



BACKING the BADGE

"Serving those that serve us."

(800) 788-8630



BACKING the BADGE Newsletter Volume 16 July 2018

Welcome to Volume 16 of the BACKING the BADGE Newsletter. Can you believe that Summer is almost halfway over? I hope everyone is enjoying their Summer, because school and Fall will be here before we know it. Let's get started.

[Visit our Website](#)

[Meet the BTB Team](#)



How Are YOU Doing?

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

Many times, as a First Responder, whether a police officer, firefighter, or paramedic, we are asked to watch out for our co-workers to ensure that they are handling the stresses and challenges that come with these types of professions. Especially as a supervisor, you are tasked with looking out for the well-being of those under your command. This is critical, and is part of your responsibilities as a supervisor. As a peer or a supervisor, you would likely be one of the first to notice if a co-worker is struggling. That being said, how are YOU doing? It never hurts from time to time to take a step back, and do a short, honest self-assessment. Are you eating properly? Getting enough exercise? Are your sleep patterns normal? (well, as normal as you can get doing shift work) Are your relationships at work and at home OK? How are YOU handling the stress? There is a whole list of things that you can use for your self-assessment. Make it a point to do this on occasion. When flying, you know the part of the safety briefing about the oxygen masks you get just before takeoff? "Please secure your own mask before assisting others." You will be in a much better position to look out for others if you look out for yourself, as well. Don't let YOU be the one that slips through the cracks.

**BACKING the BADGE
Participates in WMCJTC
Corrections Training**

BACKING the BADGE recently presented at a training session for Corrections Officers put on by the West Michigan Criminal Justice Training Consortium, and hosted by the Kent County Sheriff's Office. BACKING the BADGE Team Members Sara Eklove, Cathy Fitzgerald, and Dennis Potter all presented at this session. Topics discussed were Mental Health in Corrections, Resilience and others. There were approximately 18 attendees and the information was well-received.



BACKING the BADGE Recently Holds Women, Warriors and Well Being Workshop For Female LEO's and Corrections Officers

BACKING the BADGE recently held a workshop for Female LEO's and Corrections Officers. Women, Warriors and Well Being was an all day session hosted by the Mott Community College Police Department in Flint. There were approximately 18 attendees present, and the much needed information was well-received. The session was conducted by BTB Team Members Cathy Fitzgerald, Sara Eklove, and Alison Brown. We are planning more sessions in the future. Pictured from left to right: Officer Janelle Stokes, Flint Township Police Department, Inspector Bonnie Kanicki, Assistant District Commander, 3rd District Michigan State Police, Captain Sondra Taylor, Flint City Police Department, Lt. Jill McDonnell, Auburn Hills Police Department, and Officer Kris Surdu, Mott Community College Police Department.



First Responders and Alcohol: Use or Abuse?

By Joseph Budnick, MA, LLP, ENCOMPASS, LLC

One issue I frequently run into, as a counselor, is someone who suspects alcohol use is a problem but is unsure of what they should do about it. They may even question if they want to do anything about an activity in which they find personal value. The concerns about alcohol use often originate with the suggestion of a significant other or when health or performance difficulties are experienced by the individual.

First Responders (Police, Fire, Paramedics) are not immune to these concerns and alcohol abuse among them, estimated as high as 25% overall, is a well-documented subject. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand the perceived benefit of alcohol use by First Responders as both a coping mechanism to deal with the stress of the job and as a social lubricant with

peers – the only ones thought of who can relate to that stress. Most indications that alcohol might be a problem fall into the categories of difficulties with performance issues at work and relationship problems at home.

It also doesn't take a rocket scientist to recognize the roadblocks for Police, Firefighter and Paramedic professionals seeking help with a drinking problem. The idea of a person who is expected to be the example of control and wise behavior can be seen as a contradiction to the person with an alcohol problem. Twelve step programs focus on admitting to being powerless. Mistrust of those without insight into the particular issues of First Responders keep many away from seeking help as does the worry about confidentiality.

So, what are you supposed to do? If you or someone else sees your alcohol use as a problem, the following might be resources that you can explore:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services
- Peer support services
- Individual counseling
- Chaplaincy services

An important aspect of accessing resources is to investigate the provider's skill and experience in working with the specific culture and needs of the Police, Firefighter and Paramedic communities.

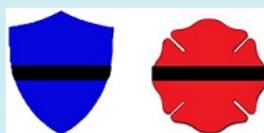


BACKING the BADGE Participates in the Recent MACP Summer Conference

BACKING the BADGE recently participated in the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police Summer Conference held at the Shanty Creek Resort in Bellaire. Team members Sara Eklove and Gary Bush staffed the BACKING the BADGE booth. Many of the attendees that stopped by our booth have now heard of BACKING the BADGE, and many have either used or are using our services. Our giveaway was a nice set of electronic ear protectors. Chief Steven Harper of the Wayland Police Department was the winner of the drawing and the lucky recipient of the ear protectors.

BACKING the BADGE Participates in the Recent MAFC Summer Conference

BACKING the BADGE recently participated in the Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs Summer Conference held at Boyne Mountain Resort. Team members Bart Perry, Jessi Zielinski and Sara Eklove participated in this event. Not only did they staff the booth, all three had the opportunities to address the Chiefs for 90 minutes. See Bart Perry's update below.



BACKING the BADGE Tribute Page
for Fallen Firefighters and Police Officers



ENCOMPASS/BACKING the BADGE Participates in a Benefit Hosted by the City of Kentwood

By Sara Eklove, LMSW and CEO of ENCOMPASS



Each year Kentwood Parks and Recreation departments hosts a benefit for their adaptive sports programs and ENCOMPASS is often asked to be sponsors for events such as these for client companies and non-client companies. As a long time member of the Kentwood community I was planning on going and have attended in years past and this year, it made sense that with our relationship with Kentwood Police and Fire, ENCOMPASS/BACKING the BADGE sponsor a table this year.

The evening was nice, with a number of great speakers who highlighted how the Adaptive Sports program has positively impacted their lives since they have had major life changing events. One particular story that was rather remarkable was a woman who is a social worker in Kentwood public schools who had sepsis and lost both her feet and hands, but continues to live life to its fullest and who continues to serve others and be an uplifting spirit to those around her.

We also had a number of opportunities to do some relationship building with some of our key contacts, the human resources contact, a number of city administrators and were there, as were other members of the Police Department.

In the year we have worked with Kentwood Police and Fire these relationships have brought about a number of additional opportunities for ENCOMPASS/BACKING the BADGE and this was a nice opportunity to provide back to the City of Kentwood in a philanthropic fashion!

Smoldering Embers

by Battalion Chief Bart Perry (Retired)



How we are past the mid-point of our 2018 summer I cannot explain! I am sure it has been a busy summer for all in the Fire Service and the Backing the Badge Team is no exception to this phenomenon. I had the very distinct honor to speak at both the Michigan Professional Firefighters Convention in Bay City and the Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs Convention in Boyne Highlands. Tough Summer assignments for sure.....I had great partners assisting me with Cathy Fitzgerald and Steve Darling in Bay City and Sara Eklove and Jessie Zielinski in Boyne. My sincere thank you to both organizations for making responder behavioral health again a front and center topic. Through Organizations like these and others, cultural change and awareness is occurring in the Fire Service.

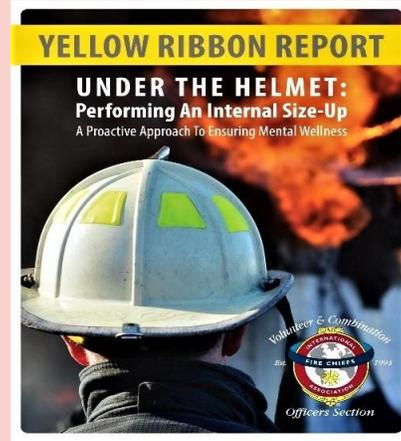


Thanks to all who stopped by our booth, we enjoyed interacting with all of you very much! One of the most frequently asked questions by nearly everyone was "how do I even get started?" when considering a comprehensive behavioral health program for your department and its members. As always, the Backing the Badge Team stands ready to advise, support and train even if your department is not a contracted BTB customer. The good news here is that it does not always take money to get started! One of the most comprehensive guides I have found so far is produced by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) entitled "Under the Helmet / Performing and Internal Size Up". Additional resources are available through the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation Life Safety Initiative #13. Both can be accessed via the below links.

Summer is slipping away, get out there and enjoy it.....we will be shoveling soon!

Stay low my friends.....

-BART



Badge and Balance: Helpful Hints

by Dennis Potter, LMSW, FAEETS

Have you noticed any of your buddies acting differently recently? Have you reached out to find out what is going on? Sometimes people need a listening ear, and maybe you can loan them one of yours for a few minutes. It helps.



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