



# BACKING the BADGE®

*"Serving those that serve us."®*

backingthebadge.com

(800)788-8630



## Newsletter Volume 8 Spring Edition by Gary M. Bush

Welcome to Volume 8 of the BACKING the BADGE Newsletter. Spring is almost upon us, and I hope that many of you are beginning to see a break in the winter weather. Let's get started.

## BACKING the BADGE is Pleased to Announce a NEW Partnership With NEW Services

BACKING the BADGE is honored to announce our new partnership with Dr. Lyle Danuloff. Dr. Danuloff has been practicing psychology in Michigan for forty-four years. He has devoted much of his practice to serving the unique psychological needs of police officers. He is a consultant to several police departments in the Metro-Detroit area including Detroit, Livonia and Canton, among others. His work involves critical incident stress de-briefing, pre-employment evaluations, fitness for duty examinations, and psychological treatment. Dr. Danuloff's involvement with police officers is based upon treating the human being behind the badge. Welcome, Dr. D!



## Dealing With Law Enforcement Stress – The Old Fashioned Way

by Gary Bush, Executive Director and Co-Founder, BACKING the BADGE

Let me say right up front that dealing with stress the old fashioned way in the course of an LEO's career doesn't necessarily work out so well. Those of you who have been "on the job" for 20 years or more will understand what I'm talking about. "Back in the day" (around 1978 for me) there were many of the same stressors that LEO's today must face. Back then, if an officer was involved in a traumatic event, or maybe cumulative stress that really affected him or her, the LAST thing you would do is discuss it with your supervisor. You might have a discussion privately with a fellow officer if you

really trusted them. As a young rookie officer, I did not want to portray an image of being weak or not being able to handle the job in front of my fellow officers. Around the locker room, that was the kiss of death. The usual attitude then was, "Suck it up, that's what you signed up for. Don't be a wimp."

I had never heard of CISM or Peer Support, so I didn't really have any kind of support system in place. I wasn't much of a church goer and I didn't have a spouse at the time. So how did I deal with the stress back then? Probably the same way many of you did. I just kept it bottled up. I mean after all, sleepless nights, heavy drinking, loss of appetite and other side effects as a result of traumatic events were normal responses, right? On occasion, some of my trusted co-workers and I would engage in "choir practice" after shift, which might or might not have involved alcohol. I even came very close to becoming an alcoholic. Now obviously, this type of behavior is not healthy, is not productive, and could very well be destructive. To your career. The only positive from this type of behavior is that it allowed me and some of my peers to "talk" about things but overall the negatives far outweighed the positives. I knew something was going on with me, I just didn't know what. I was one of the lucky ones, because I got through it.

Fast forward to now. Today, the modern law enforcement officer is better trained, better informed, and better equipped than the officers of yesteryear. Ah, but those pesky stressors are still there, just as they were many years ago. Fortunately, most law enforcement administrators recognize the need of maintaining their officers' wellness as much as maintaining their training. In addition to protecting their investment (how much does it cost these days to hire an officer, train them, equip them, and get them on the street) a well-balanced officer is more productive, takes less sick time and is generally healthier. And stands a much better chance of successfully completing his or her career.

There are many more tools available to officers today to help them maintain balance. Some of these could be Critical Incident Stress Management, Peer Support Services, counseling, coaching, or just a support system. Use them. Have your career be PART of your life, rather than having your career BE your life. Stay safe.

## **Tribute: Our Fallen Brothers and Sisters 2016**

We are adding a new section to our newsletter to recognize our Brothers and Sisters who have made the ultimate sacrifice beginning in 2016. It is my fervent hope that this section remains blank throughout the year but sadly, this will probably not happen. It is important that we never forget.

Officer Jorge Gil, Haines City Police Department, Florida – EOW: 02/29/16

Deputy Travis Russell – Los Animas County Sheriff's Office, Colorado – EOW: 03/02/16

Officer David Hofer – Euless Police Department, Texas – EOW: 03/02/16

Officer Scot Fitzgerald – South Jacksonville Police Department, Illinois – EOW: 03/05/16

Trooper Sean Cullen – New Jersey State Police, Bellmawr, New Jersey – EOW: 03/08/16

Corrections Officer Christopher Anders, McLean County Sheriff's Office, Illinois – EOW: 03/10/16

Deputy John Kotfila – Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Florida – EOW: 03/12/16

Officer Jacai Colson – Prince Georges County Police Department, Maryland – EOW: 03/14/16

Officer Nathan Taylor-California Highway Patrol, Gold Run, California – EOW: 03/14/16

First Sergeant Joseph Portaro – West Virginia State Police, Dunbar, West Virginia – EOW: 03/14/16

Officer David Ortiz – El Paso Police Department, Texas – EOW: 03/15/16

Trooper Thomas Clardy – Massachusetts State Police, Charlton, Massachusetts – EOW: 03/17/16

Deputy Carl Koontz – Howard County Sheriff’s Office, Indiana – EOW: 03/20/16  
Officer Carlos Puente-Morales – Des Moines Police Department, Iowa – EOW: 03/26/16  
Officer Susan Farrell – Des Moines Police Department, Iowa – EOW: 03/26/16  
Trooper Jeffrey Nichols – Texas Department of Public Safety, Paris, Texas – EOW: 03/26/16  
Trooper Chad Dermeyer – Virginia State Police, Richmond, Virginia – EOW: 03/31/16  
Constable Sarah Beckett – Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Langford, BC – EOW: 04/05/16  
Officer Steven Smith – Columbus Police Department, Columbus, Ohio – EOW: 04/12/16  
Deputy Jared Murphy – Charleston County Sheriff’s Office, South Carolina – EOW: 04/15/16  
Agent Jose Barraza – United States Border Patrol, Sierra Blanca, Texas – EOW: 04/18/16

**We should not forget our fallen K9 partners. "For it is not just those with two legs who are born with a soul that has Courage to wear the Badge"© ~Nessie~**

K9 Vigor – Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, Tennessee – EOW: 03/09/16  
K9 Reefer – Chelan County Sheriff’s Office, Washington – EOW: 03/09/16  
K9 Nicky – Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Nevada – EOW: 03/31/16  
K9 Quinty – University of Illinois Police Department, Champaign, Illinois – EOW: 04/09/16  
K9 Patrick – Washington State Patrol, Seattle, Washington – EOW: 04/25/16  
K9 Aldo – Unified Police Department of Greater Salt Lake, Utah – EOW: 04/27/16

## **BACKING the BADGE LEO Spotlight: Captain Pete McWatters**

In each newsletter edition, BACKING the BADGE will spotlight an LEO and ask three questions. In this edition, our spotlight is on Pete McWatters. Pete is a Captain with the Grand Rapids Police Department in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a law enforcement veteran of nearly 25 years.

**1. What influenced you to go into law enforcement?** I had an interest in law enforcement from an early age but for whatever reason did not consider law enforcement as a career option. I did not have any immediate family members in law enforcement nor did I know anyone in Law Enforcement so I did not think seriously about becoming a police officer. Following graduation from college I worked for a Juvenile Court system where I had contact with juvenile offenders and police officers and I came to see that being a police officer was a career path I was very interested in. At age 25 I put myself through a police academy while working part time for the court system on the weekends and was hired into the profession soon after graduation. I worked part time for over 2 years before being hired full time in Grand Rapids at age 27. There have been some difficult days and difficult issues to deal with in this job but overall I have no regrets about going into law enforcement and I still enjoy my job.

**2. What are some key ways to stay healthy throughout your career? (both mentally and physically)** As anyone knows who works as a police officer, there are many challenges to staying healthy in this job. The hours, shift work, stress and physical nature of the work take a toll. Staying physically fit I think is important. You don’t have to be a triathlete, body builder or marathon runner but you better be healthy enough to defend yourself and overpower someone with technique and/or strength because if you work the road, you will be in a position such as this on a predictable basis. Mentally I think officers need to be willing and able to let others know when you were in a situation that really

bothers you. Again.....this will happen and is predictable. Every police officer has been in horrible situations that stick with you and being able to discuss with a significant other or friends is very helpful. When at work give 100% and be loyal to your oath, department and profession but also realize your health and family take precedence. This is not always easy to do when you get called away from family events or miss things due to the schedule but the job in my opinion has to be somewhere down the list. I can't say it always has been for me but it should be.

**3. What advice would you give to young officers just starting out?** For officers just starting out I would say that this is still a noble and worthwhile profession with many rewards for doing a good job. I think the past couple of years have been the worst in my career with regard to media portrayal of police officers. I know many people I work with who say there is no way they would want their children to go into law enforcement which I completely understand. But.....I think the pendulum is going to swing back the other way here soon. The public, media and government administrators are going to have to realize the commitment police officers make every day and that we need good people doing this job. Society cannot continue to cut our pay and benefits and demonize the profession based on isolated incidents hundreds of miles away from where we work, while continuing to tell us to do more with less and heap additional responsibilities on us. I would recommend a new officer work hard, seek different assignments and training and treat people with respect and dignity and things will work out fine.

## **BADGE and BALANCE: Helpful Hints** by Dr. Alison Brown

It seems almost ridiculous to 'give back' to your community when you already work in law enforcement. Consider that sometimes the most rewarding experiences people have, are short and sweet, and almost always involve doing something nice for someone else.

Perhaps there is someone (young or old) that would appreciate a courtesy: picking up their trash cans, bringing them their newspaper, tossing a soft ball for a few minutes, stopping to say 'hi' on a very time limited basis. 99 times out of 100, people report 'they thought they were doing something nice for someone else' and to their surprise, it made their day more enjoyable!

Sometimes it's doing the little things that help us the most!

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual K9K Race June 18<sup>th</sup> in Grand Rapids, MI**

The Andrew Elliott Rusticus Foundation is hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual K9K race at Riverside Park in Grand Rapids, Michigan on June 18<sup>th</sup>. The K9K will be held in honor of fallen Brother Andrew Elliott Rusticus of the Grand Rapids Police Department. Please look at the flyer at the end of this newsletter. If you are near the area and wish to participate, donate, or sponsor please check out their website at [www.k9krace.com](http://www.k9krace.com).

## The BACKING the BADGE Team

Dr. Alison Brown, Senior Consultant and Co-Founder of BACKING the BADGE

[abrown@encompass.us.com](mailto:abrown@encompass.us.com)

Mike Ohren, VP of Organizational Development and Training for ENCOMPASS, LLC

[mohren@encompass.us.com](mailto:mohren@encompass.us.com)

Sara Eklove, LMSW, Chief Operating Officer and Employee Assistance Consultant for ENCOMPASS, LLC

[seklove@encompass.us.com](mailto:seklove@encompass.us.com)

Jessi Zielinski, LMSW, Director of Organizational Development for ENCOMPASS, LLC

[jzielinski@encompass.us.com](mailto:jzielinski@encompass.us.com)

Gary Bush, Executive Director and Co-Founder of BACKING the BADGE

[gmbush@encompass.us.com](mailto:gmbush@encompass.us.com)

Jeff Baker, Senior Employee Assistance Consultant for ENCOMPASS, LLC

[jbaker@encompass.us.com](mailto:jbaker@encompass.us.com)

Michelle Kimmel-Fors, Executive Director, COMPASS

[mkimmel-fors@encompass.us.com](mailto:mkimmel-fors@encompass.us.com)

Cathy Fitzgerald, Director of Law Enforcement Training & Development for BACKING the BADGE

[cfitzgerald@encompass.us.com](mailto:cfitzgerald@encompass.us.com)

Steve Darling, Coordinator of Law Enforcement Wellness Initiatives for BACKING the BADGE

[sdarling@encompass.us.com](mailto:sdarling@encompass.us.com)

**(800) 788-8630**



## What is the K9K?

The Andrew Elliott Rusticus Foundation is hosting the 3rd annual K9K race at Riverside Park in Grand Rapids on Saturday, June 18, 2016. The K9K will be held in honor of Andrew Elliott Rusticus, a Grand Rapids Police Department Officer who died on February 25, 2012. Andy was training for an open K9 Handler position when he suffered a heart attack and ran into the arms of Jesus. Come join us as we honor Andy with the community!

### Our two run / walk events are:

#### 3k

What's more fun than running or walking through beautiful Riverside Park with your pet (without your canine is welcome also) to support some good causes? This part of the run / walk will start out on the north end of Riverside Park and wind its way through the park and along the river at a doable distance for both you and your pet.

#### 9k

What's a K9K without the 9k part? That's what we thought at least; so come out and challenge yourself with a bit more than the traditional 5k. Canines are also allowed on the 9k so come on out and challenge yourself and your pet to this great event!

### Support

The Andrew Elliott Rusticus Foundation and K9K Race is a non-profit event that supports the Grand Rapids Police Department Canine Unit Foundation, the Michigan Thin Blue Line, a scholarship honoring Andrew Elliott Rusticus at Trinity Christian College, and Vested Interest in K9s.

Check out our website at [www.k9krace.com](http://www.k9krace.com) or visit us on Facebook at K9K Race!