

In 1829, Sir Robert Peel, often referred to as the father of modern policing, established nine principles that continue to guide law enforcement today. While these principles are nearly 200 years old, their message remains as relevant as ever.

One of those principles' states that the ability of the police to perform their duties depends upon public approval, public respect, and the relationships they build within their communities. Peel also reminded us that "the police are the public, and the public are the police."

At its core, policing is about people. It is about service, trust, compassion, and the willingness to help others, especially when they need it most.

Today, I have the privilege of recognizing someone who embodies those principles every single day: Officer Jeff Langford.

Officer Langford has a genuine passion for helping people. He approaches every interaction with professionalism, patience, and an unwavering commitment to service. What makes him special is that he never looks at a problem and asks, "Is this my responsibility?" Instead, he asks, "How can I help?"

One example perfectly illustrates this mindset.

A doctor on campus accidentally dropped her car keys into a storm drain. Understandably frustrated and embarrassed, she was running out of options. She had already contacted the City of Aurora and the Fire Department, but neither was able to assist her. The situation could have ended there.

Instead, Officer Langford decided to find a solution.

Thinking outside the box, he obtained the tools necessary to remove the heavy storm drain cover. Then, without hesitation, he lowered himself nearly ten feet into a dark, dirty, confined drainage area to retrieve the keys. It was certainly not a glamorous task, but Officer Langford wasn't focused on that. He was focused on helping someone in need.

That simple act may seem small to some, but to that doctor, it meant everything. It allowed her to secure her vehicle, get to work, and continue caring for others.

More recently, Officer Langford assisted an elderly gentleman who had spent more than three and a half hours searching campus for his vehicle. The gentleman was scheduled to undergo surgery the following day and was understandably overwhelmed, believing his car had been stolen.

Rather than treating the situation as routine, Officer Langford approached it with patience, empathy, and calm professionalism. He carefully gathered information, worked through the details, and ultimately determined where the vehicle had been parked. More importantly, he provided reassurance during what had become an extremely stressful experience.

The gentleman was so impressed by Officer Langford's professionalism and problem-solving skills that he later remarked, "That's one you need to keep around. He's special."

And I think that statement says a lot.

While these individual stories are remarkable, they are only part of what makes Officer Langford stand out.

He consistently seeks opportunities to strengthen relationships between the police department and the community. He volunteers at campus and community events, helping represent our department in a positive and approachable way. He has worked diligently to help develop a bike patrol program, increasing officer visibility and encouraging meaningful interactions with those we serve.

Within our department, Officer Langford is equally committed to helping others succeed. He provides weekly training, encourages professional growth, and motivates fellow officers to engage in community-focused initiatives. He willingly shares his knowledge and experience because he genuinely wants the entire team to be better.

He has also repeatedly stepped up when the department has needed him most. Whether working overtime during staffing shortages, arriving at 4:00 in the morning to ensure another officer isn't left working alone, or taking on additional responsibilities while supervisors were away, Officer Langford consistently puts the needs of the team ahead of himself.

What stands out most, however, is not any single accomplishment. It is his character.

Officer Langford is a problem solver. He is a mentor. He is a teammate. Most importantly, he is a public servant in the truest sense of the word.

Sir Robert Peel's principles remind us that successful policing depends on trust, respect, and strong relationships with the community. Officer Jeff Langford brings those principles to life every day through his actions, his dedication, and his commitment to helping others.

Jeff, thank you for everything you do for this department, this campus, and our community. Your willingness to go above and beyond does not go unnoticed, and it is an honor to recognize you today.

Congratulations, and well deserved.