

PAST THE PATCH

CONNECTING WITH THE HUMANS
BENEATH THE UNIFORM

Leanne Yake

*Motherhood In
Emergency Medicine*

EDITION 2



MOTHERHOOD IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Spotlighting Leanne Yake

"I remember saying, 'Okay I hear you. Now is the time to follow that dream.'"

It was in the early hours of the morning when a vehicle with a bright red and royal blue logo painted on the side pulled up in front of the Yake household. Leanne watched as Lancaster EMS providers worked attentively with her eldest child who, at 2 am, texted the 9-1-1 line amidst a mental health crisis. Compelled by the display of compassion put forth by these two strangers, Leanne--a daughter of a first responder herself--realized it was finally time to follow in her *own* mother's footsteps. It would take awhile for the dust to settle, but about four months after Lancaster EMS first showed up at her front door during the dark of night, she began looking into programs to become an EMT. In August of 2022, she joined their Academy.

A native to East Petersburg, Leanne grew up an only child against the background of Pennsylvania's rolling countryside. But even without siblings to look after, the instinct to nurture was there from the start, "My identity as a mother is something I've always had, even before I had children. I'm always the mom in the group. I look out for everyone."

As a parent transitioning from veterinary medicine into another role with compassion at its core, caring for others comes naturally--and it's been extremely fulfilling. But despite the emotional rewards reaped working the frontlines, the nature of the profession still creates challenges off the clock. For Leanne, long shifts and atypical hours makes the 'mom guilt' hit hard: "Some days I only see my kids in the morning before they go to school or to the sitter. By the time I get home after [my shift] they're in bed. I can't be there for every

practice, or school event...it gets to me when I haven't seen them." And while she notes gender-related barriers are not what they once were, the stigma still seeps through from time to time, "When it comes to making appointments for my kids, and I have to say 'I can't that day because I'm working a 12 hour shift' or 'That day won't work either.'" Like many women juggling motherhood and a career, there's often pressure to choose one over the other. But the catch-22 seems to be that no matter which path you take, someone's bound to look on disapprovingly either way, "I can feel the frustration over the phone because I'm a mom and should be able to drop everything else."

Leanne accredits her family for playing a huge part in her ability to do what she does, "I have a very supportive husband...he works 50+ hours a week and still gets them to practices, gets dinner and lunches ready when I work late." But for Leanne, intentionality lies at the root of her relationships. No matter how busy a day or chaotic a shift, the two find the time to talk and reconnect. She makes that same space for her children, putting an emphasis on one-on-one time in order to make the most of what they have together. Over the past year, their esteem has functioned as a pillar of support, "They are also very proud of me. My oldest daughter has seen me in action when we passed an accident and I got out to help. My younger two say they want to be a 'medic' when they grow up." While noting it may come off as cliché, she proudly proclaims, "I'm a better person because of them."

In the world of first responders, providers go into each shift knowing that, unlike many other professions, their job often revolves around seeing people on their *worst* day. For Leanne, being able to make someone feel safe and cared for ranks among the role's biggest rewards.

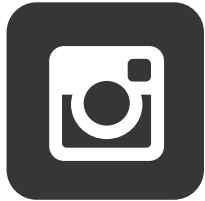
While on the truck, she often finds the skills called upon in motherhood are often needed—perhaps at times even more so—in EMS. “This job has taught me that one person's emergency may not be a true emergency in the sense of medicine” Sometimes, she says, the crisis at hand is loneliness, and the real anecdote is choosing to be the one that listens.

Despite the challenges of juggling parenthood as a first responder and the stigma that can accompany being a working mom, Leanne encourages other parents to continue to aim high, “At the end of the day I’m a mom and a wife, and *then* an EMT. But I give with everything I have, at home and at work. Don’t stop dreaming” she concludes, “Keep pushing. You can be a mom and still have what you always wanted. There will be sacrifices, but it's worth it.”





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