

CSI: Grundy County
By Christina Chapman

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CSI Carol Jaross may not have pulled up in a Hummer or put on sunglasses after closing a case, but she definitely knew more about evidence than Horatio Caine on "CSI: Miami."

Jaross, whose actual title is Master Sergeant Crime Scene Field Supervisor for the State Police, taught the seventh class of the Morris Police Citizen's Police Academy, April 29.

In addition to finding evidence at a crime scene, CSIs also conduct interviews with victims and witnesses, photograph the scene, process evidence, collect and review it.

"The dead guy does give us information and the scene does give us information, but not like it does on TV," Jaross said.

Whether it is on TV or real life, the steps involved in collecting evidence and solving a crime is just as fascinating. The biggest reason: Because it is real.

As Jaross explained how her unit processes evidence, she displayed real crime scene pictures, including suicides and murders. Forget fake blood splattered on a wall. During this class we saw evidence photographs of a blood-stained champagne bottle.

As she went through the scene with us, she explained that based on the height and amount of blood splatters on the wall, the bottle was used to hit the woman about four times. The blood only proved three hits, but you have to remember the first swing of the bottle will not fling blood anywhere, Jaross said.

The most frustrating thing about crime scenes shows for the people actually in this line of work is the way the TV shows make it seem as though fingerprinting and DNA results can be determined in an hour.

On television, whenever Horatio Caine has his agents pick up fingerprints off of evidence and run it through the computer system, a match always comes up in 30 seconds with a picture of the criminal. Jaross tells us this is absolutely inaccurate.

The computer will spit back about 10 fingerprint comparisons and then the agents have to compare the fingerprint in evidence to the comparisons through magnification and actually looking at where the lines on our fingers being.

And there is no picture given.

As we went through the class seeing pictures of dead and mutilated bodies, some done by others, but many done to themselves, all of us in the room at one time or another thought, "How does she get through the day knowing there is all this cruelty in the world?"

"I don't think about the horrible things that happened to the person. I think about how I can get the person who did it to them," Jaross said.

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