



Certification *Profile*

A visit to St. Alexius Medical Center outside of Chicago may bring you face-to-face with **Eric Swanson, CPP**, director of security, in uniform posted as a security officer. While admittedly one of his more unusual

tasks, Swanson believes firmly in modeling expected behavior for his staff and in conveying the seriousness of security for all of his employees down to the line-level officer.

Law enforcement was Swanson's first career aspiration. While pursuing his undergraduate degree in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration at Western Illinois University, he worked as an asset protection agent. After graduation, he applied for positions within police departments and federal agencies. An eight-month stint as a uniformed security officer at a hospital led to a position as director of public safety for a corporate building. The rest is history. Swanson readily realized his calling into security management and has worked in the field for 14 years.

Swanson has been at St. Alexius Medical Center since October of 2007. "In healthcare today, one of the biggest challenges we face is workplace violence," states Swanson. Swanson and his team encounter all types of inter-employee, customer/employee, and domestic disputes. "Violence can begin in the home and make its way into the hospital [through] patients. Their family member can enter the hospital and then turn into an active shooter."

Swanson observes that these types of situations take a physical and emotional toll on his security guards, as well as on nurses and physicians.

"While we may not directly impact someone's life every day, I believe that the better job we do as a security department and as security professionals provides us the opportunity to make a difference," notes Swanson. "Security is about preventing crime. The mission of my security department is to protect the more than 18,000 patients, staff, and visitors that enter my healthcare facility each year."

A member of ASIS since 2001, Swanson earned his Certified Protection Professional (CPP) in December 2006. "I saw ASIS board certification as a means to legitimize my knowledge and experience in the security management field," commented Swanson. "Certification also meant I was joining an exclusive network of industry leaders."

While St. Alexius Medical Center doesn't require certification for its security team, Swanson, with the support of his administration, actively encourages his staff of 21 to pursue ASIS board certification.

"I believe my involvement in my local ASIS chapter and my interactions with other CPPs have significantly benefited my organization," Swanson says. "I take great pride in our industry and the work we do, and I have great respect for colleagues who also take their craft seriously."

By Leigh A. McGuire, ASIS public relations manager