



# BACKING the BADGE

"Serving those that serve us."

(800) 788-8630



A Division of *encompass*

## BACKING the BADGE

### Newsletter Volume 13 November 2017

Welcome to Volume 13 of the BACKING the BADGE Newsletter. We hope that everyone had a great Summer. Fall is in the air, and the holidays will be here before we know it. As the weather cools, the activity most certainly is not. Let's get started.

[www.backingthebadge.com](http://www.backingthebadge.com)

### A Message From the Executive Director

by Gary Bush



I still get troubling stories from time to time about some of our Brothers and Sisters in both Law Enforcement and the Fire Service taking their own lives. While these incidents aren't usually highly publicized, it is happening with disturbing frequency. This is unacceptable! Our respective professions as a law enforcement officer or firefighter are dangerous enough as it is. Do not become a statistic. Please take the time to talk with a family member, a trusted colleague or a professional. There is support and assistance out there available for you. Use them! If you have no one that that you feel comfortable with, BACKING the BADGE is also available 24/7/365. Be safe and don't forget to take care of yourself, also. (see below article by Battalion Chief Bart Perry)

### BACKING the BADGE Recently

# Conducts Training in Cadillac

BACKING the BADGE recently conducted a joint training session with both the City of Cadillac Fire Department and the Cadillac Police Department. The two nights of training were attended by approximately 50 firefighters and police officers, with some spouses attending, as well. Team members Gary Bush, Alison Brown, Bart Perry, Jim Bottenhorn and Dennis Potter conducted the training. Some of the topics covered were Stress, Resilience, Badge and Balance, Connecting to Resources, and Biological and Emotional Impact of Trauma. The training went very well. The audience was engaged and there was a lot of great feedback. Thanks again to the Cadillac Fire Department and Cadillac Police Department for allowing us into their house. And we would like to welcome the City of Cadillac to the ENCOMPASS/BACKING the BADGE Family.

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## Our Fallen Brothers and Sisters; May We Never Forget



As we have mentioned before, we have recently added the Fire Service and Paramedics as clients that we service, along with Law Enforcement. As such, we are adding a category to commemorate fallen Firefighters/Paramedics, as well as LEO's. The lists are quite lengthy. Instead of trying to post them here, I will include a link that will take you to our website that will list all of them. The law enforcement link will take you to our website, the Fire Service link will take you to a different site with a list. This is in the process of being added to the BACKING the BADGE site. May we never forget their sacrifice.

[LEO Tributes](#)

[Firefighter Tributes](#)

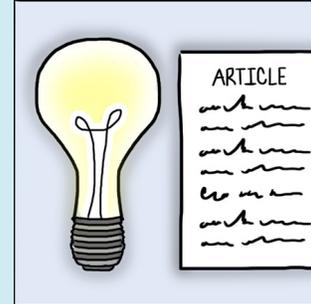
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## Be Part of the BACKING the BADGE Newsletter

Do you have an short article or story that would be relevant and of interest to our Law Enforcement, Firefighter, or Paramedic readers? Please feel free to send them to me and I will include them in the next newsletter. We are always looking for guest authors. They do not have to be long and you do

not have to be a spelling expert. A paragraph or two would be sufficient. Send them to me at [gmbush@encompass.us.com](mailto:gmbush@encompass.us.com)

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## Smoldering Embers

by Battalion Chief Bart Perry (Ret.)

I will say it right up front, I was not a “data guy” during my early years in the Fire Service. I was an operations guy, you know, “dodging danger, ducking death and saving lives. “ I didn’t have time for data let alone an interest for it. As I advanced in my career I began to realize that not only are we a data driven society but the Fire Service was becoming data driven also. Budgets, staffing, equipment design and purchases, turnout and response times, cancer trends and research, you name it, there was someone somewhere with the data on it.

For many years now, the Fire Service has been tracking active duty firefighter deaths with the very noble goal of analyzing each death, aggregating that data to create awareness, prevention initiatives and targeted grant programs that would hopefully impact each year’s cumulative LODD total in a positive way. Not including 2001 data related to 9/11, annual LODD totals have been as high as 174 in 1978 to as low as 61 in 2011. Although the totals have varied over the years, the one piece of data that stayed the same year after year was that the number one cause of LODD in the Fire Service was cardiac arrest. Every firefighter has had this drilled into his or her head, spoon fed year after year. 51% of the LODD in 2015 were cardiac related. Grants awarded, annual physicals focused, gear and equipment designed and more, all to impact the LODD data. Again, a noble and just cause given the data of 47 firefighters died from cardiac related events in 2015.

So..... I am going to share the dirty secret of the Fire Service, something that we are just now starting to get our arms around as a profession. **WE ARE TAKING OUR OWN LIVES AT A DOCUMENTED RATE OF AT LEAST DOUBLE THAT OF HEART ATTACKS.** This according to Retired Fire Captain Jeff Dill, founder of the Firefighter Behavioral Health



Alliance. The FFBHA is the foremost authority in data collection of Firefighter and EMS Suicides. Dill's website, [www.ffbh.org](http://www.ffbh.org) shows 99 documented firefighter suicides in 2016 and as of this writing 66 in 2017, and these numbers are estimated to be under reported by 40-50%. This data is by anyone's measure, nothing short of a BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EPIDEMIC for the Fire Service.....but because it is "Suicide" it is viewed by our society as shameful and subsequently not acknowledged as a LODD. We must embrace the data, we must embrace the self-evident fact that the Fire Profession is full of behavioral health pitfalls that we are all vulnerable to at some point in our careers. We must advocate for better data, educational awareness, cultural change and prevention within our organizations and appropriate funding to address our epidemic. Please take some time to visit the FFBHA website .....very important data work for the Fire Profession and our future.

I cannot close this column without acknowledging all responders working this summer's large scale events.....from the hurricanes in Houston, Florida and Puerto Rico to the mass shooting in Las Vegas and the on-going wildland/urban interface fires in California. Ask yourself what type behavioral health issues they must be facing as individuals and organizations? Let us keep them in our thoughts and prayers. Stay Low My Friends.

**-BART**

*Bart Perry recently retired as a Battalion Chief for the Grand Rapids Fire Department after over 30 years of service. Chief Perry has over 20 years of experience as a departmental Critical Incident leader, and has conducted hundreds of debriefings and one-on-one consultations. He is a graduate of Davenport College, the National Fire Academy and maintains certifications as a Paramedic & EMS Instructor Coordinator. He recently joined the BACKING the BADGE team, and is spearheading our Fire Service initiative.*



**Who can**

**Normal People:**

“Awwwww, what a beautiful full moon!”

**Police, Firefighters and Paramedics:**

“Oh Crap!!!!”

**relate to this?**

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## **BADGE and BALANCE: Helpful Hints** by

**Dr. Alison Brown**



Saying something positive to a co-worker of yours today will help you as well. When you are intentional to acknowledge something that was done well you boost your own brain chemistry. Being toxic or healthy is a choice.

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STAY CONNECTED

