



Women's Leadership Institute

Leadership Panelists

Sandy Karsten

Director, Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS)

On August 27, 2018, Governor Mike Parson appointed Sandy Karsten as the 15th Director for the Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS). Prior to her appointment as the director, Karsten served as the superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Karsten was the first woman in the history of the Missouri State Highway Patrol to serve as the colonel and is the first woman to serve as the director of the Department of Public Safety.

DPS is a department with more than 15,000 team members. As the leader of DPS, Director Karsten is responsible for coordinating the services that enhance the safety and security of millions of residents and visitors across Missouri. Karsten has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to public service and is firmly dedicated to earning the public's trust through enhanced accountability and transparency. Director Karsten has been employed in DPS since 1985 and has earned the distinction of obtaining every rank from trooper to colonel and now director.

Throughout her career, Director Karsten has been a leader within the department and the community, actively participating in programs such as Girls State, the American Legion Cadet Patrol Academy, Central Missouri Honor Flight, The Constitution Project, Operation Toys, Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run, Blair Oaks Wrestling, and other community outreach projects throughout Missouri.

Director Karsten holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Truman State University, Kirksville, MO and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Missouri. Karsten is also a graduate of the Northwestern University Traffic Institute's School of Police Staff and Command. Karsten and her husband, Tim, have two grown sons.

Jennifer Morrison

Chief, Burlington, VT, Police Department (Retired)

Jennifer Morrison currently serves as the Executive Director of Policy Development for the Vermont Department of Public Safety. She has over 30 years' experience in law enforcement. Most recently, Jen served as the Interim Police Chief in Burlington, VT, coming out of retirement to fill a critical need at her "home" agency.

Chief Morrison career began at BPD in 1990 and spanned 23 years before retiring as Deputy Chief to become the Chief of Police in next door Colchester, VT. Chief Morrison served the Colchester community until her second "retirement" in 2018. During her tenure at CPD she was the President of the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police – the first woman to be elected to this position.

A graduate of The George Washington University with a B.A. in Journalism & Criminal Justice, Chief Morrison received an M.A. in Leadership Studies from Norwich University in 2002. She is a graduate of the FBI National Academy where she was recognized as a sectional leader. She is an instructor of Leadership in Police Organizations for the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Chief Morrison lives with her family in the beautiful Lake Champlain Islands of Vermont.

Stephanie Thomas (PhD)

Training Director, Atlanta Police Leadership Institute (A.P.L.I)

Since 1999, Dr. Thomas has served the Atlanta Police Department in a training/education capacity. She currently serves as the Training Director for the Atlanta Police Leadership Institute (A.P.L.I.). Prior to working for APD, Dr. Thomas worked for the School System. Dr. Thomas has also been an adjunct professor for Georgia Perimeter College for over ten years. Dr. Thomas's specialty has always been training. While working with APD, she has served as a Senior Peace Officer Standard Training Instructor and as a Training Manager at the Atlanta Police Training Academy. Dr. Thomas traveled to Botswana, South Africa to facilitate training with ILEA. She is a certified ICIS Instructor, and she facilitated a leadership course between the Atlanta Police Department and the Israeli Law Enforcement Agency (GILEE) during International Exchange Program.

Dr. Thomas is a native of Decatur, Georgia. She holds an undergraduate degree in Human Resource Administration, a Master of Science in Public Safety Leadership, and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Leadership and Policy. She is also a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success.