

April Phillips

LAW DEGREE LEADS ALUMNA INTO FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



An agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in northeastern Pennsylvania, April Phillips '92 investigates white-collar crime including public corruption and mortgage and health care fraud. However, the former Royal continues to make time for the University, as shown here, participating in a round-table discussion on campus in May for students considering a career in law.

April Phillips' career in law is a journey that began just outside Scranton and has taken her to New York, Virginia and even Europe. But, eventually, the Scranton graduate's travels led back home to northeastern Pennsylvania.

"In high school, I wanted to be an exchange student," says Phillips, who grew up in Jefferson Township, a short drive east of Scranton. "I wanted to travel."

After earning a marketing degree from Scranton in 1992, she took the next step in her voyage and began studying international law at Syracuse University. But at Syracuse, Phillips says, something changed.

"By the first year of law school I knew this isn't what I wanted to do," she recalls. What fascinated Phillips about law was piecing a case together and the work involved in solving an investigation. With a new objective in her sights, Phillips completed her law degree in 1994 and took a position with the United Nations, working in Switzerland with the Peacekeeping and Preventive Diplomacy Program.

"It was an amazing experience," Phillips says. "And it fulfilled my quest for travel."

After a year with the United Nations, she worked for New York City Victims Services, serving as an assistant to the director for the Mediation Program, handling grants, funding and budgets. During that time, Phillips took a little fatherly advice and completed the necessary work to join the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"My father said, 'If you want to do that, go right to the top,'" Phillips says, recalling her desire to be an investigator.

She was accepted into the bureau in 1997 and entered the FBI Academy on the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Va., in February 1998. After four months at the academy, Phillips joined the bureau's New York City office, where she worked on terrorism cases, including the attacks on the USS Cole, the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, Sept. 11 and the London subway bombings.

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It was her work on the terror investigations that she calls her most memorable, though also the most difficult – especially Sept. 11.

Four years ago, Phillips and her husband, an agent with the Drug Enforcement Administration, decided it was time to return to their northeastern Pennsylvania roots to raise their family. Phillips accepted a transfer to the bureau's Scranton office as a special agent, investigating white-collar crime including public corruption and mortgage and health care fraud.

"I joke that I spent the first 18 years trying to get out of here and the next 18 trying to get back," she laughs.

Reflecting on the influence the University and the Jesuit priests had on her life, Phillips says, "They're a constant conscience in your life. You think about everything you do before you do it. I think Scranton prepares you for life in general."

Her father, James Phillips, a Scranton attorney and Jefferson Township police chief, agrees.

"We are products of a Catholic education," says the elder Phillips, who received bachelor's and master's degrees from Scranton. "The University has always been about religion, morals and culture. It's a mission they took; it's a mission they fulfill."

April Phillips has played an active role in helping current University students fulfill their own mission. In May, she participated in round-table discussions on campus for students considering a career in law.

The FBI special agent and former Royal has words of advice for all students.

"Focus on living a clean life," she says. "Even now, everything I do I have to be careful." ❧