



A SALUTE TO

HOMETOWN HEROES

in the counties of Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Prince Edward and the Town of Farmville



A special supplement to *The Farmville Herald*, *The Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch* and *The Charlotte Gazette*

JUNE 2024



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New K9 officer hits the streets

BY TRACY AGNEW

CHARLOTTE

There's a new officer to take a bite out of crime in Charlotte County.

K9 officer Buddy has hit the streets for the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, and he's already gotten his paws wet with callouts for drug detection and missing persons, both in Charlotte County as well as neighboring jurisdictions.

His human partner, Sgt. T.J. Hathaway, has considerable experience in law enforcement in general as well as with police K9s. In his 19-year career with the Department of Corrections and local sheriff's offices, he has worked with five police K9s in all.

"The nose knows," Hathaway said of Buddy, who is a Dutch shepherd. "He's great. I consider myself fortunate to be able to get a dog."

Buddy has been in the field for a little

over a month but already has been called out on approximately four drug-related calls as well as three tracking calls. In two of the tracking calls, in Charlotte County and Prince Edward County, Buddy located the missing person.

"I want to thank Sgt. T.J. Hathaway and K9 Buddy with the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office for assisting us with searching for Mr. Wright," said Prince Edward County Sheriff Tony Epps in a statement. "Buddy led us to Mr. Wright in less than 45 minutes and we were able to bring him home to his family safely."

In the third call, in Halifax County, the track was unsuccessful, but the missing person was still found after Buddy left.

"It obviously is a great feeling when you can find an innocent person that's lost or not in the right frame of mind,"



Buddy, a new K9 officer in Charlotte County, has already been successful in finding missing persons and keeping drugs off the street in Charlotte and surrounding counties.



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C E N T R A



Hathaway said. "But I don't take credit for any of that. I'm pretty much holding the leash."

SOME IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Hathaway said there are important considerations in tracking a missing person that family members should be aware of.

"Everybody wants to go out and try to start looking for that missing family member," Hathaway said. "They want to delay notifying law enforcement until the family has given up, and then they call for help. But it really needs to be the exact opposite of that."

Hathaway said the passage of time decreases the amount of scent left for the dog to trace. In addition, other people walking around can contaminate the area with other scents, also making it harder for the dog to trace the missing person.

Hathaway said items like pillowcases, hats, shirts and pants can all have the person's scent on them. It's important to get an article that's recently worn or used by the missing person but not contaminated by a different person's scent.

Sheriff James R. "Randy" Grissom said the ability to use dogs to find missing persons is a vital element of the K9 program. His office also has another K9 named Ghost, handled by Sgt. Earhart.

"I feel the tracking aspect is the most important," he wrote in an email. "When we receive calls for missing

persons either in Charlotte County or other jurisdictions, we have Buddy and Ghost to provide help in locating that person."

On the drug detection side of his job, Buddy can get called out for traffic stops as well as search warrants, school searches and searches at jails.

Buddy was trained at Ventosa K9 in Scotland Neck, N.C. Hathaway was there for the training.

"It's a lot of repetition," Hathaway said. "Building the foundation and then just repetition after repetition."

Learning how to read the dog is also vital, Hathaway said.

"All of them are different," he continued. "Before you can be certified as a team, obviously you have to know how to read them proficiently."

Buddy lives at home with Hathaway, who is pleased with how he and Buddy are coming together as a team. "I think he's doing very well so far," he said.

Grissom is positive about the continuing K9 program in Charlotte County Sheriff's Office.

"The use of K9s in law enforcement has always been very vital," he said. "Their use to combat crime is just one element that we use K9s for daily. Our handlers, Sgt. Earhart and Sgt. Hathaway, are very committed to their extensive ongoing training and absolutely love their partners. I encourage every agency to invest in a K9 program for their departments."



Sgt. TJ Hathaway and his K9 partner Buddy have already made a splash, both in Charlotte County and the surrounding areas.

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New deputy signs on

BY TRACY AGNEW

BUCKINGHAM

Frank Denaro knew as he was growing up that he wanted to be in law enforcement as an adult.

The Cumberland County native took inspiration from his mom's brother, Cumberland Sheriff Darrell Hodges.

"Growing up, I was really close with my uncle," Denaro said. "I knew I wanted to be like him when I got older."

Childhood aspirations have become reality for Denaro. The 22-year-old is now fresh out of the academy and working for the Buckingham County Sheriff's Office, having graduated on June 12.

Denaro said he enjoyed learning about defensive driving and firearms training at the academy, which involves close to six months of 12-hour days learning the basics of law enforcement.

"Getting up in the mornings and hav-

ing to go to PT (personal training) was definitely the hardest part," he said. "They had a lot to teach and a lot for me to learn."

Despite growing up in Cumberland, Denaro wound up choosing Buckingham because of another personal connection found through family. His sister works with the spouse of a Buckingham County Sheriff's Office lieutenant, who provided him the opportunity to do some ride-alongs before he officially signed on.

"I started doing the ride-alongs, and I fell in love with Buckingham and that convinced me to go there," Denaro said.

His first few days on the job have involved field training with Sgt. Clay Naff to apply the knowledge he learned at the academy.

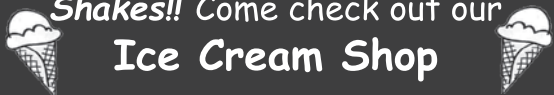
"I have to show I learned everything,"



Deputy Frank Denaro is the latest new member of the Buckingham County Sheriff's Office. Pictured at his graduation are, from left, Sheriff William G. "Bill" Kidd Jr., Deputy Frank Denaro, Capt. Jamerson and Lt. Bryant.

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he said. "It was a lot of fun to get out there and do some practicals."

Sheriff William G. "Billy" Kidd Jr. is pleased with the addition of Denaro to the office's ranks, which now number about 20. Finding good people is hard these days, he said.

"We have one more going through the academy currently, and once she gets out, that will put us up to where we're supposed to be," Kidd added. "It's been a struggle. Anytime you turn around, somebody's leaving."

Kidd said Denaro came through the academy with flying colors, which was no surprise given his family history.

"He's got good examples around him," Kidd said. "He's kind of a quiet guy, and he's easy to get along with, and a lot of people at the graduation told me so."

Denaro said he looks forward to getting to know people and being a source of support for them.

"I'd like to be that person that people can call on for help, someone who's always there for them," Denaro said. "I'm looking forward to getting to know more people in the community so I can be that person for them."

Kidd said that outlook will serve Denaro well in his department.

"Basically, what I'm looking for is people that treat people like they'd like to be treated if they were in a similar circumstance," Denaro said. "You can get your job done without causing a lot of friction — not always, but most of the time."



Photo by Dan Pempel

Coordination of resources is essential

Multiple area fire departments help fight a large brush fire in Pamplin that ended up burning a structure as well in March of 2023.

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Honor Guard lights the way to remembrance

BY TRACY AGNEW

Nurses devote their lives to caring for others, so it seems only fitting they should be honored for that service when they pass away.

A local group is forming that will pay tribute to nurses at their funerals and memorial services, free of charge, when requested by their families.

Claudia Meinhard, chief nursing officer at Centra Southside Community Hospital, said she got the idea when a colleague passed away several months ago and someone asked if there was a Nurses Honor Guard locally.

There wasn't, so Mein-

hard decided to bring it into existence.

The new group held its first meeting during National Nurses Week in May.

"It's a volunteer organization," Meinhard said. "No one is paid to do this. This is just a group of nurses who want to honor colleagues at the time of their death."

When requested by the family of a deceased nurse, the honor guard will visit the funeral or memorial service in traditional nurses' garb, including white uniforms, caps and capes. They will perform a short tribute, individualized according to the family's wishes, which can include reciting the nurses' prayer, the Nightingale pledge or the



Here's a look at the Heart of Virginia Nursing Honor Guard that works out of Centra Southside Community Hospital in Farmville. On the front row, from left, is Rose Payne and Claudia Meinhard. The middle row, from left, includes Teresa Smith, Hannah Spencer and Jackie Garrett, while the back row is Alma Cornell, Cheryl Pleasants and Breda Ravagli.

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Nightingale tribute. A recitation officially releasing the nurse from their duties of care can also be given.

Meinhard said the honor guard can also carry in a lit Nightingale lamp, which they will extinguish as part of the ceremony. The honor guard will then present the lamp to the family.

NAMED AFTER NIGHTINGALE

Many of the items and recitations are named after the influential nurse, Florence Nightingale, who cared for British soldiers during the Crimean War beginning in 1854 and continued to advocate for sanitation and other safe healthcare practices until her death.

A white rose laid on the casket or urn can also be part of the ceremony, Meinhard said. The honor guard will also learn more about the nurse from family members, including how long they nursed and their specialty, so they can further individualize it.

Meinhard said she has looped in Centra colleagues and is now starting to notify nurses outside of the Centra network to find others who would like to participate. It is not a Centra program, and any nurse is welcome.

"We really want to open this up to them," Meinhard said of nursing colleagues throughout the area.

The group is also networking with funeral homes and hospices to notify them the service is available

for the families they serve.

"It doesn't matter if you're actively nursing at the time of your death or if you were a nurse 20 years ago," Meinhard said. "You're eligible if you were a nurse."

Meinhard said she and many nurses feel driven to honor their colleagues in this special way because of the bonds they share.

"I just think there's camaraderie there," she said. "It demonstrates respect for a career where you were taking care of others, and somebody's recognizing that."

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Any active or retired Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Registered Nurse (RN) or Advanced Practice Nurse (APRN) whose memorial service or funeral is within the service area is eligible for the honor guard's services, Meinhard said.

The service area is the counties of Prince Edward, Cumberland, Buckingham, Appomattox, Charlotte,

Lunenburg, Nottoway and Amelia, although Meinhard said she is checking with the Richmond-based Nurses Honor Guard to ensure they are not overlapping boundaries in the easternmost portions of Amelia County.

The group is still organizing and ordering supplies and hopes to be up and running by September. Meinhard said supplies will be funded by modest membership dues from participating nurses, as well as donations. There will be no charge to families of those honored.

Meinhard is available for contact from nurses who wish to participate by calling her at 434-315-2431 or emailing claudia.meinhard@centrahealth.com. Rose Payne is her co-lead.

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How can I pursue an EMS career?

Emergency medical personnel are often first on the scene when someone experiences an accident or a medical emergency. EMS workers are generally trained and certified as certified first responders, emergency medical technicians and paramedics. However, the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians recognizes five different levels of emergency medical service workers. Though similar, the requirements governing each type of EMS worker vary.

All EMS workers provide life-saving services and help transport individuals to hospitals for additional treatment and care. Here is a deep look into the different EMS personnel and the training one might expect.

CERTIFIED FIRST RESPONDER

A certified first responder is an integral member of an EMS team. These individuals provide basic medical care at the scene of emergencies, including basic first aid, stabilization of injuries, treating shock, and other tasks. First responders must be certified by the National Registry of Emergency Technicians, according to Learn.org. The American Red Cross offers first responder training courses. Certification requirements vary by state, and each state's EMS office can provide specific details.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

According to the UCLA Center for Prehospital Care, EMTs complete a course that is a minimum of 170 hours. One does not need to have previous medical experience to become an EMT,

but eligibility requirements may vary from school to school and state to state. For example, to be EMT eligible in California, a person must be 18 years of age. In Pennsylvania, one must be 16 years of age and the training course is

240 hours and includes both classroom and practical lab scenarios. Like certified first responders, EMTs must pass the NREMT examination in order to obtain certification. EMTs can be EMT-B (basic) or one of two EMT-I (intermediate).

PARAMEDIC

Paramedic students complete many more hours of training that may last between six and 12 months. Coursework builds on EMT education and blends additional medical training, including courses in anatomy, cardiology, medication, and physiology. Paramedics will take part in lectures, skills labs and a hospital internship, followed by an EMS field internship before passing the national certification exam. Upon passing, these individuals will receive the highest certification of pre-hospital care in the United

States.

EMS workers provide life-saving medical care and are often first on a scene when a medical emergency takes place. Working as part of an EMS team is a demanding but rewarding career.



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Safety officials honored

BY BRIAN CARLTON

CUMBERLAND

Cheryl Bolden was the dispatcher April 16 when the call came in. Right around 11:16 p.m., paramedics were sent out to a Cumberland home for a patient possibly seizing. But when she took the call, Bolden realized there was something else happening.

“(She) quickly recognized it was more than just a seizure, that someone in the background (of the call) was performing CPR,” said Cumberland Fire Chief Andy Aigner. “She let the medic on duty know what was occurring.”

The medic, in turn, asked her to implement Cumberland’s cardiac arrest policy.

“What that did was it got law enforcement and (the) fire department to respond, which gave us extra hands,” Aigner said.

As a result of her actions, Bolden, along with many others who helped that night, has been honored by the American Heart Association with their Heart Saver Award.

“This is more than just a good thing they’ve done,” Aigner said of his staff members. “It’s very rare. In 34 years, I’ve had two people from a cardiac arrest come home.”

And you can add this case now to the list, as thanks to everyone, the patient

was able to recover.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE CALL

After Bolden notified Kayla Lewis, the medic that night who responded, she arrived and quickly took over giving CPR. She also gave what Aigner called life-saving drugs, while following the protocol and administering several shocks to the heart from the Automated External Defibrillator on hand.

In addition to Lewis, Aigner heralded the efforts of Sheriff’s Deputy Ryan Bates, who was quick to arrive on scene.

“He did a lot of the talking on the radio for those folks,” Aigner said. “He did a great job of communicating what was going on.”

The group had immediately called for a helicopter, which arrived to take the patient to Centra Southside in Farmville. Once stabilized at that hospital, the patient was sent to UVA for further care.

In addition to Lewis, Bolden and Bates, Aigner singled out Lt. Anthony Price, recently graduated from Cumberland High and a lieutenant in the fire department, for his efforts at the scene.

All of those who helped save the patient’s life were given the Heart Saver Award from the American Heart Association during the June meeting of the Cumberland County Board of Supervisors.

It’s an annual award, given out by the American Heart Association to firefighters and EMS workers, citizens, dispatchers and other public safety personnel. The AHA say on their website this award is their way of saying thank you.

“We want to recognize the heroes that have stepped in to help save a life during an emergency,” the AHA say on the website. “You have not only helped save a life within your community,

but you are also partnering with the American Heart Association to improve the survival rate of citizens who receive bystander CPR.”

As the Cumberland honorees got a round of applause after receiving their award, Aigner put the situation in perspective.

“(The patient) is living and standing today due to their heroic efforts,” he said.

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Every community has its unsung heroes. Without the contributions of selfless individuals whose efforts often go unnoticed, thriving communities would not be as safe, welcoming or successful.

EMS workers are among the most important individuals in a community. The contributions of these individuals, many of whom work as unpaid volunteers, are invaluable and worthy of recognition. Making an effort to under-

stand the role EMS workers play is a great first step toward showing them how much they're appreciated.

WHAT IS EMS?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of EMS notes that Emergency Medical Services, or EMS, is a system that provides emergency medical care. The Office of EMS also notes that EMS does not exist in isolation, as it is integrated with other



services and systems with the goal of maintaining and enhancing the health and safety of a community and its residents. This is why EMS services, though they vary from community to community, may be based in fire departments, hospitals, independent government agencies, or nonprofit corporations.

WHAT DUTIES DO EMS WORKERS PERFORM?

Because EMS is a system, EMS workers wear a range of hats. The Office of EMS notes that the responsibilities and services EMS workers provide may include:

- Incident recognition
- Access 911
- Dispatch
- First responder
- Basic life support

- Advanced life support
- Air/ground transport
- Emergency department services
- Specialty care
- Patient rehabilitation
- Prevention and awareness
- Public education

WHEN DO EMS PERSONNEL INTERACT WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES?

Many people only encounter EMS workers during medical emergencies when they are most in need of help. That underscores the vital role EMS workers play in public health and safety and just how integral they are in instances that could escalate into life-or-death situations.

Recognition of the roles EMS workers play is a great way to show support for these often unsung community heroes.

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How to help police officers cope with stress

A career in law enforcement can be highly rewarding, but it also can require officers to confront extreme levels of stress. Tasked with the vital job of maintaining law and order, as well as investigating crimes and serving as community role models, police officers face extraordinary situations every day. Quite often police officers are exposed to high levels of trauma and must do their jobs under strict scrutiny from superiors as well as the public.

Law enforcement is a high-risk occupation. Officers frequently are exposed to violence, human suffering, physically demanding work, and nonstandard/rotating schedules. In fact, Time magazine ranked policing as the fourth most stressful profession after enlisted military personnel, firefighters and pilots.

Police departments conduct background investigations and psychological screenings of police candidates to find applicants with the right dispositions to perform the job. Even individuals tailor-made for the job can succumb to the stress of working in law enforcement. Many officers may develop anxiety, depression and symptoms commensurate with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. That is why adequate support and readily available access to stress and trauma relief can be vital for officers' well-being. There are many

different ways the public and police departments can help officers confront the effects of the job on their physical and mental health.

Educate personnel about policies and keep officers in the know. According to retired lieutenant and police instructor Brian McKenna, one of the biggest stressors police officers face is not out on the streets, but in the work environment.

It's the politics, poor supervision, things coming down from administration that don't make sense, and so on, McKenna says.

Officers who understand the laws and why certain policies and restrictions are in place are better equipped to make smart decisions. Keeping the flow of information open within departments can help.

Provide access to exercise. The mental health resource Psychology Dictionary advises that cardiovascular activity is important for anyone who has a physically demanding job. It also is an excellent stress reliever. Access to a gym at the precinct can help. Fitness facilities can do their part to support law enforcement by offering free or discounted memberships to local law enforcement.

Match officers strengths with their assignments. While it is impractical to accommodate an officer in every way,

administrators can take more time to align officers' skills and strengths with positions in the department that most effectively utilize their skill sets. Satisfaction in a position, as well as doing the job effectively, can make a long-term positive impact that reduces stress.

Build a support system. Officers need people they can talk to. Peer-to-peer support is important, but a good group

of friends, compassionate family members and a supportive local community can help officers overcome the challenges associated with their profession.

Local law enforcement officials provide vital services to the communities they serve. Those communities can show their appreciation by supporting officers as they confront the unique challenges a career in law enforcement presents.

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Dispatchers are also known as the 'first' First Responders

Pictured are Emergency Communications Manager Crystal Barton and the Farmville Emergency Communications Center staff. When you dial 911 and get a dispatcher it is one of these staffers that helps you with your emergency situation.



*Thank you first responders,
for all that you do for our community.*

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Town pays tribute to past, present heroes

BY NATE PENTECOST

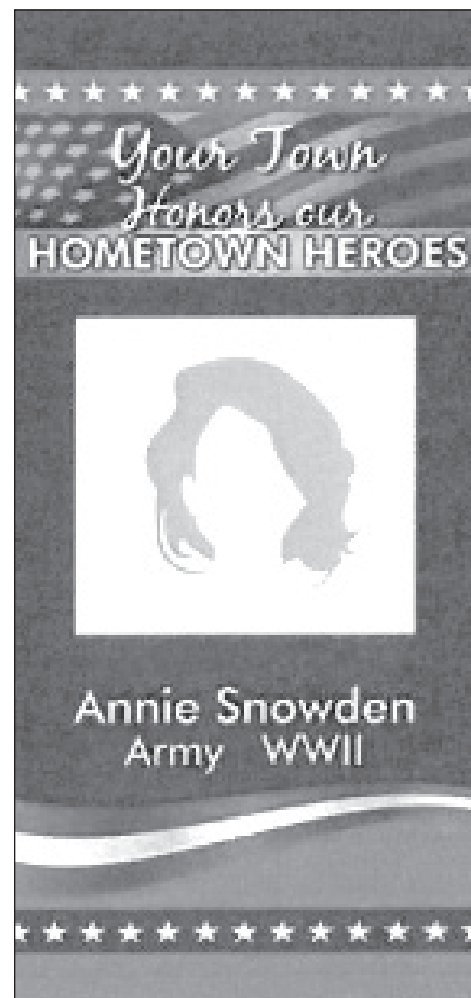
You start to notice them as you drive into town. The banners are up throughout Main Street and the connecting roads, spotlighting paying tribute to 34 heroes in the Town of Victoria. This marks the second year for the town's "Hometown Hero" Banner Program, a way residents can honor military, EMS, police and other safety personnel in the community.

It starts off with applications each year. Residents either drop by the town office or visit the town website, nominating candidates by late fall. With only 34 spots available on the light poles, it truly becomes a first come, first serve competition each year to get people recognized. Next year, with 11 new light poles, it'll give even more opportunities to honor friends and family. Now it's not free. There are two different types of banners, and residents have to pay for the one they want.

A double-sided single-person banner displaying the same picture and wording on both sides is available for \$134. A double-sided two-person banner displaying a different picture and wording on each side is available for \$150.

The banners typically go up in mid-

January and run through mid-June each year. Then at the end of the display period, residents can choose



VICTORIA

to either take the banner home or allow the town to keep it, to use the next year. This year, however, there was a delay in getting the banners made and then getting them up on the street, so that they weren't installed until mid-May. As a result, they'll be up a bit longer than normal. Town officials say that regardless of when they went up,

applications will still be taken this fall for next year's group.

It's a project that started in 2023, as the community looked for ways beyond a parade or written tribute to honor people. They also wanted to go beyond just focusing on soldiers, so they opened it up to current or former police, EMS, dispatchers and others who contribute to make the community safe.

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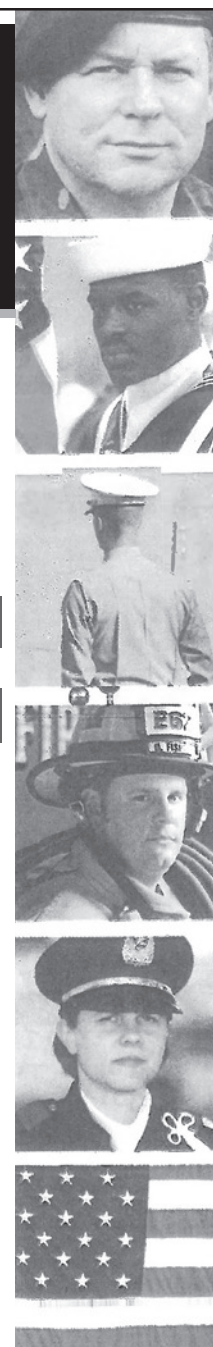
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Why law enforcement is essential

Much of 2024 has been dominated by newsmaking events that have made the year one few people will soon forget. Unprecedented and stressful circumstances can contribute to spirited debates and uncertainty about the future. Complicated situations can affect people in many ways, but the public may be wise to take some cues on how to navigate challenging situations from the professionals who routinely find themselves confronting adversity.

Law enforcement officers who don the uniform each and every day routinely put others first in the name of public

safety. According to the National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund, there are now more than 800,000 sworn law enforcement officers serving in the United States, which is the highest figure ever. Officers often step up to serve despite the risks associated with working in law enforcement. A total of 1,627 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty over the past 10 years. There were 135 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in 2019 alone.

Law enforcement personnel serve many important roles in the communities they serve. Here's a closer look at the integral roles of police and other law

enforcement personnel.

MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER

The police force is made up of many different departments with the collective goal of maintaining law and order. Traffic police are responsible for enforcing the rules of the road and minimizing the chance of accidents. Other departments canvas the streets ensuring that residents' civil liberties are not being compromised.

SAVE LIVES

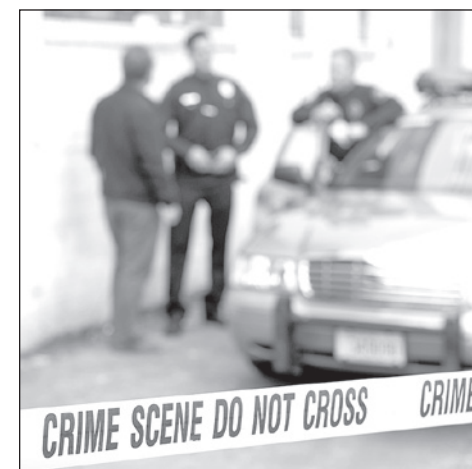
Whether they are preventing a life-threatening crime or administering emergency medical care at a car accident until an ambulance can arrive, law enforcement officers save lives every day.

ASSIST IN ADVERSE SITUATIONS

Police officers often fill the role of counselor or friend to people who find themselves in difficult situations. An officer can play a part in helping people make better life choices in the future. Training in situational de-escalation also means police officers are capable of defusing difficult situations before they snowball into serious, potentially life-threatening confrontations.

INVESTIGATE CRIMES

Police are the first people to respond when crimes have been committed.



These individuals investigate the situation and find the perpetrator.

FOSTER STRONG COMMUNITIES

Law enforcement officers share a unique solidarity with other officers, peers, community leaders, and even medical professionals, which helps to create a strong fabric for a community. Officers frequently have each other's backs as well as the respect and support of the public for putting their lives on the line.

Law enforcement is an essential component of orderly, safe and supportive communities. Recognizing and respecting the important role law enforcement officials play is a great way to show them how much their efforts and sacrifices are appreciated.

Thank You First Responders!

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How to honor first responders

First responders play a vital role in our communities, making countless sacrifices to ensure that people are safe and have peaceful places to call home.

Donate to local fire departments. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, 54 percent of active firefighting personnel are volunteers. Many of those volunteer firefighters work for underfunded departments that are in need of financial support. Donating to such departments is a great way to show first responders how much their efforts are appreciated. Donations may be used to purchase new equipment, upgrade existing facilities, provide

vital training, and/or improve response times, the latter of which can increase the likelihood that firefighters make it through calls safe and sound.

You can support legislation to support wounded first responders. Many first responders suffer significant mental and physical injuries while on the job. Various nonprofit organizations help wounded first responders who may need to make modifications to their homes or purchase costly equipment to get through their daily lives. But nonprofit organizations cannot go it alone in support of wounded first responders. Citizens can do their part by promoting and

voting for local, state and national legislation that makes it easy for wounded first responders to get the help they need, when they need it. In addition to urging local politicians to support such legislation, private citizens can utilize social media to promote proposals and other efforts to support wounded first responders.

Commit to supporting first responders year-round. First responders deserve vocal, year-round support. Make a concerted effort to thank policemen, firefighters, EMTs, nurses, and doctors in your community whenever you interact with them, and urge others to follow suit.



Thank you to all first responders who help and serve our community everyday!

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Matthews focuses on respect, honor and family

BY NATE PENTECOST

Throughout his life, Tony Matthews' family has focused on three things.

The Navy veteran, who now serves as town manager for Kenbridge, learned about honor, respect and family values growing up.

"My family helped me learn so many lessons growing up that have transposed to my life and career now," Matthews told the K-V Dispatch.

Born in Farmville and growing up in Keysville, Matthews took part in the JROTC program during high school, before enlisting in the U.S. Navy. He had ambitions to work on airplanes and in five and a half years of service he reached Petty Officer 2nd Class.

"I got to learn so much," said Matthews of his time in the military. "I learned how to launch airplanes from the flight deck of carriers, take off and land on the flight deck on airplanes, and I helped train pilots and rio's during flight

school for the E-2C Hawkeye."

The Farmville native said being away from his family and impending deployments were the most difficult parts of being in the Navy. Matthews said the sacrifice was worth serving the U.S. in the armed forces.

"(It was rewarding) being able to serve my country and know that I was taking my place beside so many that had served before me," Matthews said.

HONORED BY THE COMMUNITY

What caught him by surprise was the fact members of his community wanted to honor him for his service. They applied in nearby Victoria and got permission to make Matthews one of this year's Hometown Hero banners. The Town of Victoria's Hometown Hero Banner Program is acknowledging the contributions and sacrifices made by Matthews and dozens of other military and safety personnel members in the community for their



Tony
Matthews

KENBRIDGE

service. The program includes a display of banners depicting the honorees along the 34 light poles on Main Street and the connecting side streets with street lights.

"Personally, this is an honor that I am so grateful for," Matthews said. "I am honored to be thought of as a hero, but really am just a guy who wanted to fulfill a spot in in the lineage of our country and make my family and my hometown proud."

Matthews went on to emphasize the appreciation the community has shown

over the years to its service people in Lunenburg County.

"This community has long been proud of its military and veterans", he said. "We are a very patriotic community that does not take for granted the sacrifices that its members make day to day to keep us safe and democracy flowing."

MOVING UP THE RANKS

Since leaving the military, Matthews has worn many hats, including owner/operator of Matthews Lawn Care for 20 years, captain of the Kenbridge Volunteer Fire Department, league director for Community Girls Softball for 20 years, district director for Dixie Softball for the last three years, and numerous community service projects.

Named Kenbridge Town Manager in 2019, Matthews in part credits his time serving the county as part of the U.S. armed forces for contributing to providing him the skills necessary to serve the community of Kenbridge in his current role.

"I was fortunate to move up

the ranks fairly quickly which gave me a leadership role as a shift supervisor, flight line controller, and aircraft final checker," he explained. "I was directly responsible for a crew of men and women, and directly responsible for equipment and aircraft. I equate a lot of the skills I learned from those days to being able to help me prioritize and give special attention to things here in Kenbridge."

Matthews currently lives in Kenbridge with his wife, Beth. The couple have raised eight children together. The Town Manager reflects back to that strong family upbringing for the closeness in his home and for his successes serving the community as well.

"My grandfather was a man of many lessons, I only wish I had paid more attention while I was growing up," Matthews said. "A large family with many branches on our tree has helped me prepare for the ability to listen to all aspects of life and try to put myself in their shoes and see things from all perspectives."

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How can we show support for EMS?

The often unheralded contributions of first responders garnered considerable attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the early days of the pandemic, when much about COVID-19 was still a mystery, first responders put their lives on the line and worked long hours to help people in need.

EMS workers were on the front lines in the fight against COVID-19. Even though life has now returned to normal, EMS workers continue to bravely provide an invaluable public service. The contributions of EMS workers are worthy of recognition and celebration. The National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians suggests these community-based efforts can be great ways to

celebrate EMS workers who save lives and help make their towns and cities safe each and every day.

HOST A BLOOD DRIVE

A blood shortage during the pandemic left many hospitals scrambling for potentially life-saving blood. Though the American Red Cross indicated the blood supply had stabilized in the early months of 2023, shortages remain a possibility. Community leaders can work alongside local EMS agencies and help them to organize local blood drives to reduce vulnerability to shortages in the future. Leaders and local business leaders can work together to offer incentives to donors, such as discounted meals, items or services at popular



restaurants, stores and service providers in town.

HIGHLIGHT EMS WORKERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Many locals now get their community news and other information from social media accounts linked to township offices and departments. Lead-

ers can use these platforms to shine a light on local EMS workers. Interview a different EMS worker each month, speaking to them about what inspired them to become a first responder and what they like about the job, but also their own interests and hobbies when they are not on duty.

HIGHLIGHT LIFE-SAVING EFFORTS

Communities also can utilize social media platforms and other programs to showcase EMS workers who have gone to extraordinary lengths to help others. Share information about EMS workers who have saved a life and even promote public events when those workers are commended. Encourage people affected by EMS workers' life-saving efforts, includ-

ing the person who was saved and their family members, to share their stories and express their appreciation.

LET RESIDENTS TOUR EMS FACILITIES

It's easy to take EMS workers for granted because they do not often seek attention. But that does not mean they're not worthy. Allow locals to tour EMS facilities during certain times each month, which can help locals gain greater recognition of everything EMS workers do to keep communities safe.

EMS workers are worthy of recognition and celebration. There are many ways for community leaders and residents to express their appreciation to these invaluable workers.



Thank you first responders
for your service and dedication
to our community.

We appreciate all of your hard work!

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FIRST RESPONDERS
FOR ALL YOU DO!**



**Town of
Victoria**



WE COUNT ON YOU!

For the important role you play in protecting our lives and for your brave and selfless sacrifice, we thank you, the dedicated men and women of our communities' emergency response teams, for all you do.

We gratefully recognize your service and we honor the memories of those who have fallen in the line of duty.

YOU ARE ALL HEROES. THANK YOU!

Stay safe. Stay well.

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