

# Policemom

## Officer transfers from desk to diaper duty



Feeding her infant son is a far cry from Cathy Cracchiolo's duties as a police officer.

By Louise Okrutsky  
staff writer

By the time Michael Anthony Cracchiolo is old enough to play policeman, he'll have had plenty of experience observing the real thing.

His parents, Cathy and Anthony Cracchiolo, are police officers. His mother had the distinction of being the Livonia's first pregnant police officer.

When she first discovered she was pregnant, Cracchiolo, 27, was transferred from street duty to the desk in department headquarters on Farmington Road. When she was six months pregnant, she was transferred to the traffic bureau where the working hours are a steady 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

"The city was very generous, courteous and helpful. It went out of its way for me," said the seven-year veteran of the police department.

By the time she was six months pregnant, Cracchiolo and the city bumped into a problem that police departments are discovering with more frequency — the need for a dignified maternity uniform.

AT FIRST, the department tried to keep her in uniform by issuing Cracchiolo a pair of men's pants with elastic in the back and a women's blouse three sizes larger than usual for her. "I finally told them, 'I look like a clown,'" she said.

Although wearing civilian maternity clothes gave Cracchiolo an unfamiliar sense of being stylish while working, it also created a problem.

"People did not believe I was a police officer. They couldn't comprehend I was pregnant and a police officer," she said.

After trying to explain her situation to people who listened and then asked

again to talk to an officer, she fell into the habit of automatically referring them to a male co-worker.

"Why should I have to explain to everyone?" said Cracchiolo, a graduate of Garden City East High School.

Her blue-eyed boy weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces and was 22 inches long when he was born Oct. 22 in Providence Hospital, Southfield.

HER HUSBAND delivered the baby and a friend coached her through natural childbirth techniques.

Cracchiolo, who worked until two weeks before her Oct. 8 due date, has a month remaining of her paid maternity leave. She's hoping the city's civil service commission grants her two

months of unpaid business leave. Her husband, who's studying toward a bachelor's degree in criminal justice at Madonna College, took time off from work to be with her and their son.

While she wants to spend time with her baby, the transition from working police officer to stay-at-home mother wasn't easy.

"It was rather strange. I've worked for most of my life. I've never had so much time off," she said.

In the weeks immediately before the baby was born, she felt too large to be comfortable driving a car and didn't get out as much. She was faced with having lots of time but not much she could do and enjoy.

When the baby arrived, her tasks increased, and her personal time decreased.

"I'm so used to a schedule. With a baby, things don't go that way," she said.

Cracchiolo, who has an associate's degree in law enforcement from Schoolcraft College, said women officers need to take their pregnancy into account on the job.

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