



BACKING the BADGE®

"Serving those that serve us."®

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Newsletter Volume 9 Summer Edition by Gary M. Bush

Welcome to Volume 9 of the BACKING the BADGE Newsletter, Summer 2016 edition. There have certainly been a lot of events in the news lately that directly affect law enforcement officers. We have tried, at least in part, to address some of these issues. Let's get started.

Perilous Times – A Personal Message By Gary Bush, Executive Director

I almost do not have the words to describe my feelings of anger, grief and helplessness in light of the recent attacks on our Brothers and Sisters in uniform in Dallas, Texas, St. Joseph, Michigan, and most recently in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In my 32 year law enforcement career, I have never seen the amount of anti-police sentiment that I see today. However, you can rest assured that the VAST majority of the citizenry support law enforcement and appreciate the job that you do. Our sincerest condolences go out to the agencies, friends and families of the fallen. In tribute, the mourning band across the badge in our logo will remain for the next several issues. If we can assist you or your loved ones navigate through these trying times, please don't hesitate to contact us. To our law enforcement Brothers and Sisters everywhere, remain strong. Remain vigilant. We stand with you.

The Orlando Tragedy: Are You Ready?

By Steve Darling and Gary Bush

The recent terror attack at the night club in Orlando will likely be investigated for months. The aftereffects will likely be felt for months if not years. One thing should be painfully obvious. This attack could have happened anywhere. In my town, in your town, or in the town of one of your loved ones. There is every possibility that this could happen again. Are you ready? Once the situation was stabilized, imagine the scene that LEO's and other First Responders had to wade through with 49 dead and over 50 wounded. I'm not sure ANYONE could ever be prepared to face that type of carnage. What must they have been going through their minds while assisting the wounded, securing and processing the scene and generally picking up the pieces. How will this event impact their well-being?

My colleague Steve Darling writes;

“Let's remember that LEO's and first responders around the nation prepare and train for mass casualty incidents, regardless of the ideology, race, nationality, or motivation of the offender (s). LEO's respond to the gunfire and rely on past training to get them through physically, mentally, and emotionally, but not always. LEO's are the Shepard's guarding a thin blue line, every LEO in the country has thoughts and feelings and emotions on events like this.

I am sure that professional teams are responding to provide assistance to the first responders who are willing, and more importantly, open to help cope with the aftermath of this horrific incident on American soil.

Being a retired police officer, I know that each and every active LEO should be rehearsing their own response if and when an event similar to Orlando or San Bernardino occurs within their own jurisdiction. Just as important, LEO's should be practicing self-care care daily to alleviate cumulative stress inherent with the job. If and when an incident of this magnitude does occur, prior mental health preparations may insulate LEO's innate coping systems and protect them from being overwhelmed.”

So, are you prepared? If not, GET prepared. Most importantly, BE SAFE.

BACKING the BADGE Participates in the MACP Summer Conference

Alison Brown, Sara Eklove and Gary Bush recently participated in the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police Summer Conference which was held June 19-22 at the Boyne Highlands Resort in Harbor Springs, Michigan. BACKING the BADGE exhibited at a booth and had the opportunity to interact with many police chiefs and administrators about who we are and what we do. We had a drawing and gave away a pair of Alpha 360 Electronic Ear Protectors. Chief Stephen Johnson of the Bronson Police Department was the lucky recipient of the ear protectors. We also had a session for the LEO spouses called Resiliency for Law Enforcement Loved Ones: Breaking the Emotional Yo-Yo Syndrome. Sara Eklove and Alison Brown from BACKING the BADGE were the presenters for this session. There were 30 LE spouses in attendance and we got some great feedback. We had a drawing and one attendee received a gift certificate for some well-deserved pampering from a local day spa. We hope she enjoys it! BACKING the BADGE also co-sponsored the annual MACP Awards Banquet.

The Inevitable Encounter with Grief By Dr. Alison Brown

Growing up, I was fortunate to live in a ‘tight-knit’ neighborhood, where people looked out for each other. When I learned that several people in one family, from our neighborhood, had been killed in a car accident it was devastating, and I had no idea as to how to ‘proceed.’ The pain suffered by this family affected all of our families in different ways.

For the family impacted by this tragedy, the challenges for the surviving children, and spouse, were understandably, herculean. We would visit our neighbor, and as time moved on, life moved on as well, with the scars of this event still visible.

In the recent months and weeks, as blue families have buried their own, moving forward is critical – and yet, hugely challenging. Here are some ideas about ways to address grief and to encourage your colleagues to heal, while supporting their families and each other.

1. Don't ignore grief. It will not just go away.
2. Grasp the biological signs of grief – isolating, tearfulness, anger and psychological 'soreness' just to name a few.
3. When you experience the signs of grief, understand that they are NORMAL. By paying attention to the signs, you may then proactively address those signs. Talking with a trusted person may ease your grief and help make grief more understandable.
4. Your own grief symptoms are an opportunity to honor your colleagues. By acknowledging the challenges and pain associated with the signs of grief, we honor those who served.
5. Understand that your pain may lessen as you reach out to others. Your willingness to 'be there' for others is typically perceived by those who grieve as a gift. Sometimes people get hung up on saying just the right thing. That 'right thing' rarely exists. A willingness to be there, and to listen, may be just the comfort needed.
6. If you have experienced another loss during the past 18 months or two years, a new loss will likely re-open the wound of that past loss. Some people report that they have less energy, don't laugh as easily, or may not want to be around others. If you find yourself in this situation, consider investing in yourself by not tackling life as hard as you normally might. Your biological hard-wiring is giving you a signal to cut yourself some slack, at appropriate times.

The biology and mechanisms associated with healing take time. This doesn't equate to forgetting. Personally, I don't believe in 'closure' but, as we commit to face our grief, we not only strengthen ourselves, but offer greater ways to effectively support each other through grueling times.

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.

Sergeant Jorge Ramos, Florida Department of Corrections, Doral, Florida – EOW: 05/01/16

Investigator Anthony Freeman, Bibb County Sheriff's Office, Georgia – EOW: 05/05/16

Detective Brad Lancaster, Kansas City Police Department, Kansas – EOW: 05/09/16

Officer David Glasser, Phoenix Police Department, Arizona – EOW: 05/19/16

Motor Officer Sean Johnson, Hilliard Police Department, Ohio – EOW: 05/19/16

Officer Ronald Tarentino, Auburn Police Department, Massachusetts – EOW: 05/22/16

Officer Ryan Bourque, Jamestown Police Department, Rhode Island – EOW: 05/23/16

Deputy Michael Winter, Branch County Sheriff's Office, Michigan – EOW: 05/31/16
Corporal Robert Johnson, Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office, Louisiana – EOW: 05/31/16
Sergeant Derrick Mingo, Winnsboro Police Department, Louisiana – EOW: 06/04/16
Officer Verdell Smith, Memphis Police Department, Tennessee – EOW: 06/04/16
Officer Natasha Hunter, New Orleans Police Department, Louisiana – EOW: 06/07/16
ICE Agent Brian Beliso, Redwood City, California – EOW: 06/08/16
Officer Endy Ekpanya, Pearland Police Department, Texas – EOW: 06/13/16
Officer Michael Katherman, San Jose Police Department, California – EOW: 06/14/16
Agent Gilberto Leon, Puerto Rico Police Department, Puerto Rico – EOW: 06/13/16
Deputy Zachary Larnard, Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Tennessee – EOW: 06/15/16
Sergeant Stacey Baumgartner, Patton Village Police Department, Texas – EOW: 06/19/16
Deputy David Michel, Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, Louisiana – EOW: 06/22/16
Sergeant Sean Allred, Livingston Police Department, Tennessee – EOW: 06/23/16
Sergeant Kevin Miller, Detroit Police Department, Michigan – EOW: 06/29/16
Deputy Martin Sturgill II, Humphreys County Sheriff's Office, Tennessee – EOW: 06/30/16
Detective Russell Ross, Potawatomi Nation Police Department, Oklahoma – EOW: 06/30/16
Officer Bryan Bordes, New Orleans Police Department, Louisiana – EOW: 07/03/16
Sergeant David Elahi, Sterlington Police Department, Louisiana – EOW: 07/03/16
Deputy Paul Clark, St. Francois County Sheriff's Office, Missouri – EOW: 07/04/16
Corporal Lorne Ahrens, Dallas Police Department, Texas – EOW: 07/07/16
Officer Patrick Zamarripa, Dallas Police Department, Texas – EOW: 07/07/16
Sergeant Michael Smith, Dallas Police Department, Texas – EOW: 07/07/16
Officer Michael Krol, Dallas Police Department, Texas – EOW: 07/07/16
Officer Brent Thompson, Dallas Area Rapid Transit Police Department, Texas – EOW: 07/07/16
Officer Michael Ventura, Salem Department of Public Safety, Wisconsin – EOW: 07/08/16
Court Bailiff Ronald Kienzle, Berrien County Trial Court, Michigan – EOW: 07/11/16
Court Bailiff Joseph Zangaro, Berrien County Trial Court, Michigan – EOW: 07/11/16
Motor Officer Anthony Zarate, Bellaire Police Department, Texas – EOW: 07/12/16

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 Bruno, Anaheim Police Department, California – EOW: 05/18/16
K9 Bruno, Amarillo Police Department, Texas – EOW: 06/12/16
K9 Billy, Highlands County Sheriff's Office, Florida – EOW: 06/16/16
K9 Lazer, U.S. Border Patrol, Rio Grande Sector, Texas – EOW: 06/20/16
K9 Tyson, Fountain County Sheriff's Office, Indiana – EOW: 06/27/16
K9 Credo, Long Beach Police Department, California – EOW: 06/28/16
K9 Roscoe, Emmett Police Department, Idaho – EOW: 06/30/16

BACKING the BADGE LEO Spotlight:

Officer Kendra Backing

In each newsletter edition, BACKING the BADGE will spotlight an LEO and ask three questions. In this edition, our spotlight is on Kendra Backing. Kendra is an officer with the Hastings Police Department, Michigan. She has eleven years of service.

1. What influenced you to go into law enforcement? I read Nancy Drew books as a kid and enjoyed problem solving. I always wanted to try and figure out "who did it" before I got to the last chapter.

In middle school, I distinctively remember being at a friend's house and watching MTV. I wasn't allowed to watch it at my house. A music video by Soul Asylum came on called "Runaway Train". I'll never forget the feeling of emotion that came over me as I watched the images displayed of numerous missing and exploited children. I didn't even know how this was possible. I wondered and thought about where they could be and what I could do to help find them. I would say this video stopped my world and significantly impacted me to want to work in law enforcement.

While attending high school, I dual enrolled in a Criminal Justice course offered through Montcalm Community College. I was able to apply my passion by taking this course which resulted in only wanting to take more classes. I knew through education I would be able to attain my goal of working in law enforcement.

My father was employed with the Michigan Department of Corrections and I felt proud to call him my dad. When I told him I wanted to be a police officer, I remember him telling me very seriously but lovingly he wouldn't be able to sleep at night and it would raise his blood pressure. To this day, I remember every word of our conversation.

2. What are some key ways to stay healthy throughout your career? (Both mentally and physically) Fitness not only is key to physical health but also mental. It is a great outlet for the stresses we are warned about, observe from our peers or experience personally, that come along with the nature of the profession.

Law enforcement is very absorbing and a balance of separating your personal life from your professional life is extremely important. Forming healthy relationships is going to be critical in maintaining this balance and having open communication, as opposed to shutting it off, is vital within your support system.

3. What advice would you give to young officers just starting out? If you're going to spend 25 years in law enforcement you want to play with the best people. The dangers are real. Go to as much training as you possibly can and maintain that training.

One of my professors in the academy told me that law enforcement is 95 percent boredom and 5 percent panic. You play the hand you are dealt. Be ready every day.

Focus on your personal health and wellness. If you have a family, include them in that equation. This job affords us the opportunity to do a lot of good for people. We owe them, our families and ourselves, at our very best.

BADGE and BALANCE: Helpful Hints by Dr. Alison Brown

SIMPLE. Sometimes simple is best. Grab a lawn chair and your spouse, a book, the kids, your fishing rod, and chill out in a nearby park or favorite spot. By being away from your personal and work responsibilities you create respite for yourself, your family – even if only a couple of hours. Giving yourself time away gives your hypervigilant brain a much deserved break!

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