

ERNIE & JOE: CRISIS COPS

A FILM BY JENIFER MCSHANE



World Premiere 2019 SXSW Film Festival - Special Jury Recognition for Empathy in Craft

2019 Independent Film Festival Boston – Grand Jury Winner

2019 San Antonio Film Festival – Audience Choice Award

2019 Woods Hole Film Festival – Audience Choice Award Runner-Up

2019 Aspen Mountain Film Festival – Youth Jury Award

2019 Port Townsend Film Festival – Jury Award Best Documentary Feature

2019 Santa Fe Independent Film Festival – Best Documentary Feature

2020 Intl. Public Health Film Competition - Honorable Mention

YEAR 2019 | COUNTRY U.S.A. | RUN TIME 95 mins

www.ernieandjoethefilm.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ernieandjoethefilm/>

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ABOUT THE FILM

LOGLINE

ERNIE & JOE follows two police officers with the San Antonio Texas Police Department who are diverting people away from jail and into mental health treatment, one 911 call at a time.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

ERNIE & JOE is an intimate portrait of two Texas police officers who are helping change the way police respond to mental health calls. The film takes audiences on a personal journey, weaving together their experiences during their daily encounters with people in crisis. Guns tucked away, Ernie and Joe de-escalate confrontations, divert people to desperately needed mental health services, and save lives.

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

I believe strongly that my own contribution can be in raising awareness of tough societal issues through relatable characters and their stories. While making my last film, *MOTHERS OF BEDFORD*, it became evident to me that there were many people with untreated mental illness sitting behind bars. Upon learning of the innovative work of the SAPD mental health unit and meeting Ernie and Joe in person I felt compelled to make this film. Their jail diversion work is humane and desperately needed to improve not only the health of the mentally ill, but also of their families. We have seen many films illustrating the multitude of sins in police departments across the country. *ERNIE & JOE* introduces us to officers trying and succeeding in doing it right. - **Jenifer McShane**

SELECTED PRESS

"Impressively intimate"

Director Jenifer McShane offers an impressively intimate look at her subjects on and off the job in a documentary that is at its riveting best during an extended dash-cam view of Stevens and Smarro as they try to talk a suicidal woman out of leaping to her death from an overpass. - [VARIETY](#)

"One of the Best Films of SXSW 2019"

*Jenifer McShane's solution-focused documentary offers proof of an enlightened way forward. Zeroing in on a unit of the San Antonio Police Department, the disarmingly titled *Ernie & Joe* is a candid, mostly vérité portrait of two cops in a small but paradigm-shifting program — one that breaks down the us-vs.-them mind-set that views people in crisis as offenders and too often, as in the news footage that opens the film, turns them into victims of police gunfire. - [THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER](#)*

"Should Change the Conversation on Modern Police Work"

Ernie & Joe is a shockingly emotional and human look at a new kind of police force that shows us exactly what too many forces have been lacking for the last few decades. It's also a fascinating look at what they call the future of police work and the harrowing effects of mental illness. McShane has constructed a beautiful documentary that shows the kind of world we could be living in with the kind of police we deserve.

- [GLIDE MAGAZINE](#)

"a quiet stunner"

You must see this film. Not only must you see the film we must use it as a rallying cry to get the police to change what they are doing. - [UNSEEN FILMS](#)

"10 out of 10 STARS"

McShane is intelligent enough to realize that trying to add pizzazz to what is being portrayed here, especially in this particular climate of police relations with citizens, would ring hollow. The likable Ernie and Joe and their SAPD unit's selfless mission are observed closely and watching these men and women work to de-escalate situations and try to find the right treatment for someone is captivating. - [FILM THREAT](#)

"For Ernie and Joe are he-man poster boys for the radical idea that empathy is not only compatible, but necessary, when it comes to law enforcement." - [FILMMAKER MAGAZINE](#)

"Moving in its humanity and forceful in its pragmatism, the documentary feels like essential viewing, especially for decision makers with the power to enact similar initiatives." - [LA TIMES REVIEW](#)

"It's not about being a kinder, gentler police department. It's about being a smarter police department." - Officer Ernie Stevens, one of the subjects of *Ernie & Joe: Crisis Cops* - [THE CITY](#)

Drama And "Levity": Director Jenifer McShane Strikes Balance In Oscar-Contending Doc 'Ernie & Joe: Crisis Cops' - [DEADLINE](#)

"Ernie & Joe: Crisis Cops is a fascinating look at how police departments can handle the mentally ill if they have the proper training and desire to help instead of just going into a situation with guns ablaze." - [DECIDER](#)

"Jenifer McShane's insightful, enlightening documentary, "Ernie & Joe: Crisis Cops allows viewers to ride along with the title San Antonio police officers. But this documentary is no feature-length episode of "Cops." Rather, it shows how these valued employees of the SAPD's mental health division help suicidal and dangerous citizens get the treatment they need without criminalizing them." - [SALON](#)

"Everyone needs to pay the f**k attention to this deeply felt and expertly rendered documentary about two members of the San Antonio Police Department's Mental Health Unit, who are changing how police see their own jobs with their embrace of making empathy and the individual the priority over force and violence."

- **Official statement from the SXSW Jury for Empathy in Craft Award**

"Jenifer McShane's powerful and artistic storytelling in *Ernie & Joe* is like no other that has come before it. The film is described as a different kind of 911 call. Through Jenifer's lens, not only is every 911 call different, the world is different. We see the possibility of police and communities working together to create a safer and more humane reality for all involved parties. This film is a must see for everyone, everywhere who cares about improving human dignity in policing. The characters Ernie and Joe, who Jenifer brings to life on the screen, poetically show us that this film is about and for all of us." - **Rebecca Neusteter, Policing Program Director, Vera Institute of Justice**

"Ernie & Joe really is a "must-see." While it is about an innovative and much-needed shift in law enforcement's response to those with mental health challenges, at its core it is about being human and connecting at the level of our shared humanity. At the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations, we work alongside and advocate on behalf of children who have witnessed their parent's arrest, children whose parents are incarcerated, and people who have been arrested and incarcerated. We also work with law enforcement and corrections staff. What strikes us in our work with each of these communities is a shared experience of trauma and fear, and feeling judged and misunderstood. *Ernie & Joe* pulls back the curtain on the false "us" and "them" narrative to reveal what is possible when we have compassion for one another and for self. Compassion—combined with solid training and high-level skills for de-escalating crises and attending to secondary trauma—is what Ernie and Joe exemplify. This film provides us with a way to move forward, improving police-community relationships, and increasing public safety and quality of life for us all." - **Tanya Krupat, Director | Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations, Osborne Association**

"I wanted to let you know we all watched your movie on Sunday night together. It was phenomenal. So moving. And what Masters those two are at their craft. Not to mention the director. I was reminded while watching of the incredible power of genuine follow up. Was one of the best things I learned when training at Yale from George Lister- a great critical care doctor. He described calling clinic patients during his training-even weeks after their

visits to check in as the most important part of his job as a pediatrician. On Monday I got to work and on my desk was a report of a patient of mine-college senior -found during the weekend on the roof of a building at his school in a suicidal mode and fortunately he got talked down. Anyway-as a friend, a dad, a pediatrician, a wanna be movie maker, and a human being-your film was most enjoyed and appreciated. I wish you the most success possible both for your own recognition as well as that of the need for Ernies and Joes everywhere. Thank you for making that masterpiece.” - **Dr. Freeman, pediatrician**

PODCASTS

ART WORKS PODCAST - Jen only

<https://www.arts.gov/audio/jenifer-mcshane>

FILM SCHOOL RADIO PODCAST - Ernie, Joe & Jen

<http://filmschoolradio.com/november-15-ernie-and-joe-crisis-cops-director-jenifer-mcshane-and-film-subjects-ernie-stevens-and-joe-smarro/>

SCHOOL OF DOC PODCAST - Jen only

<http://schoolofdoc.libsyn.com/jennifer-mcshane-0>

VIEWER FEEDBACK (from Social Media Feeds, Recommendations, etc.)

IMDB:

A Game Changer 10/10

**Spirit of compassion* meets *truly knowing what it's like* - a powerful model for how a culture might actually help terribly misunderstood and stigmatized people. If you care about people with mental illness, and are sick of the lip service given to reforming the system, watch this. Really.*

Exceptional documentary! A glimpse into the future of policing... 10/10

Had opportunity to preview film. Exceptionally done. Kudos to director, producers, & staff in the filming of this powerful story about policing from a mental health perspective versus a law enforcement perspective. I also thought it was a more compelling story in that not only do you "ride along" with Ernie & Joe as they respond to mental health calls but also share their own personal story of upbringing, childhood, adulthood, joining the force, then in many respects becoming the first MH officers in the SA area. A widely successful diversion program, recognized as a national model. Highly recommend!

From a nurse... 10/10

This is what the world needs more of. Compassionate people that listen and are willing to help others. I'm a registered nurse and in my training, I was taught de-escalation techniques and to utilize therapeutic communication and active listening. I see so many similarities between what police officers do and what a nurse does. Communication is truly key. With that being said, I think many times people who are mentally ill are very misunderstood by others who aren't familiar with the condition. These police officers recognized that there's a problem with how law enforcement deals with mental illness and they chose to address it. Since they're exposed to mental illness all the time, they're in a position where they can truly make a difference. This film made me smile and gives me hope that our law enforcement, hospitals, and mental health facilities can hopefully implement change and successfully collaborate with one another.

FACEBOOK:

Kandi Kirby: I watched your documentary & was so inspired! I work with teens with drug abuse issues & when they know you can SEE them they really do trust & open up. Excellent documentary!

Alotta Carlotta: These two officers are amazing! I wish more people had the level of patience these gentlemen do.

RuthAnne Gersten: An incredibly moving and gripping view into the world of Ernie and Joe and a first hand view of how they are really trying to affect change in a world that is very afraid of people with mental health issues. They are likable, smart, incredibly articulate and to be admired for all they do for this community and our world.

Lindsey Fields DeShazer: These gentlemen are inspiring!!!! great movie, and worth the time to see.

Kathy Bingley DeCoster: There was such genuine compassion and caring from these first responders- a story that needs to be told. The statistics on mental health cases and lack of law enforcement resources is shocking. I cried, and I laughed out loud - mostly at Joe!

Amy Hale: If you watched Joker and left feeling utterly lost, wondering if there's hope, you absolutely must watch this film. It is everything I've hoped to see plus some. All the stars.

Kelly Hill Gunderson: I love this film. It humanizes the real issues of citizens with mental illness and addiction interacting with law enforcement. The film shows all sides respectfully and with compassion. There are tough scenes that are powerful and loving, along with lighter moments of Ernie & Joe's awesome friendship. I can't wait to see it again after it becomes available on HBO on-demand on Nov. 20th.

Jenny Ourand: Ernie and Joe - documentary about police officers dealing with those who have mental health issue. It was GREAT!! I have to admit I thought it would be an informative documentary but also dry and a little sad given the subject content. Far from it. It was informative, funny, and captivating. The work Ernie and Joe are doing shows the heart of law enforcement as they try to help everyone. In the movie, Ernie and Joe said they had to find a way to connect with their subjects in order to help them. I think that is exactly what Jennifer McShane did in directing this film. She connected with each and every viewer by showing law officers are just like us. They want to help others, find fulfillment in their jobs and have fun sometimes while doing it. During the movie, my husband looked around and saw everyone engrossed in the film. No one was on their phones or talking to their neighbor. That is because we got to see the real triumphs and struggles of these officers in their everyday lives, their personal stories, and the humor they have even when there are rough days. We got to see the good and bad of dealing with those with mental health issues and each of us viewing the film took away knowledge and empathy that we may not have already had, as well as, hope in the system. Kudos to all involved in making this film.

Jan Culley: I retired from the NYPD as a detective after 20 years of service and this film resonated deeply with me. Ernie & Joe demonstrates that being open to caring and bringing down barriers can only help the large portion of the population struggling with mental illness every day. I hope to God the NYPD starts a program like this stat- the only CIT training I got was "be careful "...

Kent Keefer: Real men that love and care.

Joe Barry: Amazing show! Thank you for what you all do! As a Mental Health Counselor this is what we need throughout this country! Helping others.

Steve Bennett: So many positive messages in one documentary.

John Stefan: Joe, just watched you and Ernie on your HBO documentary. Phenomenal job! I retired from the Marine Corps in 2018 after 27 years. Been struggling with depression, anxiety, and PTSD for years. Could have stayed for 30 years because I was a Master Gunner, but the struggle caused me to retire. I just want to thank you guys for what you do. Your Ted Talk was amazing brother! Being from San Antonio (Judson Alum),

it was great to see some old landmarks. Again fellas, thanks for what you do for the community, Mental Health, and putting your lives on the line everyday. Semper Fidelis Warriors!

Rosemarie Garza: Just caught your documentary on HBO...you two are amazing and a rarity. Hoping your program can be something implemented everywhere. Thanks for what you do.

Rebecca Golden: I absolutely love the work these guys are doing! So glad they are training in other states, this needs to be a nationwide approach to policing.

Joe Breech: Needs to be taught EVERYWHERE!! This movie could really change things for the better!

Kayla Prettitore: Incredible film. The power of your work and education is outstanding!

Jacqui Christina Mauro: This is a wonderful & informative documentary! A must see!!

Barbara Britton Novick: I had been waiting months to see this film. It was definitely worth the wait. I loved it! Ernie and Joe are amazing. The work that they and their colleagues are doing is opening the eyes of society and will impact policing of the mentally ill in the future. Thank you, Jenifer McShane for this extraordinary film.

Virginia Stefan: Wow, these police officers are so inspiring. I'm moved by their incredible compassion and desire to help those who are struggling.

Shad Rachel Toney: I usually don't recommend very much on TV, but this HBO documentary was Fantastic

Jana Marie Hupp: We all can learn so much from this wonderful doc! Thank you! Let's hope more cities join in! We love you, Ernie and Joe! Bless your hearts!

TWITTER:

BillingsFireFighters: Just saw your doc last shift. Then this shift I run a call on a patient suffering from schizophrenia and hearing voices. Used your "focus on my voice" thing. Worked very well. Even worked when the patient began yelling at himself. I was able to calm him down very easily without escalating. Thanks! Keep up the good work.

Amy Perez: @ernieandjoe you all are doing incredibly good and important work! Extremely helpful to watch your intervention and deescalation strategies in action. I've been recommending your excellent documentary to everyone! Thank you!

Tim Pearson: 10/10. This hits home so hard. I'm not even 10 minutes in and eyes are wet just thinking how this could be a new way of policing. Going through things myself, I sure could've used guys like you. Thank you.

Hey... It's Steph: I am ASKING everyone to TELL a friend and MAKE your family gather in groups and experience & watch: @ernieandjoe: Crisis Cops! This documentary has the potential to revamp the entire police culture, this is a right NOW solution for policing!

Larissa Alszegi: What amazing work being done by @ernieandjoe! Stumbled on this documentary and hope not just first responders but civilians watch it. Completely blown away and hope this approach spreads like 'O'O

Meghan Leach: I feel like every single day I'm telling someone to watch it!!! I work on the kid-side of this...and it's so interesting to see the "adult-grown up-out in the world" side of things through your documentary! Such important work!

Connor Patrick Griffin: New documentary @ernieandjoe was incredibly refreshing. America needs to re-evaluate its approach to mental health and our response to issues involving those in need of assistance, and this film showed examples of compassion that, hopefully, can create a new standard.

Nature Lover 2: I'm looking forward to watching the documentary. My husband is retired LE. Best thing I've seen all year. ♥ Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can. I see you, @ernieandjoe Crisis Cops. ♥ Everybody needs to see this documentary. I give it 10 hearts! My heart was breaking and melting at the same time. Thank you for making this film. I hope everybody sees it. Especially Police departments. It's even better the second time around.

INSTAGRAM:

hellorhighseas: Best documentary of the year. Thank you all for starting this conversation, with people like each of you in this world, it's only a matter of time before we build a quality system that understands how to accept mental scars.

mariee0hgee: This was hands down the best documentary I have ever seen. Thank you for raising awareness on such an important issue that touches the lives of so many but is the most misunderstood. My family has been profoundly effected by mother's mental illness (schizoaffective D/O, bipolar type) and I believe if we were aware of resources available years ago that it would have made a huge difference in all of our lives. I've become a licensed social worker and certified mental health screener. I go out with police every day on crisis calls and it truly was not until I became a screener that I realized how many interventions are out there for people and their families effected by MI.

My name is Kevin Herington and I am a mayoral and city council appointed board member of the Community Review Board on Police Practices for the City of San Diego. Our board was created by voters to review high profile police incidents. Some of the cases we review are generated from citizen complaints and some are mandated by the nature of the event (in custody death, shootings, etc). We review all in-custody deaths, officer involved shootings, use of force complaints, false arrests, criminal conduct by officers, slur's, etc. We routinely review cases with mentally ill/people in crises, and we are able to make recommendations to the mayor and police department regarding policy and procedure. The reason for reaching out is because I recently watched: Ernie & Joe: Crises Cops. I want to share this beautiful piece of education and wisdom with my entire board and the Police Department that we audit. Normally I would refer this video via email to the board members and police captains, but since some might not have HBO, or not know how to stream to their tv (board members ages range from 20's - 80's), and are technologically challenged.

Warmly, Kevin Herington (District 3, City of San Diego - Community Review Board on Police Practices)