

?Training is something that every person who is wanting to be the best, rather it be an Olympic athlete or a Little Leaguer or even a doctor or police officer, concentrates on at any given opportunity. Training makes one the best they can be.

Training is what two Clark County Corrections Officers contribute to a situation that presented itself in the Probation Office.

The way the two officers, Mike Fleming and Eric Balingit, responded earned them the prestigious Corrections Officer of the Year honor in the State of Indiana.

The co-recipients traveled to Indianapolis to the Marriott Hotel Ballroom for the Sheriff's Association Dinner and Awards Ceremony. The state-wide award is given by the Sheriff's Association.

Fleming and Balingit were nominated for the award by the Clark County Sheriff's Department.

"They were nominated for going above and beyond the call of action," Clark County Sheriff Danny Rodden stated.

Fleming and Balingit were both overwhelmed about receiving the Corrections Officer of the Year award.

"It means a lot to receive it. I'm overwhelmed. It's really nice and it gives me a great feeling inside," Fleming stated.

Fleming continued as he explained the actual dinner and awards ceremony, "The dinner was really nice. The Sheriff's Association had it all nice. There were a lot of important people there, a lot of sheriffs and even some mayors. The dinner was really nice."

Balingit agreed with Officer Fleming.

"It was like Officer Fleming said, I was overwhelmed, overjoyed and happy. I am glad it turned out like it did and nobody got hurt and nothing went wrong," Balingit added.

The situation that led to the award was explained by Fleming.

"When we arrived at the Probation Office the weapon was not drawn. She waited until we walked into the place. She was just sitting there with her purse in her lap. It seemed to be natural. I guess she was told she was going to be arrested and was going to jail," Fleming explained. "She sprang up from the chair and said she wasn't going anywhere. We took control at gun point immediately."

The situation then went to the woman threatening to take her own life.

"She then stuck the gun into her mouth. I gave loud verbal orders then when I realized she was serious about committing suicide, I lowered my voice and tried to talk in a soft manner. I am not a negotiator. But when the gun jammed and I realized it was jammed I took control of the situation and disarmed her," Fleming continued.

Fleming was just glad the situation turned out the way it did.

"I did not want her to commit suicide. I am glad it all turned out," Fleming stated.

The two officers are actually Transport Officers and do not expect to have problems with the inmates they deal with during transport.

"We are Transport Officers. We take inmates back and forth to court or to a doctor's appointment or pick-up in other states," Balingit stated.

He continued about the earlier situation at the Probation Office, "That situation is never a

plan for it. We have a lot of training but to be honest you don't expect to be in that situation. It's not everyday when someone pulls a gun in my line of work."

The training received by the two and the other Corrections Officers in Clark County is more intense that what the state of Indiana actually requires.

"Our Corrections Officer training is three to four to five times greater than what the state requires," Sheriff Rodden stated. "Captain Terry Hubler is our Training Officer and he does a great job."

Fleming added about the training, "The training helped. It puts everyone through extensive training. We are constantly certified in weapons over and over. We are going through the training prepared to do this. We are taken through scenarios, all different, to give us an idea how to respond. The training gives you a type of idea to take charge."

Fleming has been a Corrections Officer for eight years while Balingit has been with the department for 2 years.

Rodden concluded, "We all are very proud of them at the Sheriff's Office."

Sam Beard was the last Clark County Correction Officer to receive the Corrections Officer of the Year award. He brought it back to Clark County in 1994.