speaker Domestic Violence Awareness Panel & Q&A

Wednesday, October 28th, 2026 | 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. | USF Turk Theater

Featuring Sgt. Jessica Bernard & Ms. Nichole Pasteris, MSW



About this Speaker:

Sergeant Jessica Bernard brings 28 years of law enforcement experience to her role as a Deputy Sheriff Sergeant with the Cook County Sheriff's Department. After joining the department in 1998 as a Deputy Sheriff, handling entry screening, detainee security, and general operations, she advanced into leadership. She currently oversees service of process (warrants, subpoenas, and Orders of Protection), implements mandates like Karina's Law, and manages emergency responses. Dedicated to operational excellence, she conducts on-the-job training, evaluates personnel, and maintains strict standards. Committed to continuous growth, Sgt. Bernard also holds a leadership certificate from Cornell University and pursues ongoing academic studies at Purdue University.

Career Milestones:

- **Specialized Training & Certifications:** Earned advanced federal and state certifications, including Crisis Intervention, Weapons of Mass Destruction response, active shooter instruction, and NATO conference field force deployment.
- **Academic & Executive Development:** Earned a Women in Leadership certificate from Cornell University and pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice at Purdue University.

About this Speaker:

Ms. Nichole Pasteris, MSW, serves as the Executive Director of the Victim Witness Services Unit at the Will County's State's Attorney Office, leading a team that guides victims and families through the judicial process. She oversees critical safety planning, counseling referrals, financial resource coordination, and comprehensive case notifications. To ensure victims never navigate the system alone, her team collaborates with prosecutors, explains court proceedings, and offers emotional and practical support. Previously, Ms. Pasteris built a community care foundation counseling at-risk youth. Holding a Bachelor of Social Work from Lewis University and a Master of Social Work from Aurora University, she blends clinical empathy with administrative leadership for advocacy.

Career Milestones:

- **Professional & Community Recognition:** Honored with the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists Award in 2015 and the Will County Bar Association Community Service Award in 2023 for her impactful community contributions.
- **Early Work with At-Risk Youth:** Began her professional journey as a counselor supporting at-risk youth at Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center in Joliet.

For Additional Information:

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