

BEHIND THE BADGE

OFFICER KRISTIN HUGHES NAVIGATES TRAUMA AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN A HIGH-CRIME AREA

BY PATRICK KING

In the heart of Syracuse, Police Officer Kristin Hughes stands as a beacon of resilience amid the city's rising crime rate. With a 13-year military career and a dedication to public service, Hughes navigates the complex landscape where community relations are paramount in facing challenges like "defund the police" protests and the perpetuation of stereotypes. Through dedication to duty, stories of perseverance, and coping mechanisms, she sheds light on the often-overlooked realities of police work.

Despite calling for police aid, a resident angrily shouts after Hughes knocks and identifies herself as police.





“I try to recognize when stress may be bothering me,”

Hughes revealed. “For whatever reason, figuring out why it bothered me because for some cases, honestly, it’s like, ‘Why didn’t it bother me?’”

Her candid reflection on her daily challenges paints a poignant picture of the complexities of her job. Recounting moments of trauma and exposure to the grim realities of human existence, Hughes acknowledges the importance of processing these experiences.

“I’ve stared into detached body parts, like an eyeball,” she shared somberly. “I’ll never forget, during that scene that was just ... on the ground.

And I just stared into it for what felt like an eternity.”

It’s not just about enduring these traumatic encounters; it’s about understanding their impact and finding healthy ways to cope. Hughes spoke passionately about the role of yoga and exercise in her life, emphasizing their significance in maintaining physical and mental well-being.

she explained. “It’s a way to practice mindfulness and relaxation without having to fully close my eyes.”

Yoga has grown into a passion for Hughes this year. She uses it to help with stress management and coping with the demands of her job. She sees yoga as beneficial both personally and professionally and recommends it to peers as a coping medium.





Due to the timing of Hughes' schedule, her best fit for gym sessions is early in the morning. She has a whole open gym to herself during those times, which makes the gym a sanctuary for her.

“Yoga helps me with techniques from meditation,”

Her commitment to self-care extends beyond personal benefits, as Hughes sees it as a crucial aspect of her professional responsibilities. Through peer support and advocacy, she hopes to empower her fellow officers to prioritize their mental health and well-being.

In a profession often plagued by stigma and

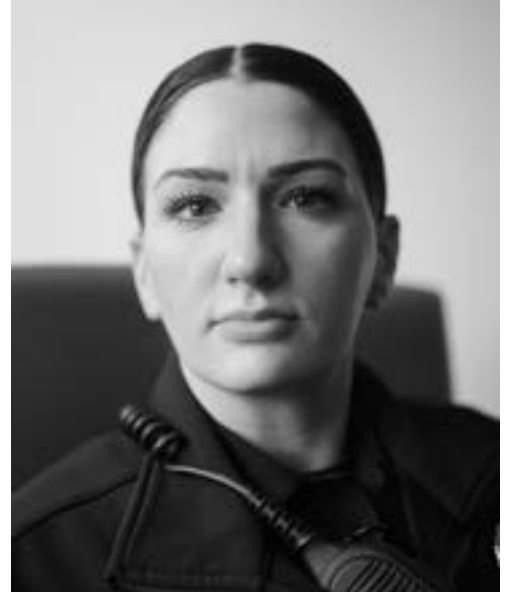
stereotypes, Hughes' openness and vulnerability are a powerful reminder of the humanity behind the badge. Her willingness to share her struggles and triumphs amplifies the voices of law enforcement personnel and contributes to a more extensive dialogue about public perception and support for those who serve and protect.



Katy Perry's "Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)" plays on the radio while Hughes squeezes in lunch during patrol.



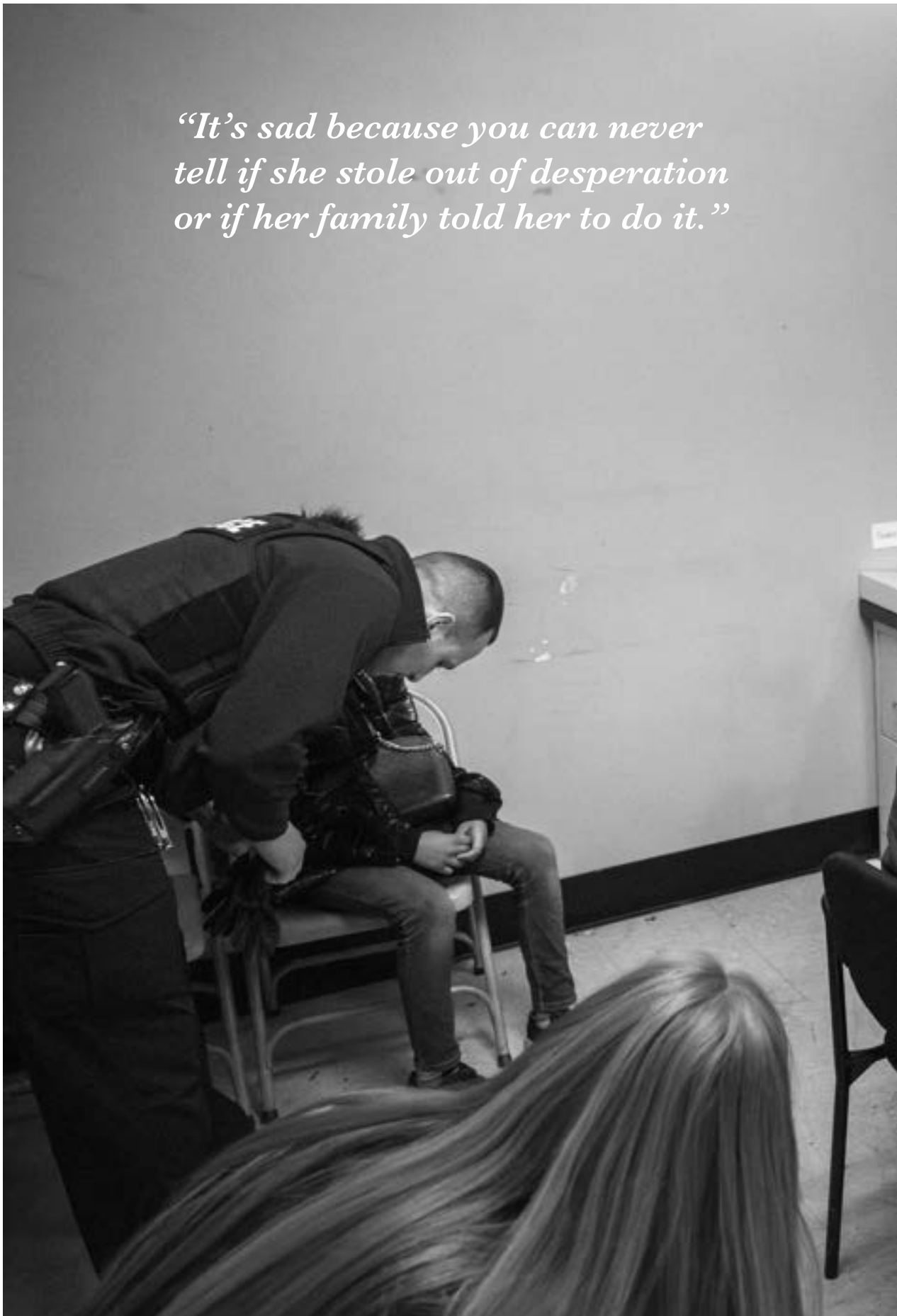
In the early morning of her 10-hour shift, Hughes guards a man being held on suspicion of car theft at St. Joseph's Health hospital. He was found bruised, swollen and in a coma for unknown reasons.



Deputy Jonathan Hagenmayer and Hughes spend a quick moment together during their shift.

“It’s sad because you can never tell if she stole out of desperation or if her family told her to do it.”

Hughes speaks to a grocery store security manager after a 9-year-old girl was caught stealing food. The girl told the police that she stole the food because her family could not afford it.







A mother learns that her 9-year-old daughter has been caught stealing food from a local grocery store. Hughes and her fellow officers took the girl home.

