

LOCAL HEROES



HONORING OUR FIRST RESPONDERS

The Daily Home & The St. Clair Times — May 2017

‘IT JUST TAKES YOUR INNOCENCE’



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

First responders cope with demands of life-and-death work

By CHRIS NORWOOD
Home staff writer

Earlier this year, Talladega County resident Jan Fowler happened upon the disturbing scene of a traffic accident that had happened moments before.

Parking her own vehicle and approaching the accident site to see if she could be of assistance to the seriously-injured driver, Fowler said she prayed with him and for him as first responders worked to save his life.

Despite their efforts, the driver died. “I’m so sorry. They worked really hard for him,” Fowler later said in a Facebook post, prompting discussion, in a month that includes National Police Week, International Firefighters Day and Emergency Medical Services Week, about how first responders are affected by the work they do.

Kimberly Rivenbark said she’s wanted to be a paramedic since she was 16 years old.

“I just knew,” she said.

The North Star EMS paramedic and her coworkers all agreed recently that it takes a special kind of person to be a first responder.

“It certainly isn’t for the money,” manager David White said.

“It was just too late for me to become a doctor,” joked Rory Andrews.

White explained that part of the attraction is that every call is potentially “a new challenge. We never know what we’re going to find when we get there.”

The constantly changing nature of the job can be jarring and intriguing.

“A lot of the calls we get end up being nothing like dispatch says they are,” Paramedic Mariah Campbell said. “It’s exciting.”

Rivenbark agreed. “We tend to be adrenaline junkies,” she said.

“And it’s not all of them,” said

paramedic Thomas Wheat, “but a lot of the time, our decisions can change everything.”

Needless to say, that adrenaline-driven excitement can be a recipe for stress -- especially when it’s a matter of life and death.

“It’s mental and physical,” White said.

“You see us around here at zero, but as soon as those tones go off, we’re at 100 percent, full-bore. It’s not just the lights and sirens, there are the hazards on the way, what you’ll do at the scene. You’ll make medical decisions, get them to the hospital, and then you’re back to zero again. There’s really no mid-range.”

Andrews said the mindset of a first responder has to be flexible and readily adaptable. Wheat agreed, adding that it also means there are few who truly relate to the job, and even fewer who have what it takes to do it.

“It can be hard for other people to understand,” Wheat said. “We all have to find our own ways to cope. It’s different for everybody. But what we’re going through, other people have gone through, too.”

The paramedics said the job of a first-responder can be difficult even for family members to understand.

“There’s a lot of camaraderie,” Campbell said, “because nobody else can really understand.”

“This group here,” White said, “they get it even when our own families look at us like we’re crazy.”

White said how first responders deal with the physical and emotional stress of the job varies from person to person.

“You have to develop your own coping mechanisms, and some of them are better than others,” he said.

“Some people, through no fault of their own, just can’t do it. EMS, police officers, firefighters, all have problems outside work with things like insomnia, depression and (post traumatic stress disorder) ...

“None of us are unaffected,” he added.

“We all have our own ways of coping.”

And many of those ways require leaning on co-workers who likely understand better than anyone.

“Even when we’re not working, we hang out, go fishing ... we have that understanding with each other,” White said. “We need to separate from ourselves.”

One way of coping is to make each emergency call its own, and try not to carry the last call into the next call.

“You have to learn to compartmentalize,” Andrews said. “You think about something until you take the next call, and then it’s over.”

Another coping mechanism is laughter.

“You need a really good sense of humor,” Campbell said. “You have to be able to joke and cut up after a rough call.”

Even so, each of the responders seems to have a particular call that has stuck with them.

“There’s an intersection in Winterboro

that I just can’t go through anymore,” said Andrews, recalling a particularly horrible accident.

White says he has spots like that also. “It just takes your innocence,” he explained.

This group, however, may have gone through one of the most difficult calls a first responder can answer.

“We had to run on one of our own,” White said, referring to a traffic accident last summer involving a paramedic, who died from a broken neck.

“That was a horrific accident, and we had to work on him just like we would anybody else,” he said. “When it was over, we grieved as a family, but we still had to do our jobs. That was absolutely our darkest hour, by far ...”

Of course, not all the calls are as dramatic or emotional.

“It definitely gives you a high -- a sense of gratification that you don’t get a lot -- when things go right,” White said. “It refuels the drive to keep doing this.”



Chris Norwood/The Daily Home

North Star paramedics Kimberly Rivenbark, Thomas Wheat, Rory Andrews, David White and Mariah Campbell at their offices in Talladega.

Thank you for joining us in saluting these heroes of our community

This special publication of The Daily Home serves to recognize a group of individuals whose work and presence in local communities can too often be taken for granted.

First responders -- peace officers, firefighters, EMTs and paramedics, 911 dispatchers, emergency service providers -- have been described as those who run toward, not away from, dangerous and tragic situations to provide order and safety, life-saving medical care and comfort to those who have been affected by accidents, fires or natural disasters.

Talladega and St. Clair counties are home to hundreds of dedicated, service-minded individuals who make up the following first responder organizations.

- Talladega County and St. Clair County sheriff’s offices and the police departments of Talladega, Lincoln, Sylacauga, Childersburg, Munford, Argo, Ashville, Margaret, Moody, Odenville, Pell City, Ragland, Riverside, Springville and Steele.
- Talladega County’s municipal and volunteer fire and rescue departments:

Talladega, Lincoln, Sylacauga, Childersburg, Berney Station, County Line, Eastaboga, East Providence, Fayetteville, Ironaton, Lanier, Lay Lake, Munford, Oak Grove, Renfro, Stemley, Sycamore, Waldo and Winterboro.

- TSt. Clair County’s municipal and volunteer fire and rescue departments: Argo, Ashville, Margaret, Moody, Odenville, Pell City, Ragland, Riverside, Springville, Steele, Cook Springs, Cool Springs, Davis Lake, Friendship, Gallant, New London, Northeast St. Clair, Pinedale, Pleasant Hill,

Shoal Creek, Wattsville, Wolf Creek and Whitney.

- Talladega County 911 Center, Talladega County Emergency Management Agency, St. Clair County Emergency Management Agency, St. Clair County E-911, Regional Paramedical Services, Northstar Emergency Medical Services, Alabama Forestry Commission and the St. Clair County Fire & EMS Association.

Although The Daily Home reached out to all of these agencies with an invitation to contribute to this special publication, not all were able to.

That’s understandable, given how busy first responders are. They remain constantly on call, ready to provide whatever assistance is called for. Many are volunteers, rendering their services without pay while working full-time jobs and caring for family responsibilities.

These individuals and agencies are worthy of appreciation, and The Daily Home -- and the advertisers who have made this publication possible -- thank you for joining us in saluting these valued members of our communities.

Ironaton Volunteer Fire Department

About the department: Its one centralized station and 23 members serve as many as 800 homes.

Members include Haley Armbruster, Lt. Lucas Armbruster, Scott Armbruster, Jason Blackburn, Auburn Blackwood, Shane Blackwood, Dale Daughtery, Cpt. Drew Gallman, Hillari Hallmark, Tim Hallmark, Dakota Harris, Tyler Harry, Chris Haynes, Christopher Haynes, Steven Haywood, Evan Ingram, Jeremy Johnson, DJ Polk, Chad Sharpe, Christy Sharpe, Jerome Walters, Chief Duane Wright and Assistant Chief Dalton Yates.

banded together to create this wonderful department to aid the surrounding departments due to geographical limitations. From that point forward, the members of this department have vowed to serve and protect this community no matter the cost. The overflow of support for our rural department continually motivates the members to train and perform when the call is made.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?

The biggest misconception regarding local volunteer fire departments are response times to calls for service. Most of our members have full-time jobs to support their families and loved ones. With this being the case, many community members never understand the sacrifice that our volunteers make each day. Every time the tone goes out, our members leave their jobs and families, never knowing if they will return, to help others in distress. Without pay or hesitation, each member of the department willingly puts their lives at risk to serve and protect our com-

Q&A WITH CHIEF DUANE WRIGHT

What motivates the members of your department to serve your community?

The Ironaton Volunteer Fire Department was founded in March of 1992 and built by the local members of this community brick by brick. After countless homes were lost to fire, the community



Submitted photo

munity.

How much does community support mean to your department?

The Ironaton Volunteer Fire Department thrives on community support each and every day to answer the call when needed. With this being the 25th anniversary of our department, we are reminded of the sacrifices made by our community members who

built this establishment. The community places their trust in our department knowing that we will be there when needed. This department is also known as a place of safety during severe weather and serves as a harbor for our community members.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you

serve?

We would first of all like to thank the community for their continued support for the past 25 years. We would like our community members to know that we are diligently working towards bettering our department for all fire suppression and rescue needs in our area. Through purchasing the latest equipment, executing countless train-

ing sessions and developing a more organized operational standard, our department is dedicated to decreasing our community's ISO rating for lower insurance rates. Achieving a lower ISO rating has been a goal for our department for years, but has only been obtainable as of late with the newest addition of our pumping apparatus.

Pell City Fire & Rescue Department

About the department: Pell City Fire and Rescue Service is comprised of 51 personnel: 36 full-time operations personnel, 12 part-time operations personnel, 2 administrative personnel, and 1 training officer. "An influential support group we have is an active corps of local chaplains, whose dedication to our personnel and city is unparalleled," said Battalion Chief Tim Kurzejeski.



Q&A WITH CHIEF MIKE BURDETTE

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

Our motivation starts with our department motto "Service with Pride" in turn our department takes great pride in delivering superior services to our community. Our personnel strive to treat our citizens in their time of need as we would want our own families to be treated. An additional motivation factor is the desire of our personnel to be trained and educated to the highest standard.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about law enforcement officers?

That this is an easy job. Our time in between emergency responses is just as demanding. Our personnel are responsible for pre-incident planning, business inspections, annual fire hydrant and hose testing, community fire safety education programs, daily-monthly-yearly training objectives, apparatus and equipment maintenance, station upkeep and cleaning, as well as responding to our department's approximately 2,500 fire, medical, rescue, hazardous materials calls per year.

How much does community support mean to your department?

The continued support of our community, from both city leadership and local residents, has always been at the core of why we chose to do what we do.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

We would like our citizens to know that even as we take on more and more additional responsibilities, including teaching a state-certified recruit school twice a year, initiating a vocational training program for high school seniors, and hosting multiple Alabama Fire College certification classes, continuing to provide quality emergency services remains our number one priority.

Members of the department are

- Fire Medics: Caleb T. Andrews, James Banks, Josh Blackwell, Kenny Boyd, Jared Brannon, Chief Michael D. Burdette, Steve S. Cavender, Levi Christian, Assistant Chief Bobby S. Clevenger, Fire Medics Benjamin C. Coleman, Lt. Jerry Dailey, Firefighter Ian K. Dunaway, Fire Medics John Edge, Chris M. Hall, Randy Hall, Stephen B. Harbison, Firefighter Ron Harrell, Battalion Chief Jonathon Harris, Firefighter Dewayne Harry, Fire Medics Hunter T. Horton, Battalion Chief Larry T. Horton, Fire Medics Wesley R. Hudson, Capt. Richard A. Kniep, Battalion Chief Tim J. Kurzejeski, Fire Medics Tabitha Langner, Eric W. Littleton, Firefighter Adam Manning, Fire Medics Andrew P. Minyard, Trevor D. Moore, Firefighter Greg Moss,

- Training Officer Jeffrey M. Parrish, Fire Medics Cody S. Payne, Mike Platts, James B. Presley, Firefighter Timothy S. Rhoades, Fire Medics Charles A. Rickles, Lt. Jeff A. Rogers, Firefighter David B. Shadix, Fire Medics Justin J. Shake, Firefighter Scott Shelton, Lt. Andy E. Simpson, Firefighter Roderick Swain, Fire Medics Jeremy Thompson,

- Fire Medics John M. Tyson, Capt. Joey Vaughan, Firefighter Joshua B. Vincent, Firefighter Aaron D. Vines, Firefighter Caleb D. Walker, Capt. Tony White, and Fire Medics Kimberly R. Wolfe

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Members of the Lay Lake Volunteer Fire Department include, from left, Capt. Linda Brown, firefighter Pat Davis, junior firefighter Blake Lippincott, Capt. Rod MacLeroy, firefighter Brittany Brown, junior firefighter Daniel Davinport, Capt. Tim Butler, firefighter Dylan Jenkins and junior firefighter Stephen MacLeroy. Not pictured are Chief Don Blair and firefighters Brian Ward, Robert Davis, Hunter Gardner, Lesley Baker and Jeremiah Johns.

Lay Lake Volunteer Fire Department

About the department: Among its equipment is a 300-gallon capacity Brush/Rescue truck, rescue tools for extrication, a tank/engine with 2,000 gallons of water and air packs (scba), thermo image camera, several rescue saws and tools and an engine with 1,500 gallons of water.

The department has an automatic aid agreement with the Fayetteville Volunteer Fire Department for structure fires, and it receives support from the Childersburg Rescue Squad on water rescue and recovery.

Q&A WITH CAPT. TIM BUTLER

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

When you live in rural areas, paid fire departments are not available. That's where we come in. We all have regular jobs, but we also train a minimum of 4 hours every week. I really can't say why we do it, but you feel the calling to help your community.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?

Most people think we get paid or we don't train.

Both are as far from the truth as you can get. We all spend our own gas money to travel to training and sometimes it's located at other departments. We are all subject to be away from our families at any given moment. The heart of a volunteer fireman is hard to explain, we work countless hours on a fire knowing no pay is expected. I have the utmost respect for all volunteer firemen.

How much does community support mean to your department?

If you don't have the support from your community I don't think any volunteer fire department would survive. From our annual fundraising to just

saying thank you, it all makes a big difference.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

To our community, we train every week to protect you and your property. All of our firemen have proved they have the heart and courage to serve as part of the team at Lay Lake Volunteer Fire Department. So if you see a member of our department out in our community, keep in mind that person trains weekly and goes to countless schools to better protect you and your property.

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Wolf Creek Volunteer Fire Department

About the department: Located in south St. Clair County, it is responsible for coverage of 50 square miles. The Wolf Creek Fire Auxiliary, made up of department members and their families, regularly participates in such fundraisers and charitable activities as the Country Breakfast (every second Saturday from 7-11 a.m.), annual fish fry (May 20, beginning at 11 a.m.), family fall portraits and holiday fruit basket donations to elderly residents.

Its officers are Chief Danny J. Wright, First Assistant Chief Bryan Price, Second Assistant Chief Donny Martin, Captain Homer Sticher, Philip McLain, Amanda McLain, Tyler Price, Lockett Blanton, Mike Blanton, Chris Prosch, Channing Gallups, Jeremy Dudley, Charles Townsend, Michael Wilder, Gwenn Wilder, Andrew Bohannon, Randy Castleberry, Josh Richie, Stephanie Parker, Colton Houston, Christian Norwood, Caleb Perkins and Clay Castleberry.

I look at my volunteerism as a ministry unto God. There is also a sense of "If not me, then who?" This is a field that people get into for various reasons: camaraderie with a team, to get in shape, to help fellow man, to stay out of trouble and of course excitement.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?

First, that volunteer firefighters are a bunch of uneducated goofs. This is the case if their leader(s) are goofs. If the leadership of a VFD sees and understands the serious nature of organization, training and holding people accountable for their actions while dealing with other people's lives and property, then you will find a respectable VFD. Second, the public has an assumption that there is always someone available and ready to respond. This is only the case if the community involves themselves with their fire department. Third, that you have to be young and fully physically fit in order to join. There are many jobs in the fire service besides the actual firefighting aspect. There are clerical, ordering and stocking, research and planning, medical training and medical response during business hours. Now, we want people to be in decent shape overall, but you don't have to

be a power lifter that can run a mile in 4 minutes.

How much does community support mean to your department?

It is so important. The community is the oversight to the fire service. The community needs to observe or attend meetings, see the needs and help fill the needs. This machine is not automatic, it is manual.

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Shoal Creek Volunteer Fire Department

About the department: Its members include Chief/Training Officer Carl Brownfield, Assistant Chief/Maintenance Officer Eric Muller, Treasurer Rexanne Brownfield, Recording Secretary Angela Cook, President Vernon White, Firefighters Amy Hughes, Steven Wright, Matt Caldwell, Gina Caldwell, Tim McMillins, Pam McMillins, Cyndi Day, Buc Buckles, Sam Wise and Chuck McKay, Honorary Chief/Weather Watcher Gabe Wise and Auxiliary members Carolyn Mills, Mike Blanton, Lockett Blanton and Patsy Runyans.

Q&A WITH CHIEF CARL BROWNFIELD AND TREASURER REXANNE BROWNFIELD

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

Chief: For me there is no one answer. I've been doing this for the better part of 40 years now, and it is my way of giving something back to the community. It's helping someone in their time of need, it's the camaraderie and brotherhood of being around a certain group and type of person, people who you are willing to put your life in their hands at times. But most important, it's God's way. There are several scriptures, but I like Philippians 2:4 - "Not looking to your own interest but each of you to the interest of others."

Treasurer: My motivation comes from the 2011 tornado. I felt so helpless that night because I was not prepared for the dev-

astation we faced. It immediately became my goal to never be put in that situation again. I decided to get training and knowledge it would take to help in any situation I may encounter.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?

Chief: Many people do not realize the commitment many volunteer firefighters make to be part of a department. Many of us work full-time jobs, have families with children. There is a lot of training and work that needs done to maintain a department. It is very time consuming even before you run a call.

Treasurer: My experience has been many people feel that because we have had training in firefighting and medical fields that we can fix all of their issues.

How much does community support mean to your department?

Chief: Everything! Without our community support, we could not survive. We do not have any major business in our area that can make large donations. All of our funding comes from the 2-mil tax and the donations our community provides us. Then there is the moral support they give us. From the 'thank you's' or hugs we may get at a call to the waves they share as they drive by the station to the courtesy they show driving down the road as we respond to a call, it all has a special meaning to us.

Treasurer: Being a volunteer department,



Submitted photo

Members of the Shoal Creek Volunteer Fire Department include, from left, Gabe Wise, honorary chief; Carl Brownfield, chief; Rexanne Brownfield, treasurer; Carolyn Mills, Eric Muller, assistant chief; Angela Cook, recording secretary; Cyndi Day, Buc Buckles and Vernon White, president.

the community support in fundraising and moral support is very important and beneficial to enable our department to be available and trained in all their needs.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

Chief: From the bottom of my heart, thank you for all you do to help us help you. Without your support, none of this would be possible, and it is my pleasure and honor to serve and protect my community and the surrounding communities.

Treasurer: I would like to thank our community for their continued support and trust in their fire department. It is a pleasure and honor to be able to serve our community. Everyone in our community has become a part of our family and we will be there for them at any time to assist and support their needs.

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Springville Fire & Rescue

About the department: Springville Fire & Rescue provides fire suppression, technical rescue & advanced life support medical response to the residents of Springville. In addition, it provides primary hazardous materials response to the northern half of St. Clair County, from Highway 411 north including all of the Interstate 59 corridor. The two fire stations that are staffed 24/7/365.

Springville Fire Department sponsors the Springville/Argo Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). A total of 38 team members has completed the CERT Basic training. CERT members are members of the public who are trained to perform basic search and rescue, triage, first aid, firefighter rehab and volunteer coordination.

Members of the Springville Fire & Rescue Department are Chief Richard Harvey

Lt. Graham Darnell, Lt. James Martin, Lt. Dennis Putnam, Firefighter/Paramedic Johnny Eidson, Firefighter/Paramedic Patrick Eskew, Firefighter/Paramedic James Johnson, Firefighter/Paramedic Anthony Kourmoulis, Firefighter/Paramedic Scott Phillips, Firefighter/Paramedic James Robinson,

Firefighter/Advanced EMT Frank Johnson, Firefighter/EMT Jimmy Briggs, Firefighter/EMT Skip Davis,

Firefighter/EMT Richard Meadows, Certified Volunteer Firefighter/Chaplain Billy Reynolds, Certified Volunteer Firefighter Tim Baker, Certified Volunteer Firefighter Daniel Caudle, Certified Volunteer Firefighter Jeremy Hoefflicker, Certified Volunteer Firefighter Nicole Robinson, Certified Volunteer Firefighter Tommy Sullivan and Volunteer Recruit Thomas Harvey.

ed to, but it is comforting to the families to know there is a familiar face with them. As our department has grown, it has been a priority to try and find folks that are from the area to join our ranks, because they have a family and friends here, and that makes a big difference.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?

That we are just sitting at the station waiting on something to catch fire. In reality, we respond to very few fires. Less than 5 percent of our calls are something burning. The largest majority of our calls are medical calls and motor vehicle accidents. Our department's motto is "Preparing for the Worst, Providing the Best." This preparing for the worst takes up most of our time, because the worst could be a fire, a major medical issue, a trapped person, a hazardous chemical leak, a train derailment, a tornado or a multitude of other things.

How much does community support mean to your department?

We love our community, and it is important that our community loves us. As a department, it is important for us to be active in our community and to be visible. We keep active in our schools doing fire prevention education so that if a child has an emergency, they feel more comfortable because they have seen us at the school, or day care. Each month, our department goes to the Springville Senior Center and cooks lunch for the

seniors. We are available to check their blood pressure or answer questions about their smoke detectors. Typically, we spend an hour or two with them playing cards with them or help them with their vegetable garden. This is valuable, because we get to know more about them on a personal level.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

On behalf of the officers and members of the Springville Fire Department, I would like to say thank you for all of those that allow us to do what we do: the past and present administrations of the city have recognized the importance of having a strong public safety presence and have worked hard to make sure that we have the manpower, tools and equipment necessary to do our jobs; our county emergency management agency, who have been instrumental in obtaining state and federal dollars to provide training opportunities, equipment, over-site and management in planning for those worst-case scenarios; our county fire & EMS association and all of the other fire and EMS departments within this community that have come together to address some very important issues such as the development of a county-wide ambulance contract and replacement of our outdated communications system; and finally to the citizens of Springville and St. Clair County, thank you for your continued support.



Alabama Power thanks First Responders for the difficult jobs they do every day to protect and enhance our communities.

Q&A WITH CHIEF RICHARD HARVEY

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

Most firefighters and emergency services providers will tell you that they do it because it gives them a sense of satisfaction to help others in a time of crisis. Sometimes we may not agree with them that they are in a crisis, but to that person at that point in time, they have a need, and we were called to assist them with it. I have had the privilege of serving in this community for the past 31 years. I have always said I am lucky to be able to say that I have been able to live my childhood dream. I always wanted to be a fireman, and what really makes it special is to be that fireman in the community where you have grown up. It can be stressful at times, because you know the families personally that are being impacted by whatever it is you have respond-



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Submitted photo

Oak Grove Volunteer Fire Department

About the department: Its members include Chief Charlie O'Barr, Assistant Chief Joshua Mizzell, Cptn. Freddie Gaddis, Lt. Stephen Baird, Lifetime Captain Robert Baird, Firefighters Jason Fix, Jeffrey Devine, Ed Gardner, Jason Devine, Hunter Goodson, Deon Gaddis, Brianna McDonald, Christian White and Wade Smith, Firefighter-AEMT Zach Pendergrass, Firefighter-EMR Crystal Baird, Firefighter-EMT Carey O'Barr, Firefighter-EMT-P Jon Williams, Explorer Josh Baird and Firefighter-EMT-B Tony White.

Associated with the department is an auxiliary unit overseen by Renea Gaddis. The group helps with fundraisers, events and bringing resources to active scenes.

Q&A WITH CHIEF CHARLIE O'BARR

What motivates your and the members of your department to serve your community?

We as volunteers are the same as anyone else, but we have a desire and drive inside of us that wants to help our fellow man. We

don't get paid to do it. We do it because we care. Oak Grove has a dedicated group of volunteers that freely gives to the community and the surrounding county fire coverage that the fire department covers. Oak Grove is the busiest VFD in the county. We responded to over 700 calls for service last year and are on the way to surpass that number this year. It takes a special person to get up in the middle of the night to go help someone having a medical emergency, cut someone from a wrecked vehicle or try to save a house from burning down, all the while having to work a regular job.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?

One of the biggest misconceptions of volunteers is that we are just people that are members of a fire department with no training. We train all the time at Oak Grove. Over the past two years, our certified instructors have taught an estimated 9,000 hours of certified training through the Alabama Fire College. We currently are teaching a Certified Volunteer

Fire Certification course for which each student must complete 160 hours of training, pass a written exam and skills exam. We at Oak Grove have members that are EMTs, Paramedics, Emergency Care Providers, and Emergency Medical Responders. All members after joining our department have to become certified in the 160 course to stay a member. We take the responsibility of caring for others very seriously and train to do so. We train for all emergencies big and small, and we do it all for free to help the people.

How much does community support mean to your department?

The community support is one of the biggest things we rely on. Without them, the VFDs in this county would be at a terrible loss at times. We do receive tax funding from the county, but for the most part it is just enough to cover operating cost of equipment and keeping it maintained. We hold fundraisers to obtain certain equipment to better the department. When considering that local paid departmental budgets are about \$1.5 million a year, we operated on a com-

bined total of tax funding and funds raised of only around \$40,000 the last year. So when you see us out with boots, consider helping us out.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

I can say that our community has been a blessing to our department. Without their support, the department would not be where it is today. We currently hold an ISO rating of 4/4x, which is the lowest it has ever been for our community. This helps with their homeowners insurance premiums. We would like everyone in the area we serve to know that we appreci-

ate and thank them for the support. We will continue to keep our department moving forward with their support.

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Sylacauga Fire Department

About the department: Its members include Chief Adam Gardner, Lts. Tim Epperson, Kelly McNeill and Chris Wallis, and firefighters Brian Black, Tommy Chamberlain, Jarrod Cunningham, Josh Forbus, Scott Kines, Zach Pendergrass, Nate Osgood, Sam Ogilvie, Ron Machen, Daniel Barrett, Don Blair, Bo Brown, Tom Rogers, Adam Russell, Joseph Spencer, Reid Tapley, Chad Toland, Jacob Turner, Tony White and Jon Williams.

Q&A WITH CHIEF ADAM GARDNER

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

"Excellence & Efficiency in Public Service." This is our motto. You will see this statement on our apparatus. This is a challenging job for those who dedicate themselves to serve the public. There is nothing more rewarding than knowing you assisted or helped someone through a difficult time. And even more rewarding is knowing you had a hand in saving a life. Our doors are always open to

the community for advice and assistance.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?

We sit around and eat and watch television all day. We do eat, and we do watch television, but we also train daily. Each member is required to train a minimum of 20 hours per month. We are required to be certified in different aspects of our job. Some of these include hazmat, apparatus operator, rope rescue, extrication, confined space rescue and fire investigator. These are just a very few of what we are trained to do to be efficient at our job. This knowledge and expertise does not come from sitting around and not doing anything. We are ready to serve our community on a second's notice. Also, this is home away from home for us. We spend a third of our life here. This can be challenging to the firefighter and their families.

How much does community support mean to your department?

We have great community support here at Sylacauga. Just about

every time we go out in the public, someone is going to tell us how much they appreciate our service. This is a caring community, and we here at Sylacauga Fire Department care about our citizens, and anything we can do to make our community a safer place. The hospitality of our citizens is actually what keeps us motivated in what we do. They are all the time bringing us food and snacks. I can't imagine working or living any place different.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

We here at the Sylacauga Fire Department want to thank our citizens for their support. We are here to provide our citizens with courtesy and professional service. Our community goes above and beyond to support and assist us in the event of a crisis or an emergency. It takes the community and our department working together to keep our city safe and a city I am proud to live in.

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Riverside Fire & Rescue Service

About the department: Its members include Chief Timothy Kurzejewski, Capt. Adam Manning, Capt. Kevin Painter, Firefighter-EMTs Jared Brannon, Jared Perry, Justin Brannon and FF-Trae Parker, Fire Medics Joey Vaughan, Dewayne Dulaney and Trevor Moore, EMT Kristi White, Paramedic Rachelle Painter, Firefighters Austin Brewer, George Macon, Brien Gullledge, Steven Allen, Barry Lambert, James Parsons, Jaykob Morse and Rusty Jessup and Chaplin Bobby Parker.

city. **What is the biggest misconception generally held about firefighters and rescue personnel?**

The greatest misconception we face is that our personnel do nothing in between emergency responses except sit around until the next call. On-duty personnel are responsible for pre-fire plans, business inspections, hydrant testing, fire hose testing, apparatus maintenance and readiness, community education, CPR and first aid training for local businesses, continuing education and training for our firefighters and paramedics and assisting other city departments when needed.

How much does community support mean to your department?

Community support is huge for our personnel and department. Having our citizens behind us provides a positive impact not only on our personnel but that of the entire city. Our department also truly appreciates the support of our mayor and city



Submitted photo

Q&A WITH CHIEF TIM KURZEJEKSI
What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

Our highly-dedicated personnel and support team are motivated by our department motto of "Pride-Commitment-Dedication" to provide the best and most efficient services possible to our community and those passing through our great

council with their vision to help make our department and city the greatest possible.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

Our community is why we are here each

and every day to protect their health, safety and welfare. Riverside Fire serves the best citizens that have supported us and our goals for many years. Providing emergency services in a small city, we see each family as our family and put their needs as our top priority.



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You Do!*

Talladega County 911

About the agency: Talladega County 911 is authorized for 36 full-time employees across three divisions (business office, communications and training).

The 6 positions attached to the business office range from overall administration to administration support to addressing. The 25 positions attached to communications are responsible for emergency and non-emergency call processing along with the dispatch of all disciplines of public safety in Talladega County. The 5 positions attached to the training division are responsible for not only the emergency and non-emergency call processing (along with the dispatch of all disciplines of public safety in Talladega County) but also the training of all employees.

department to serve your community?

There are many intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that drive 911 personnel, but there is one common core motivator: to help. The opportunity to serve the citizens, visitors and responders of Talladega County provides a conduit to make a difference every day.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about 911 personnel?

The biggest misconception about 911 is "all we do is answer a phone." Public safety telecommunicators are the unseen responders, but we are the first first responders. The public safety telecommunicators answering those phones are doing so much more than answering a phone. They are processing information from incoming non-emergency and emergency calls, gathering information, providing information, dispatching responders, updating responders, communicating with other entities at the request of responders, all while docu-

menting the actions taken. This is accomplished utilizing multiple phones, multiple radios and multiple computers with multiple monitors.

How much does community support mean to your department?

Individually and as an agency, we place a great deal of pressure on ourselves to meet the public's expectations of 911. Your support, be it direct or indirect, has a positive impact that we as an agency are meeting, maintaining or exceeding those expectations. Community support means a great deal.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

We recognize the responsibility we have for the safety of all that we serve. We hope you are never in a position to need our help, but know we are here to answer the call. Thank you for putting your trust in us, and thank you for your continued support.

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR VICTOR KENNEDY

What motivates you and the members of your

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Pleasant Hill Fire Department

About the department: "This very dedicated crew seeks to serve our community and to make a difference," Chief Billy Reynolds said. "We're grateful to have a good working relationship with other departments such as Springville and Davis Lake. To see the trust between these departments to work various incidents together and to come to know each other from these departments to be able to go onto scenes and know who can perform certain duties speaks volumes that we can all come together and work to save lives and property."



The Pleasant Hill Volunteer Fire Department include, from left, in front, volunteer Drew Morgan, Assistant Chief/paramedic Jared Echols and firefighter Daniel Caudle; in back, Chief/Chaplain Billy Reynolds, retired firefighters/volunteers Davis Whiteside and Billy Vann, volunteer Thomas Moss, Lt./medic Mike Estock and volunteer Tim Shirley.

Submitted photo



File

International Firefighters' Day recognizes and honors the sacrifices that firefighters make to ensure that their communities and environment are as safe as possible.

International Firefighters' Day

International Firefighters' Day is observed every May in honor of the firefighters who dedicate their lives to the protection of life and property. Sometimes that dedication is in the form of countless hours volunteered over many years, in others it is many selfless years working in the industry. In all cases, it risks the ultimate sacrifice of a firefighter's life.

"The role of a firefighter in today's society - be it urban, rural, volunteer or industrial -- is one of dedication, commitment and sacrifice, no matter what country we reside and work in," said Lt. J.J. Edmondson, an operational firefighter in the Clyde-Cardinia Fire Brigade and a lieutenant in the District 8 Headquarters Fire Brigade in the Country Fire Authority in Victoria, Australia. "In the fire service we fight together against one common enemy - fire - no matter what country we come from, what uniform we wear or what language we speak."

International Firefighters' Day recognizes and honors the sacrifices that firefighters make to ensure that their communities and environment are as safe as possible.

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Talladega County Sheriff's Department

About the department: Its 106 total employees includes the sheriff, 38 sworn deputies, 50 corrections officers and support staff. The Sheriff's Reserve Unit is comprised of 24 reserve deputies, who are all volunteers.

erally held about law enforcement officers?

That we are indifferent to the needs and feelings of the public, when in fact, we are very sensitive about enforcement actions that we must do to ensure compliance with the law, thus ensuring the safety of the citizens in our communities.

How much does community support mean to your department?

It is imperative that we receive the support of the community. A law enforcement agency cannot be successful in its efforts without community support.

On behalf of your department, is there

anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

On behalf of my department to those we serve: I am very honored and humbled to have been elected Sheriff of this county and it is extremely encouraging for me and my staff to have received the amount of support that has been provided to us by the citizens of Talladega County. We thank you.

Q&A WITH SHERIFF JIMMY KILGORE

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

Pride in our profession and the self-satisfaction of being able to protect and assist the public.

What is the biggest misconception gen-



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Ashville Police Department

About the department: Its members include Chief Dennis L Matthews, Assistant Chief Wendy Brechin, Sgt. Ed Hampton and Officers Jim Thompson, Dwight Ray, Dallas Fulmer, Gordon Williams, Jason Townes and Cris Cannon. Reserve officers are Michael Pate and Nick O'Rear.

help others and to attempt to make a difference in someone's life.

How much does community support mean to your department?

Community support is vital to our agency as it is a group effort to insure the safety of our city.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

To our citizens who support us on a day-to-day basis, your words of encouragement and prayers mean the world to our department.

Q&A WITH CHIEF DENNIS MATTHEWS

What motivates your and the members of your department to serve your community?

I think motivation comes from the desire to

We appreciate all you do for our community. We support you.

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Emergency responders deserve support

Emergency responders, which includes the police, firefighters and paramedics who are the first to arrive at the scene of an emergency, are in the business of protecting others and helping save lives. These workers are on call during natural disasters, technological failures, terrorist attacks, criminal acts and many other potentially traumatic events. Emergency responders are the unsung heroes of many communities that they work hard to keep safe and secure.

While emergency responders are heroes, it's important that people know these brave men and women sometimes need assistance, too. The pressure and stress associated with being an emergency responder can sometimes be overwhelming, and it's in those times when emergency responders could use a hand.

Comprehensive statistics on stress-related medical conditions among first responders are difficult to tabulate because many incidents go unreported or unshared. However, pressures of the job and post traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, can take their toll on paramedics and law-enforcement officials.

Addressing the stress of being an emergency responder can help

responders and their families better cope with the pressure and stress of the job. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommends that all workers involved in first-responder activities help themselves and others to reduce the risk of stress-related psychological and physical health effects from their jobs.

Certain symptoms and behaviors may present themselves when emergency responders are having difficulty coping with the demands of the job. These symptoms may include:

- Changes in sleeping patterns.
- Passive or fatalistic behavior.
- Frequent conflict and argumentative behavior.
- Limiting social networks and general withdrawal.
- Poor problem-solving abilities.
- Poor concentration.
- Inability to rest.
- Self-medicating with alcohol.

While there is no single method to cope with the physical and psychological demands of a first responder's job, a combination of therapies can help. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that responders need to take care of their own health to maintain the constant vigilance they need for their own safety. The following steps can put workers on the right track:



File photos

Form a support network in which each responder looks out for one another. Knowing support is available can be a big help.

Take frequent breaks to clear the mind and rest the body. Try to take breaks away from a work area.

Accept what cannot be changed, such as chain of command or long hours.

Take advantage of mental health support services when they are made available. Recognize that it's not weakness to discuss diffi-

cult emotions.

Maintain a healthy eating pattern and try to get adequate sleep.

Exercise, which can reduce feelings of stress and be a healthy way to clear the mind and strengthen the body.

Recognizing that emergency responders are not invincible and may need some emotional support can be the first step in getting these workers the help they need and deserve.



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May 14-20 has been designated National Police Week.

National Police Week honors law-enforcement officers

Communities across the United States will come together this week to honor and remember those law-enforcement officers who made the ultimate sacrifice, as well as the family members, friends and fellow officers they left behind.

May 14-20 has been designated National Police Week. This year, the names of 394 officers killed in the line of duty are being added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC. These 394 officers include 143 who were killed during 2016, plus 251 officers who died in previous years but whose stories of sacrifice had been lost to history until now.

The names of all 394 fallen officers nationwide were formally dedicated during the 29th annual candlelight vigil Saturday evening at the National Mall between 4th and 7th streets.

The vigil is one of many commemorative events taking place in the nation's capital this week. The national observance is organized by a group of organizations led by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), Concerns of Police Survivors, the Fraternal Order of Police and the Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary.

On May 15 each year, the Fraternal Order of Police and the Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary host a ceremony on the west steps of the U.S. Capitol to honor fallen law-enforcement officers and their families.

In tribute to American law-enforcement officers and at the request of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, Public Law 103-322 designates May 15 National Peace Officers Memorial Day, which is one of only two days each year during which government agencies, businesses and residents are to fly their U.S. flags at half staff.

Thank You
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We want to thank you and let you know how much we appreciate all your sacrifices and for putting your life on the line for our community!

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Sylacauga Police Department

About the department: Its members include:

Officer Matt Abrams, Sgt. Shane Bland, SRO Officer Harry Brown Jr., Daniel Calfee, reserve; Investigator Cody Childress, Sgt. Timothy Collier, Officer Matt Cook, Lt. Renea Cummings, Sgt. Mike Davenport, Geri Devee, volunteer; Records Clerk Kassey Epperson, Steve Foster, reserve; Sgt. Ryan Gaither, Officer Terry Gallahair Jr., Officer Christopher Gallops, Warrant Officer Adam Grantham, Wendell Hickman, reserve; Chief Kelley Johnson, Officer Doug Kemp, SRO Officer David Kimbrough, Officer Charlton Kircus, Kevin Kite, reserve; Sgt. Donnie Landers, Investigator Ben Layton, Chaplain Mark Ledbetter, Chaplain Rhonda Ledbetter, Investigator Stephen Ledbetter, Officer Curt

Looney, Officer Huel Love, Officer Blake McGhee, Lt. Jason McNeill, Officer Scot Meador, Lt. Mike Moore, Officer Joshua Morris, Capt. Rondell Muse, Officer Jacob Pennington, Sgt. Mike Smith, Michelle Taylor, animal control; Officer Keith Thomas, Officer Joshua Vandiver, Investigator Chris Vinson, Chaplain Ray Weaver, Lt. Willis Whatley, Chaplain Bobby Whetstone, Officer Kelly White, Chaplain Glen Winter, Investigator Jason Williamson and Officer Chris Wykoff.

Q&A WITH CHIEF KELLY JOHNSON
What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

I personally am motivated by hoping I can make a difference in at least one person's life in the community that I

serve whether it be by an arrest being made that prevents a future crime from happening or simply speaking to a group about being safe. I believe that is also a motivating factor for many of the officers at SPD.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about law enforcement officers?

The biggest misconception about law enforcement officers today is that police work is all action. You never see police officers in the movies writing a report. The truth is, the majority of our time is spent filling out reports or testifying in court. The majority of police work is conducted in front of a computer screen.

How much does community support mean to your department?

Community support is the backbone of a police

department. Without the support of the community a police officer will not be able to conduct many aspects of his/her job. Having the support of the community means crimes get solved, some even prevented, and when there are officer involved incidents the healing process is shortened due to that support.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on this occasion to those you serve?

I would like to thank all of the citizens of our city for their continued support of the Sylacauga Police Department. I want everyone in the community to know that my door is always open to them whether they need to get information, advice or just rant about someone or something that has caused them concern.



The importance of 911 dispatchers

In times of intense personal crisis and community-wide disasters, the first access point for those in need of emergency services is 911.

Local public safety communications centers that receive emergency calls have emerged as the first and single point of contact for persons seeking immediate relief during an emergency.

National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week recognizes these professionals, honoring the thousands of men and women who respond to emergency calls, dispatch emergency professionals and equipment, and render life saving assistance.

The importance of recognizing and celebrating the hard work of these dedicated professionals at every level is immeasurable.

Q&A with Dr. Alex Rosenau

May 21-27 is National Emergency Medical Services Week. Dr. Rosenau has served as president of the American College of Emergency Physicians and is an advocate of EMTs and paramedics.

Why is it important to recognize EMTs and paramedics?

They are right there on the front lines, treating people where they work, live and play. Often they are there to relieve pain and anxiety, and sometimes those interactions are lifesaving. EMS is an extension of medical care beyond the doors of a hospital and into the community.

Can you provide a specific example?

I remember a patient,

about 19 or 20 years old, who was beaten badly with a baseball bat. A brand-new paramedic communicated with us over the phone that the patient's blood pressure was low, and he didn't hear breath sounds on the right. We gave him instructions over the phone and worked with him as he successfully completed an advanced airway maneuver to treat a tension pneumothorax. The patient's blood pressure went up, his oxygen level improved, and his pulse came down. His life was saved by that paramedic, which speaks to the core values of EMS.

What types of candidates make good EMTs?

People who like people. People who are interest-

ed in education and learning. People who enjoy taking action. They need to have high ethical standards. Those who go into emergency medicine have to enjoy the quick pace of making rapid-fire decisions that make a difference. EMS involves training and preparation for unexpected situations. You have to keep your skills fresh, be flexible and be collaborative with your fellow medics, other healthcare providers, physicians and the families you interact with.

What messages does the public need to hear about EMS in general?

EMS is there 24-7, 365 days a year. They are part of your safety net. They are



Dr. Alex Rosenau

well-trained. They carry specific medications, have specific skills, and they can take care of you for the immediate emergency. They can get you to the right hospital at the right time where you can get further care.

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Talladega Police Department

About the department: The Talladega Police Department is made up of 44 sworn officers and 3 civilian support staff in patrol, investigative and administrative divisions. It participates in the Talladega County Drug and Violent Crime Task Force and has a SWAT team.

Members of the Talladega Police Department include Chief Jason Busby, Capt. Leon Thomas, Capt. John McCoy, Lt. Bob Curtis, Lt. JT Tomlin, Lt. Ron McElrath, Lt. Pat Thornton, Lt. Alan Kelly, Lt. Jimmy Thompson, Sgt. Marco Williams, Sgt. Glen Nabors, Sgt. Cliff Mize, Sgt. Tommy Pettus, Sgt. Brad Bowdoin, Det. Lisa Garrett, Det. Todd Williamson, Det. Dennis McDaniel, Det. Jeremy Falkner, Ofc. Alan Wheeles, Ofc. Kenny Price, Ofc. John Staehly, Ofc. Allen Cavender, Ofc. Jacob Riley, Ofc. Eric Dean, Ofc. Darrell Garrett, Ofc. Jeff Hamm, Ofc. Doug Whaley, Ofc. Josh Shears, Ofc. Matt Thacker, Ofc. Scott Martin, Ofc. Cory Sears, Ofc. Steve Mitchell, Ofc. Jake Heath, Ofc. Scott Shaddix, Ofc. Justin Sparks,

Ofc. Shed Long, Ofc. Andy Layton, Ofc. Dannis Collins, Ofc. Josh Kennedy, Ofc. Josh Blankenship, Ofc. Andrew Bryant, Ofc. Coley McGowan, Ofc. Tyler Sharp, Ofc. Kyle Evitts. Non-sworn officers are Angela Lackey Thomas, Erica Williams and Mallory Parton.

Q&A WITH CHIEF JASON BUSBY

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

The officers are motivated by their desire to help the community, specifically helping those in need. They genuinely want to serve and try to change negative perceptions that people may have about law enforcement. The officers love the job and believe in what they do and realize they have the opportunity to change lives for the better.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about law enforcement officers?

The officers feel the biggest misconception about

law enforcement is that they are out to get people, or they only do the job to draw a paycheck. Most officers work overtime and extra jobs just to make ends meet. Most feel that doing this job is a calling. They make arrests, issue tickets and other things that are unpopular because it's a part of the job, and they strive to keep order in society, not because they are trying to ruin the lives of people. Officers focus more on helping others than anything.

How much does community support mean to your department?

The officers feel community support is huge. They know that without the support of the community, their jobs would be impossible. The officers enjoy interacting with people they meet. Officers really feel they are a part of the community and want to build relationships and partnerships so the department is effective and able to meet the needs of everyone.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on

this occasion to those you serve?

As the chief of police, I would like to thank each officer from the bottom of my heart for their hard work and dedication. They often times do a very thankless job under adverse conditions. They miss birthdays, Christmases with family, children's ballgames and many more special occasions because when people are in trouble and call, we always have to be there. I want them to know that their dedication is not unnoticed. I am extremely proud of the officers and believe Talladega has the finest officers I have ever worked with.

WE SALUTE ALL FIRST RESPONDERS!

We are proud of our first responders and want them to know how much we appreciate what they do for us each and everyday! **THANK YOU!**




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St. Clair County sheriff's deputies.

Submitted photos



St. Clair County Sheriff Terry Surlis and Assistant Sheriff Billy Murray with members of the department's office staff.

Thank You!

FIRST RESPONDER

To all the First Responders that selflessly give of themselves day after day...

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Members of the department's supervisory staff.

St. Clair County Sheriff's Department

The department's officers include Sheriff Terry Surles, Assistant Sheriff Billy J. Murray, Captains Dale Isbell (Pell City) and John McWaters (Ashville), Lieutenants Freddie Turrentine (Pell City) and Cathy Goodwin (Ashville) and Sergeants Greg Walker, Paul Monk, Jonathan VanPelt and Mike Doss.

Investigators include Tommy Dixon, chief investigator; Jerry Robertson, Randy Hurst, James Sargent, Mark Slezak, Owen Walton, Wayne Layton, Joey Brown, Demetrius Seals, Rick Oliver and Wayne Knight.

Deputies include Bill Richvalsky, 911 Administrator; Matt Coupland, school resource officer; Lionel Callender, Doug Smith, Dennis Jenkins, Alec Bosworth, Jason Munkus, Lee Carden, Shane Roe, Jason Cantrell, Phillip Barnard, Michael Bradberry, Jacob Mitchell, Ronnie Brasher, Rod Rich, Greg Turley, Matt Cone, Chris Long, Jimmy Tyler, Patrick Adams, James McGowan, Brian Ebner, Evan Kavli, Lorrie Dark-Bishop, James Otwell, Phil Watson, Barry Dickerson,

Jonathan Spann, Byron Jenkins, Matt Morris, school resource and DARE officer; David Ashley, Scott Wamble and Greg Watson, jail administrator.

Courthouse Security Deputies are Phillip Anthony, Roy Foreman, Aubrey Glasscock, Melinda Luker-Thomas, Chris Cross, Shennandoah McInnish, Milton Gilmore, Billy Beavers, Tommy Watts, Buddy McBride, Trent Wicks and Austin Nash.

The Ashville office staff includes Jeannie Canas, office manager; Juana Corbin, Deborah Huey and Karen Thompson.

The Pell City office staff includes Cindy Stefaniak, office manager; Kathy Brasher, Naomi Bowie and Lori Mullins.

Q&A WITH SHERIFF TERRY SURLES

What motivates you and the members of your department to serve your community?

The St. Clair County Sheriff's Office is fortunate in that most deputies live in and are from St. Clair County. This county is

their home, it's where they go to church, and it's where their children go to school. This allows us to feel closer to the communities we serve and feel invested in our communities prospering.

What is the biggest misconception generally held about law enforcement officers?

The biggest misconception, I believe, is that we are disconnected and don't care about the areas we serve. Nothing could be further from the truth. We love our county and want to do our part in keeping the citizens safe.

How much does community support mean to your department?

Our sheriff's office couldn't exist without community involvement and support. The sheriff's office is very involved in our communities. Some examples would be our Citizen's Firearms Safety Classes, Project Lifesaver, Yellow Dot Program and many other programs designated to foster relationships between the sheriff's office and the citizens we serve.

On behalf of your department, is there anything you'd like to say on

this occasion to those you serve?

The sheriff's office is proud to play a role with other first responders in serving and protecting all of our citizens. We salute all first responders knowing full well what a difficult and challenging job it is. We are thankful for community support and the wonderful working relationships that we have with all first responders. We look forward to continuing to work with the men and women of law enforcement, fire fighters, EMTs and 911-EMS personnel. We would like to thank the citizens of St. Clair County for the support.

Saluting Our Hometown Heroes

Ben Donahoo, PTA Dan Schabel, PT Abby Allen PTA

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The department's staff of investigators.

St. Clair Sheriff's Reserve Deputy Program

A volunteer group, the unit is organized to assist the sheriff's office in providing law enforcement services for the residents of St. Clair County.

Coordinated by Sgt. Jonathan Van Pelt, it is composed of citizens 21 years of age and older who volunteer their time to supplemental phases of departmental operations. The members come from all areas of the county and include individuals from a host of different professions. They have the same duties, responsibilities, and mission goals as their full time peers.

Reserve deputies wear the same uniforms, badges and identification cards, and they must meet all the education, training and duty requirements of full-time officers. Reserves assist the full-time

officers in patrol duty, criminal investigation, K-9 services, court services and sometimes provide the only opportunity to have 2-officer units, especially on busy nights and weekends.

All reserve deputies are required to provide their own personal equipment, including approved firearms, duty belt equipment, some uniform items, shoes and ballistic vests. They are required to complete the Law Enforcement Academy and meet Alabama Peace Officers Standards and Training (APOST) requirements.

"The program clearly requires quite a commitment, and these reserve deputies are a true service to our county and a vital part of the operation of the department," said Sheriff Terry Surles.



The Lovejoy Team Appreciates All of Our First Responders

★ *Thank You!* ★

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Thanks To All Our First Responders

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