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# NEW JERSEY COPS

The official publication of the New Jersey State PBA

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

SEPTEMBER 2020

Remembering 9/11  
Page 10



**Police Officer Sean C. Peek**

Bridgeton Police Department

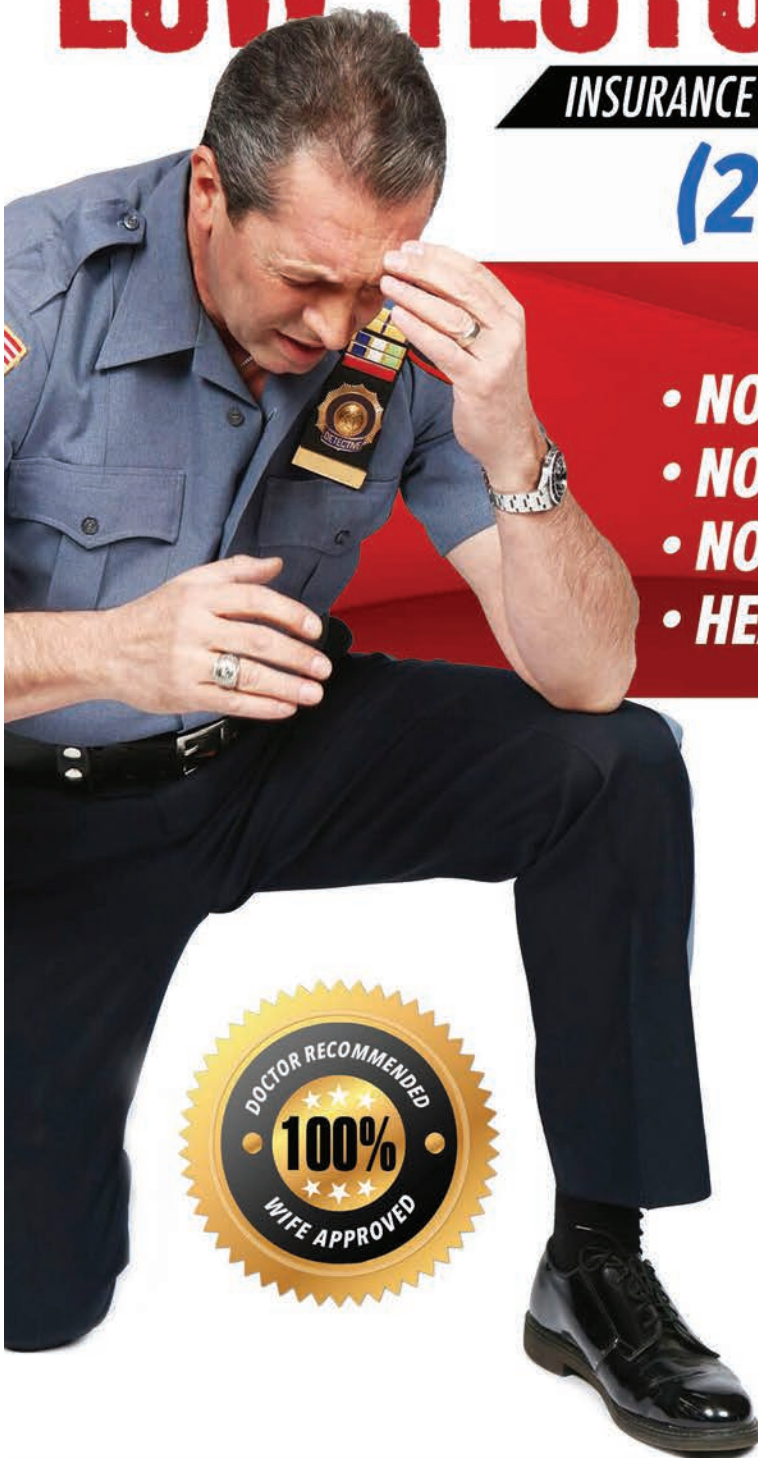
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# The President's Message

## We need to remember the honor of 9/11 now more than ever



**Patrick Colligan**

The 19th anniversary of 9/11 has come and gone. I wish there were a more appropriate word to use than "anniversary." The word always seemed more celebratory than the milestone it really is.

The day is still as raw to me as it was 19 years ago. Unfortunately, most of our country seems to believe that the safety and security we have experienced since 9/11 will continue forever. We are all well aware that will not be the case.

Right now, those who wish to see us destroyed are content with the lone wolf attacks we see with too much frequency. We can't minimize those attacks because there isn't any doubt that another big operation is on somebody's to-do list! We owe it to the extraordinary efforts of those who are in the profession to thwart those attacks, remembering the outstanding work they do every day around the world.

And of course, something as sacred as the reading of the names and the tribute in lights was somehow turned into political theater this year. Politicize a budget. Politicize an endorsement. But I would like to think that some extraordinarily bad karma awaits anybody who wants to politicize 9/11.

In other news, oral arguments were made to the New Jersey Supreme Court in our case against the attorney general. He wanted to rewrite the rules and release information from up to 20 years ago for any officer hit with "major discipline."

As much as he likes to mischaracterize our two-hour meeting with him and subsequent lawsuit, we objected to the blanket – and usually misconstrued – definition of major discipline. We all know that major discipline does not mean "major violations," and changing the rules from the past 20 years does nothing but harm those who voluntarily chose to accept "major discipline" and move on with their careers.

Most continued to serve with honor and dignity. It does nothing but embarrass and humiliate those who have dedicated their lives to serving and protecting. Win, lose or draw, it is a stand I will never regret fighting for. As we have said, if it was a violation of the public trust, then we can have that discussion. Otherwise, he is absolutely destroying dedicated public servants.

And, finally, we've all watched the horrific video of the attempted murder of two Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies. As difficult as that was to witness, the depravity of the subsequent social media posts is, quite literally, sickening.

To laugh and film while two humans are fighting for their lives was a repugnant display of soulless humanity. Don't like law enforcement? Unfortunately, I get it. But when you choose to video and laugh instead of, at least, calling 9-1-1, blocking a hospital entrance or hoping death on them leaves me speechless. Our language doesn't even have an adequate adjective to describe that. It sends us all a message of what we are dealing with today.

Please stay safe, today more than ever!



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Steve Kalafer,  
Chairman







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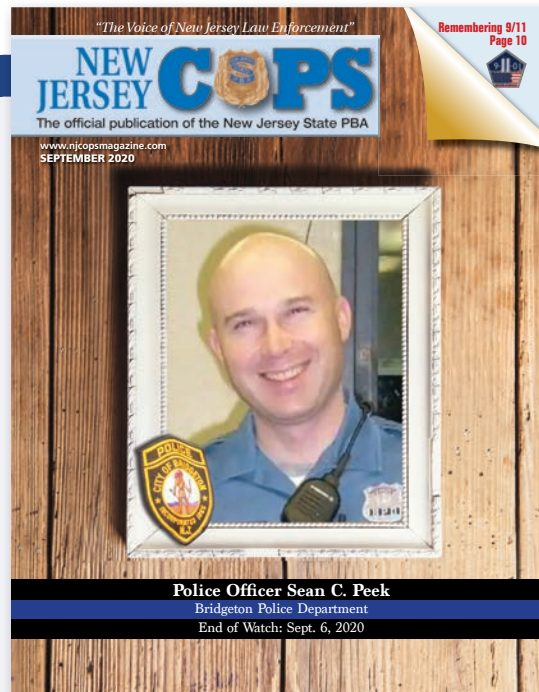
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## A tribute to Sean Peek

The Bridgeton Officer and Local 94 member set a standard of excellence that will be hard to match. His dedication to serve and help led him into a river to save a suspect, a response that resulted with losing Sean in the line of duty. But he never hesitated, and it's that passion, along with his ability to make his fellow officers, his department and his city proud, along with his infectious laugh and love for precious daughter Kate and beautiful wife Megan, that we will always remember.



### Remembering 9/11

A tribute to those who were lost that day and those who have been lost since ..... **Page 10**

### Heck, yeah

State Corrections Local 105 State Delegate Ray Heck is vying for his second term as the elected police trustee to the PFRS board. His record merits only one choice: Vote for Ray!..... **Page 37**

### Special Report

#### Trenton's toughness

A vehicle pursuit that resulted in shots being fired at law enforcement officers left six Trenton Local 11 members injured, some almost fatally. After six weeks in the hospital and rehabilitation, one of those, Officer Kevin Starkey, finally came home, exemplifying the strength and resiliency that makes this group so remarkable ..... **Page 41**

#### Giving it up for law enforcement

Their appreciation for what officers endure every day led Dr. Caesar DePaco and his wife Deanna to make an unbelievable contribution to the NJ State PBA Survivor & Welfare Fund that could not be more timely ..... **Page 47**

#### Coming home

After a 111-day battle against COVID-19, State Corrections Local 105 member Chris Stanek received a hero's welcome back..... **Page 54**

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**Marc Kovar**  
Executive Vice President

# Remember the importance of voting during these difficult times for law enforcement

Labor Day traditionally marks the beginning of election season. And you hear from me every year about the importance of law enforcement voting together. It is time again to reiterate how important this is and to encourage NJ State PBA members, as well as our friends and families, to cast their votes for NJSPBA-endorsed candidates. (See the list of our endorsed candidates on page 10 of this issue, and feel free to reach out to me or your State Delegate if you have questions or need additional information on our endorsements.)

In 2017, NJSPBA President Pat Colligan and I met with candidates running for governor. It was the end of Chris Christie's second term and his relentless broken promises to law enforcement. We endorsed Governor Phil Murphy over Kim Guadagno. I can tell you that, at the time, Governor Murphy was a better choice. I specifically recall candidate Guadagno speaking enthusiastically about a 2 percent budget cap and consolidation of services, which would negatively impact local law enforcement positions and salaries.

Three years later, and because I have heard it directly from members, law enforcement has not been overly excited with the Murphy administration. Although the governor did sign historic legislation that dramatically restructured the Police and Fire Retirement System (PFRS) Board of Trustees – removing control of the pension system from the state and providing the board with the exclusive power to select the investments of PFRS assets and make decisions about how pension policies will be governed – we now find ourselves fighting policy and legislation that negatively impact all of law enforcement.

Only a short time ago, in the beginning of the pandemic, elected and appointed officials were rushing to stand side by side with law enforcement. We were being called heroes, along with healthcare and other essential workers, for showing up day in and day out to keep our streets and neighborhoods safe while also being called upon to participate in drive-by parades and other showings of support to help uplift our communities. We were going to work every shift, while most workers in our state were on lockdown. We

did that without hesitation and without complaint because that is the difficult job we swore to uphold.

All that changed after the death of George Floyd at the hands of a few bad police officers in Minneapolis. The NJSPBA immediately condemned the actions of the officers responsible. We did not come to the defense of bad officers at that time, and we never will. Yet, as a result of bad actions by bad actors outside of our state, we now find ourselves vulnerable to the whims of politicians searching for the soundbite that will rise above all others in the face of historic divisiveness across the country.

Even during these difficult times, however, the glass is still half full. While gaining control of the PFRS will pay dividends forever, it will prove particularly timely given the pending economic fallout from COVID-19. New Jersey, and all its county and local governments, will be dealing with economic fallout from the extended lockdown, and it will only be a matter of time before politicians begin looking to cut budgets and dip into already underfunded pension systems. With control of our pensions in our own hands, the PFRS pension system will be off limits.

But back to the importance of these upcoming elections. This year is unique in that the election will be conducted largely with vote-by-mail ballots. Every registered voter will receive a ballot that can easily be returned in a return address-stamped envelope. It will literally take less than five minutes of your time and helps keep our collective voice alive.

Please vote. There is no excuse not to fill out the ballot from home and mail it back. We need to stand together. We need to vote together.

These remain difficult and dangerous times to serve in law enforcement. Please look after and protect each other. And please join me in sending our thoughts and prayers out to the family of Bridgeton Local 94 member Sean Peek, who was lost in the line of duty on Sept. 6, and Lakewood Local 71 member Nicklas Shimonovich, who was fatally injured in an off-duty motorcycle accident on Sept. 5.

## 2020 NJ State PBA Endorsed Candidates

### President of the United States

Donald J. Trump

### U.S. Senate

None

### U.S. House of Representatives

District 1: None

District 2: Jeff Van Drew

District 3: David Richter

District 4: Chris Smith

District 5: None

District 6: None

District 7: Tom Kean

District 8: None

District 9: None

District 10: None

District 11: Rosemary Becchi

District 12: None

### New Jersey Senate (special election)

District 25: Senator Anthony Bucco

### New Jersey General Assembly (special election)

District 25: Assemblywoman

Aura Dunn



# THE 411: Fundraisers and Fun

**Sept. 23**

## **South Jersey Building Trades Annual Golf Tournament in support of Atlantic City Police Foundation and Atlantic City Fire/Rescue Foundation**

Mays Landing Country Club  
1855 Cates Road, Mays Landing  
8 a.m.

For more information, visit [https://www.njspba.com/web\\_content/pdf/events/South-Jersey-Building-Construction-Trades-Annual-Golf-Outing-2020.pdf](https://www.njspba.com/web_content/pdf/events/South-Jersey-Building-Construction-Trades-Annual-Golf-Outing-2020.pdf)

**Sept. 24-Oct. 24**

## **Virtual Bike SONJ Ride for Inclusion to support Law Enforcement Torch Run**

For information: <https://www.classy.org/event/2020-virtual-ride-for-inclusion/e271587>

**Sept. 26**

## **2020 Plane Pull to Benefit Special Olympics NJ**

Newark Liberty International Airport  
Brewster Road, Newark  
Noon-6 p.m.

For more information, please contact Beth Starr at [bas@sonj.org](mailto:bas@sonj.org)

**Sept. 26**

## **Passaic County Sheriff's Office Local 197**

VFW  
260 Wanaque Ave., Pompton Lakes  
1 p.m.

For more information, please contact Mike Dalton at 973-725-4042, Mike Damato at 973-725-6711 or John Welsh at 201-881-5100

**Sept. 29**

## **2020 Garden State C.O.P.S. Survivor Golf Classic**

Mercer Oaks Golf Course  
725 Village Road West, West Windsor  
Registration 11 a.m.; lunch noon-1 p.m.; shotgun start 1:15 p.m.

For information: [www.gardenstatecops.com](http://www.gardenstatecops.com)

**Sept. 30**

## **NJSPBA PFRS Retirement Seminar**

State PBA Offices  
158 Main St., Woodbridge  
10 a.m.  
RSVP to [pandreyev@njspba.com](mailto:pandreyev@njspba.com)

**Oct. 4**

## **Lincoln Tunnel 5K Challenge to Benefit Special Olympics NJ**

Lincoln Tunnel  
400 Blvd. East, Weehawken  
6-11 a.m.

For more information, visit <https://www.sonj.org/events>

**Oct. 7**

## **Third Annual Essex County Conference Cigar Night**

Nanina's in the Park  
540 Mill St., Belleville  
7-11 p.m.

Tickets: \$125

For tickets, call PJ Sandomenico (973-392-9224), Brett Keepers (973-632-3918), Eric Serio (908-347-8789), Ed Carattini (732-610-0434) or Joe Savittieri (973-632-9869)

**Oct. 9**

## **37th Annual Law Enforcement Torch Run**

Statewide  
For information, [www.NJTorchRun.org](http://www.NJTorchRun.org)

## **NJSPBA Pension Seminar**

Ocean County Police Academy  
659 Ocean Ave., Lakewood  
9 a.m.

For more information, call 732-363-8710 or visit <http://www.oceancountypoliceacademy.org>

**Oct. 15**

## **The 2020 Perlman Cup**

Forsgate Country Club  
Monroe Township  
10 a.m.-8 p.m.

To register or donate, visit: <https://www.classy.org/event/2020-perlman-cup/e266973>

Questions? Send an email to [perlmancup@sonj.org](mailto:perlmancup@sonj.org)

**Oct. 25**

## **Unified Cup Soccer**

Mercer County Park, Parking Lot 1  
West Windsor Township  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

For questions on how to get your school registered or other Unified Sports opportunities, contact Jess Stevenson at [jns@sonj.org](mailto:jns@sonj.org)  
To volunteer, visit: <https://2018fallevents.my-trs.com/>

**Oct. 26**

## **Bike SONJ: Ride for Inclusion**

Skillman Park  
Main Blvd., Skillman  
8 a.m.-2 p.m.

For more information, visit: <https://www.classy.org/event/2019-ride-for-inclusion/e238624>

**Nov. 14**

## **Thanks4Giving Dash & Splash supported by the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics NJ**

The Grand Arcade of Convention Hall  
1300 Ocean Ave., Asbury Park  
10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

For more information, visit [www.thx4giving.org](http://www.thx4giving.org)

**Dec. 1**

## **NJSPBA Pension Seminar**

Stamler Police Academy  
1776 Raritan Road, Scotch Plains  
2 p.m.

For more information, call Lisa Martinez at 908-889-6112 or visit [www.njspba.com](http://www.njspba.com)

## **2020 NJ STATE PBA MEETING DATES**

**Date changed:**

**Oct. 13. Pines Manor, Edison**

**Dec. 8: Pines Manor, Edison**

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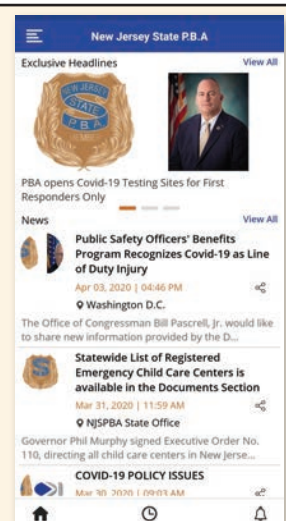
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# More to Remember

# 495

Officers listed on the  
Officer Down Memorial Page  
lost in the events of Sept. 11, 2001

# 72

Officers lost at the  
World Trade Center  
site on Sept. 11, 2001

# 423

Officers lost due to  
the events of 9/11  
since Sept. 11, 2001

The moments of silence on 9/11 resound more vehemently with each passing year. Remembering the fallen officers lost due to that horrible attack has become almost exponentially more vexing because of what has happened since 2001.

Dr. Iris Udasin, director of the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, lends some context and compassion to the current state of 9/11 remembrance. She knows many of these heroes who have been to her clinical center for screening and treatment.

As early as 2008, first responders were already showing a cancer rate 15 percent higher than people their age who were not at the World Trade Center site. In 2010, she treated an officer who responded on 9/11 and performed many months of search and rescue and was diagnosed with an aggressive metastatic cancer of the hypopharynx of the throat. A rare cancer in healthy non-smoking patients, Dr. Udasin had eight patients who responded to the World Trade Center site with this condition.



Honoring the fallen heroes of 9/11 ensures never forgetting the 60 officers lost that day, including the 37 Port Authority officers who were Local 116 members. But the honor includes never forgetting those who were part of the search and rescue that day and in the ensuing days, weeks and months.

"I think the people who were there that day felt really good about what they did, and they would do it again," Dr. Udasin observes. "I think the mentality of rescuing is still there for everybody in the profession. I think we know a little bit more about it."

Dr. Udasin emphasizes that this year is an especially great opportunity for all first responders to remember what might have saved even more lives that day. The pandemic reminds about the need for law enforcement officers to always have the proper protective equipment when responding.

"I think it teaches us that you still want to run in rather than run away," she adds. "But when you do encounter an environmental problem, make sure to protect yourselves."





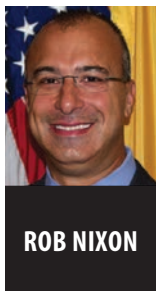
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# Legislating police reform and the effect on officer safety



ROB NIXON

The attempted murder of two Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies and the threats of violence against law enforcement officers on social media and in public perpetuated by BLM, Antifa and others have rightly caused concern that the line between social justice reform and vengeance are becoming blurred. The disgraceful lack of attention in the media of these threats and attacks is disappointing but not shocking. The failure of elected officials, and in some cases the justification of violence against law en-

forcement is, however, shocking.

No one can argue against respectful dialogue and proactive steps to enhance the law enforcement profession, improve training and develop meaningful community relationships to build trust while enforcing the law. But the fact that anyone could justify or excuse a violent action or a threat against law enforcement demonstrates that members of the profession must always be on guard for their personal safety.

Since this violence and community unrest has expanded across the nation, the NJ State PBA has been asked how to prevent the release and posting of the personal information, addresses and phone numbers of officers. Fortunately, New Jersey law already prohibits disclosing, circulating, publishing or posting on the internet the home address or unpublished home telephone number of any retired law enforcement officer, law enforcement officer or spouse or child of a law enforcement officer.

PL. 2015, c. 226 is the law that makes it up to a third-degree crime, and it applies to any private citizen, governmental entity, business or association that discloses an officer's personal information. An officer whose personal information is posted online can seek damages under the law in superior court as well.

A copy of the law, originally known as S1447 (2015), can be found on the New Jersey Legislature's website [www.njleg.state.nj.us](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us). Any active or retired officers whose rights are violated by the release of their personal information should immediately seek to protect themselves under the law and press charges when appropriate in order to protect themselves and their families from harassment.

Fortunately, the "Defund the Police" movement and other demands to dismantle and weaken the law enforcement community has not taken root in the New Jersey State Legislature. Despite the ignorant comments and actions of a handful of mayors, school officials and bloggers, the discussion about policing in New Jersey has been respectful and productive in Trenton, even if we disagree about the need for some of the bills and policies that have been proposed.

As discussed in prior articles, the legislature has passed numerous bills in the past few months relating to police reform.

For the most part, these measures have not been objectionable and, where necessary, we have suggested changes that bill sponsors have taken into consideration.

A few bills of major concern remain, though, not the least of which are those to establish civilian review boards with subpoena powers to permit citizen groups to conduct their own internal affairs investigations that could interfere with, complicate and disrupt existing criminal and IA investigations. Establishing civilian review boards in a local government is permitted now, but those groups must follow rules adopted by the attorney general in the revised IA guidelines, and the board review must wait until after all administrative and criminal reviews are concluded.

The State PBA will not support legislation that provides a politically appointed civilian review board with powers to interview witnesses, compel testimony from officers, examine evidence and dictate discipline while an IA or criminal investigation is also underway. The State PBA has expressed its concerns to the sponsor, and we are hopeful that this bill will be held.

The State Senate Law and Public Safety Committee have continued to hear testimony on police reform and have recently moved legislation regarding the use of body cameras as well. The legislature has since sent two bills to the governor regarding body camera use. One essentially codifies the existing AG policies on body camera use, but the other is a mandate that is unnecessary and expensive.

The mandate, Senate Bill 1163, requires every "uniformed state, county and municipal patrol law enforcement officer" to wear a body camera except in several limited circumstances involving undercover assignments, administrative positions, union representation and a few others. The bill is most likely an unconstitutional unfunded mandate on local government because it does not come with a funding source other than forfeiture funds. The governor has not signed the bill up to this point. Assuming he does, we will be watching to see if any local governments file suit to block its implementation over the lack of funding, like they did to block the mandate that all police cars be equipped with cameras.

We expect a continued discussion over these issues and others during the next few months. But whether it is review boards, public access to IA files, use-of-force policies, police licensing or any other developing issues, the State PBA has a seat at the table and a respected voice in the process. What is most important is that we stand up for laws and policies that protect officers first and foremost while they do their jobs professionally in difficult and dangerous situations.

On that, there is no room for negotiating.



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# Supreme Court upholds Newark CCRB ordinance

The city of Newark and the FOP have been engaged in long-standing litigation regarding the City's Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). The case finally reached the New Jersey Supreme Court and its opinion was issued on Aug. 19, resolving the FOP's challenge to Newark's ordinance. In a 6-1 decision, the Supreme Court upheld the city's right to establish the CCRB and addressed the authority the CCRB can and cannot exercise based on Newark's ordinance.

Newark's ordinance was enacted without any statutory authorization. It established a CCRB within the mayor's office to address complaints filed by citizens against Newark police officers. The CCRB's powers under the ordinance can be divided into two categories: investigative powers and policy responsibilities.

## Newark's CCRB Ordinance

The following are the investigative powers given to the CCRB by the ordinance:

Gives the CCRB subpoena power and authority to receive and investigate complaints against officers even if an IA is already underway.



- The CCRB's findings of fact in its investigations are binding on the public safety director (absent clear error), although the public safety director retains final authority over discipline.

- CCRB can recommend discipline to be imposed.

- CCRB has the authority, at the conclusion of the police department's own investigation into an officer's behavior, to review the findings, conclusions and recommendations that follow from that internal investigation.

The CCRB has the following policymaking authority:

- Recommend procedures for investigating police conduct.

- The authority to consult with the public safety director in the development of a discipline matrix.

The ordinance also directs the Division of Police and Department of Public Safety to cooperate with the CCRB. It also establishes rules and procedures for the CCRB, including one which provides for the confidentiality of complainants' identities. The ordinance further allows for the release of a complainant's identity if the complaint is substantiated and is referred to a CCRB hearing.

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### The Supreme Court decision

The court upheld the city's ordinance and concluded that the CCRB can investigate citizen complaints alleging police misconduct, and that those investigations may result in recommendations to the public safety director for the pursuit of discipline against the officer. The court also affirmed the CCRB's ability to conduct its oversight investigation by reviewing the overall operation of the police department, including the performance of its IA function and provide periodic reports to officials.

However, the court rejected important elements of the city's ordinance, making two significant modifications. First, the court concluded that some of the investigatory powers conferred on the CCRB conflict with existing state law. The court held that the CCRB could not exercise its investigatory authority while an investigation is being conducted by the Police Department's IA unit. The court noted that concurrent investigations by the CCRB would interfere with the police chief's statutory responsibility over the IA function, and that the CCRB's separate investigatory proceedings would conflict with requirements imposed on IA investigations and the results. Second, and importantly, the court invalidated the subpoena power given to the CCRB.

The court concluded, however, that if there is no IA investigation underway, the investigatory power conferred on the CCRB is valid and poses no conflict when it is used to investigate a citizen complaint filed with it. In other words, the CCRB can independently investigate citizen complaints if there is no active IA underway. The court further noted that the public safety director has the authority to direct the chief to initiate

charges against a law enforcement officer after receiving the findings and recommendations of the CCRB even if no IA process was started.

Chief Justice Rabner, in his dissenting opinion, would have upheld the Appellate Division's decision without modification. He would have allowed the CCRB to exercise subpoena power and also would have allowed the CCRB to conduct investigations even while an IA investigation was underway.

Undoubtedly, municipalities will use the Supreme Court's decision and the Newark ordinance as guides for creating their own CCRBs. In addition, legislation is pending: A-4272 would require municipalities to create civilian review boards. The bill would also authorize counties to create civilian review boards which would review and investigate complaints about the conduct of members of a police force of a participating municipality.

Whether the review board is created by the municipality or a county, it must consist of seven members who are residents of the municipality or the county, and who have training or experience in community relations, civil rights, law enforcement, sociology and other relevant fields. The bill otherwise does not have much in the way of detail as to how these boards would operate and what authority they could exercise. The NJ State PBA is actively opposing this bill.

Issues regarding civilian review boards will undoubtedly arise as more municipalities or counties create them, either using the Newark decision as a template or relying on any statutory enactments. We will continue to keep the State PBA and members advised of any developments.



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# When 'papers' aren't paper anymore



PETER  
ANDREYEV

One of the many questions I have been asked during my tenure as your NJSPBA pension consultant is, "How do I put my papers in?"

The Division of Pensions does not accept paper retirement applications anymore. The Division of Pensions now requires all members to complete their application for retirement online through their MBOS account. If you don't know what MBOS is, it is the online version of documents and applications that allows pension members access to their pension account information.

All members have access to apply for retirement in a secure, fast and efficient manner. Members can apply for all types of retirement, including disability retirements. When applying for disability retirements, make sure you follow the directions of the application carefully. If you need to send any documents to the Division of Pensions, make sure you write your name and PFRS number in the margins.

If for some reason you may not have set up your MBOS account yet, you will need to register immediately. First go to the Division of Pensions website and click on the link that takes you to the registration page for MBOS. Once there, you will complete all of the information requested, and then select Active Member or Retired Member. Be sure to have your PFRS and Social Security numbers, because that information is needed when you register for the first time. If you don't have your PFRS

number, you can obtain it from your employer or by contacting the Division of Pensions. Now that you have provided all of the required information, click the submit button.

You then need to create your My New Jersey account and link it to your MBOS account. Once you've done that successfully, you have registered and created an account for MBOS. The one obvious suggestion is to make sure that your user ID and passwords are easy to remember. If you can't remember your user ID or password, contact the MBOS help desk at 609-777-0534.

Once you have set up your MBOS account, you now have access to all of your pension account information. When you're ready, you can complete and submit your retirement application. When you get to the retirement application, make sure the information that MBOS has for your address and your pedigree information is correct. If the information is wrong, you can edit and change it. The next thing you need to check is that your beneficiary's information is correct. Your retirement application requires your beneficiary's name, date of birth and Social Security number for all the people in your life that you want to list as your beneficiaries. When completing your application, be aware that all retirements take effect on the first of every month. The earliest you can file your application is one year from your date that you become eligible for retirement, and the latest that you can file your application is the day before your eligible date. We suggest that you submit your application three to four months before your chosen or eligible retirement date.

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# Internet-based healthcare applications

We were always told in school that “necessity is the mother of invention.” Even if you couldn’t see it before, healthcare was slowly moving to the internet pre COVID-19. Teladoc and other companies were attempting to increase access by turning your phone into a medical tool. Increasing access, convenience and education are just some of the benefits of remote medicine, but several of the programs that have had a meteoric rise are due to the physical barriers required in the COVID-19 era.

Leadership at the SHPB brought forth several additions to coverage that are at the cutting edge of remote healthcare both as treatment and administration. These changes will help you to make responsible healthcare choices for you and your family while having the convenience we need, given law enforcement’s nontraditional work schedules.

It is important that you know that these are all available as choices at this time, as none of the programs are mandated. Most have cost share waivers at this time, which makes them even more attractive.

Over the next few issues, we will discuss different programs from different areas of healthcare. We hope that you take the time to explore the programs to see which is the best fit for you.

The first program that is available to you is AMINO. This app helps you navigate high-value, in-network providers, which

can save you exposure to deductibles, coinsurance and balance billing while making sure the doctor has a high rating for safety and patient satisfaction. This is an application that will show you a list by categories in practice and in a certain geographical area for all types of practitioners. For instance, if you need a doctor for shoulder pain, if you type in “orthopedic,” it will show you your options and ratings and allow you to schedule an appointment. This gives you the ability to have freedom of choice with the least cost exposure.

The other app that we have had several discussions about is Workit Health. Workit is an online addiction treatment service that can provide one-on-one and group counseling that uses cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to help those suffering from addiction. This contact can be made one-on-one from the privacy of your cell phone and currently has no cost share for the members. The service is currently available to all of Horizon’s customers, regardless of whether they are in the SHBP. This is part of Horizon’s response to our repeated calls to increase access to mental health treatment. While we don’t believe that any form of treatment is a panacea, we will continue to support the Division and Horizon’s efforts to put more “tools in the toolbox.”

## Before I get into this, don’t kill the messenger

The rate-setting process for the members of the State Health Benefits Plan is complete and allows us to plan for next year’s rate increases. While the results vary from group to group, you must know that although the state allows us to join the conversation, the rates are wholly controlled by the treasury and, vicariously, by the governor’s office. After the Design Committee is handed the plan outlines, the only power and influence it wields is to reduce benefits in order to reduce premiums.

Having said that, we have to give a great deal of credit to the Division of Pensions and Benefits, and specifically to Christin Deacon and many on her staff who worked every day through the COVID-19 crisis and through the challenges of furloughs to make sure our members still had coverage and access to healthcare. And they accomplished this all while continuing the innovation that will save us going forward.

The issue that we agreed on was the assumptions of the actuaries. AON would not project the tremendous reduction in utilization we had this year into next year. Thus, we think some increases will have the potential to balance out next year.

So let’s go through the increases group by group. One

trend we saw driving the premiums was that drug costs were up and medical costs were down.

State actives in the Direct 15 and new direct plans will see an increase of 4.1 percent, while the HMO, tiered and high-deductible plans will have a small decrease. Early retirees for the state will see about an 8 percent decrease, and state Medicare retirees will see a 5.1 percent increase.

On the local government side, the news is all over the place. When viewing these rates, please remember that the national trend is a 5 to 5.5 percent increase for 2021, and even higher than that for the past few years.

For local government actives, the increase is 1.8 percent. For early retirees, the reductions of the past have finally caught up and will realize an 11.6 percent increase — and that is after taking all monies in reserve and applying them to the rates. This will have a significant impact on our chapter 330 retirees, but this is mostly due to a 24 percent increase in prescription drug costs. Lastly, Medicare (for those aged 65 and over) saw an 8 percent increase, which is driven by both medical and drug costs.

The good news is that the plan designs will not change for 2021, and we will have new plans that will reduce premiums.



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# When dealing with employers, better to communicate than to wing it



**MICHAEL  
FREEMAN**

“The right wing and the left wing both belong to the same bird, and both are needed to fly!”

Those are words from one of the most interesting members of the NJ State PBA. At the time, Passaic Local 14 State Delegate Mauro Farallo was talking about political discussions. He bemoaned the unwillingness of many people to listen to someone who has a different point of view. Many people do not listen; they merely wait to talk. An inability to communicate hampers all relationships and hinders any progress that could come from working together to solve the problems that both parties face.

Employer-employee relationships are no different. When communication between the administration and the union is good, the workplace is better, and that transfers to the public we serve. The adversarial relationship that is developed between the parties can be avoided by listening, understanding and accepting that the other side has challenges that are completely different and often at odds, but just as important as the challenges that your side is attempting to overcome. When both sides can help each other meet those challenges, a successful negotiation occurs.

In Little Egg Harbor, Local 295 entered negotiations with the Township in the fall of 2018. After more than a year of discussions, the PBA was unable to convince the Township that switching to the State Health Benefits Program with lower premiums would result in considerable savings, and those savings could be shared by the Township and the employees through reduced contributions. In January 2020 they declared an impasse, and PERC assigned James Mastriani as the arbitrator to decide what each party would be awarded in the new contract.

Since it is the mandatory first step to resolve an impasse, they engaged in two unsuccessful mediation sessions with Mr. Mastriani. Ultimately, a final offer was submitted by the PBA that included a reasonable across-the-board raise, the change in health carrier and a two-step reduction in Chapter 78 contributions from Tier 4 to Tier 3, then from Tier 3 to Tier 2. The Township's offer was for no salary increase in the first year and four years of salary increases significantly below what they had negotiated with the other bargaining units in Little Egg Harbor.

Although the timing was impacted by the COVID pan-

dem, the parties were able to present evidence to support their offers. Little Egg Harbor Local 295 was represented by Christopher Gray and Frank Cioffi of Sciarra & Catrambone, LLC. The attorneys were able to present briefs that stressed that the PBA offer considered the issue of cost, and then met the challenges faced by the employer to keep the cost of the new contract at a level that did not have a negative impact on the taxpayer. They were able to utilize data that was expertly presented by Dr. Ray Caprio in a full financial analysis of the cost as it related to the budget. The number that was accepted and verified by Mastriani was a tax increase that equaled \$0.63 per month to the average taxpayer in Little Egg Harbor.

After applying the nine statutory criteria that have been discussed in previous articles in this space, Mr. Mastriani awarded fair raises and step increases in all but the first year of the five-year contract. In addition, he became the first arbitrator in New Jersey to award a reduction of the health care contribution by lowering it to Tier 3 in the final year of the contract. He reasoned that based on the salary structure and number of officers in the bargaining unit, that change equated to a 1.75 percent increase in base salary — an amount that does not get aggregated by overtime or pension costs to the Township. He did not award the change to the SHBP, although he did opine that he would not preclude the Township from engaging all of the bargaining units in the change, as it would clearly save money for all parties.

In short, the arbitration process worked in this case as it was designed. Both sides will walk away with a contract that, through its duration, overcomes many of the challenges that they faced at the end of 2018. It is unfortunate that the employer refused to listen to the union as it proposed a similar package before both sides spent time and money on legal fees.

Hopefully, other employers will be able to learn from this and work with the unions. As public employees and also as taxpayers, PBA members should be viewed as a part of the solution, since our jobs require us to solve problems every day. We are trained to listen to the complaint and evaluate the situation before deciding upon the best course of action. Many municipalities have benefited from good communication with the unions. There will be discussion on how to develop this relationship at the 2021 Collective Bargaining Seminar in February at Harrah's in Atlantic City. All members with an interest in representing their Local should attend. Ask your State Delegate for details.





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# 48 hours



BRIAN  
DAWE

“Attica! Attica! Attica!” Those are not the words you want to hear when you arrive at your post as a correctional officer in your state’s largest medium-security prison.

Many people will have heard of the 1971 riot at Attica Correctional Facility in New York, which left 43 people dead. For those unfamiliar, the inmates took control of the prison for four days. When the dust settled, 33 inmates and 10 officers and civilians lay dead. Five of them — one officer and four inmates — were killed by inmates. The remaining 38 died when the governor ordered the state police to open fire and regain control of the prison.

As I approached MCI Norfolk on that day in the summer of 1987, I had been working in the prison for five years, and so I quickly noticed some differences from the norm. There were more cars in the parking lot than usual, and more staff milled about. Tactical team buses lined the lot, and there seemed to be a lot of unfamiliar officers across the street at what we called “the White House,” a training building generally used for new recruits. I assumed there must be a training exercise in progress that I was unaware of, or possibly a “shakedown.” As it turned out, I was quite mistaken. This would be a day I would remember for the rest of my life.

As I entered the gatehouse, I felt a distinct heaviness in the air. There was a tension that charged the atmosphere; it felt thick, oppressive. I could feel it on my skin, as if someone had just dramatically raised the humidity in the room.

Often outnumbered 80, 90 or even 100 to 1, correctional officers learn to survive on our instincts, relying on “tells” that indicate that the status quo is in question. From what I had already observed in the lot and the atmosphere in the gatehouse, I began to realize that something had either gone down or was about to. I punched the time clock and headed upstairs to roll call. (Remember when our lives mattered enough that we had roll call?)

Usually the officers would be jokingly giving each other a hard time or would be playing pool, just trying to chill and take a breath before going inside. But not today. No one was playing pool, there was no lighthearted banter, no one was busting chops. It was nearly silent. Just looking around the room, we all knew intuitively that it was not going to be your average day at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk (MCIN).

When the captain arrived to read the roll, the room was silent. He told us there was a problem in the yard. There were dozens of inmates walking in unison around the quadrangle in the center of the prison. He told us to be alert, do our jobs, but do not be overly aggressive. We were cautioned to be a little more patient in our interactions with the inmate population and let the OIC (officer in charge) know if we noticed anything unusual at our posts.

There are five towers at MCI Norfolk. As they take the lon-

gest to get to and relieve existing staff, they are the first to be assigned, but on that day the captain didn’t assign anyone from our shift to man the towers. The officers currently on those posts would not be leaving, and those scheduled to work there were reassigned into the yard. Although this certainly heightened our senses, we are trained to handle these situations, and the captain had not seemed overly concerned. His attitude was more akin to “we got this under control” rather than “batten down the hatches, boys, this isn’t good.” The shift pretty universally took their cue from the captain’s attitude, and so we relaxed a bit.

That is, until we entered the yard.

It was the three-to-eleven shift, and I was a house officer. At the time, I worked a housing unit consisting of 48 inmates and one officer: me. MCI Norfolk was originally a boys’ school; in 1987, there were 18 “dormitories” which housed about 800 to 900 inmates. The drug wars had just begun, our population was growing and attitudes were changing. There was a new outward militancy toward authority and more inmates willing to confront staff. Assaults were on the rise, and there was a general unease throughout the system. So perhaps those at the top of the correctional hierarchy should have seen this day coming.

After roll call, all staff were required to go through the search of the day when leaving the gatehouse and heading into the yard. We went through a set of security doors, the search, the Five Tower sally port and then across a 30-yard opening to the administration building. From there, we passed two more secured gates before gaining access to the interior of the prison.

When the sally port opened from Five Tower and we hit that opening between the gatehouse and the administration building, we could hear the chants: “Attica! Attica! Attica!” Despite what I’d been led to expect, it did not sound like a couple dozen inmates. As I cleared the second set of gates and entered the yard, it was obvious that regardless of our captain’s confidence in our ability to keep control, this was to be no minor incident. I was now greeted with the sight of hundreds of inmates with their fists in the air, all chanting the name of that most famous prison riot in history.

*Attica! Attica! Attica!* Every muscle in my body clenched — this was the real deal. To this day, the memory alone raises the hairs on my arms.

It would be nearly 48 hours before my shift ended. Those two days will stay with me for as long as I live.

*(To be continued...)*

---

*Brian Dawe spent 16 years as a state correctional officer in Massachusetts, beginning on May 31, 1982. He is a co-founder of the Massachusetts Correction Officers Federated Union, administrator of the Corrections and Criminal Justice Coalition and executive director of Corrections USA and the American Correctional Officer. He is the originator and owner of the American Correctional Officer Intelligence Network (ACOIN).*





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- A list of job openings for retired officers
- Survivors Bulletin
- Annual newsletter
- Monthly luncheon meeting: Second Tuesday of each month. Log on to [www.njspba600.org](http://www.njspba600.org) for location and time.

# Endorsing President Trump for reelection



**JIM TOMA**  
STATE  
DELEGATE

Following months of quarantine, mask wearing, social distancing and taking all the other precautions we were advised to take, I pray that we are nearing a safer and healthier time. I know there is more fight to fight with the virus, but from all accounts there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Many have paid a big price and, unfortunately, we retirees are more vulnerable because of our age and health. We lost a few, and we mourn and pray for all members who have been stricken, and their families. So much has been put into perspective: the importance of family, relationships, love, helping others, caring for those less fortunate. Hopefully, we used this time to reflect on these important things and will come out the other side more appreciative of what we have and what we have been given.

And then we have seen an additional side of these somewhat dark days with the anti-police actions, defunding or, in one candidate's terminology, "We can redirect some of the funding." Well, to me, if money is redirected away from law enforcement, that seems to be defunding. It's kind of like the quote from a former president: "It depends on what your definition of 'is' is."

Either way, less money is coming to law enforcement at a time when investments should be increasing. Of course, there is no way to defend cops who commit a criminal act, and they should be dealt with quickly. Invest in the hiring and screening process. Invest in the training process, even though there is no 100 percent foolproof way to eliminate every future incident. When you're dealing with millions of interactions with the public each year, there will be mistakes and poor decisions; however, statistics accurately show that those incidents are a small percentage of all police-involved interactions.

I started in law enforcement 40 years ago this past August. Many of you began your careers even earlier. We have seen the ups and downs of public support. As a kid in Newark, like in many cities in the '60s and '70s, I watched my dad, a Newark officer, face hate and assault. Changes needed to be made in policing, in community activism, in recruitment and in soul-searching.

We've come a long way. Just look at our diversity, our community policing and opportunity for all in the profession. We can always do better, and it's OK for the public to hold up a mirror to our profession. Like all professions, we are constantly evolving.

However, when certain groups are using these times for their own personal manifesto of destruction and lawlessness, they need to be condemned and stopped. Otherwise, we have anarchy. We are approaching that in many areas of our country right now. We need to see our leaders and potential leaders, in the strongest terms, condemn this violence and destruction, the killing and burning. One candidate refused to condemn any of this behavior or anti-police rhetoric for months. Only when a poll showing that position was helping his campaign, did he make a change and give a half-hearted "I'm against violence" speech. His party's rhetoric about peaceful protests while police were being targeted with rocks, bottles and bullets was disgraceful.

Throughout all of this, President Trump has stood for law and order, stood with the police, critiqued when necessary but never condemned for political or personal gain. He has been consistent in his message to encourage investing in police, increasing training and eliminating the small percentage of problem cops. As the president said — and we all agree — nobody wants to get rid of them more than the really good and great police officers.

President Trump has been endorsed by police agencies and unions across the country. He believes our country is based on law and the right of all citizens to feel safe in their communities and homes. During every step of his four years in office, he has supported law enforcement measures to make all citizens safer.

With this, I stand with the NJ State PBA and police unions throughout America in endorsing President Trump for reelection in November. I ask each of our Local 600 members to reflect on their careers, their families, their hopes and dreams for the future and see the difference between one political party that demonizes law enforcement and blames us for society's ills and the alternative who believes we are part of the solution to the problems. The Local 600 executive board and the vast majority of its 5,500 members endorse the reelection of President Trump.





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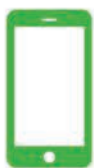
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# PERC opens door to fresh air for correctional police officers



ARTHUR J.  
MURRAY,  
ESQ.



STUART J.  
ALTERMAN,  
ESQ.

"I can't breathe" is a popular mantra utilized by those protesting law enforcement in these uncertain times. However, this mantra recently took on a different context for Cumberland County Corrections Local 231, the rank-and-file correctional police officers for Cumberland County.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a memo was sent to all uniformed correctional personnel stating:

"Effective Sept. 26, 2019 at 7 a.m., all uniformed correctional personnel will no longer be permitted to leave the correctional facility for any breaks. There will be no exceptions to this directive."

Can this be deemed an exercise of management rights when civilian personnel employed at the jail are free to come and go as they please?

We filed an unfair labor charge, which was proceeding through normal channels before the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC). Once the COVID-19 pandemic started to hit the U.S., Local 231 President Victor Bermudez and his executive board inquired whether there was anything we could do at PERC to expedite this issue because of the lack of fresh air afforded to members by the draconian memo.

We immediately converted our unfair labor charge into an order to show cause at PERC and reframed the issue as:

Should a memo to all uniformed correctional personnel which provides, "Effective Sept. 26, 2019 at 7 a.m. all uniformed correctional personnel will no longer be permitted to leave the correctional facility for any breaks. There will be no exceptions to this directive" be temporarily suspended pending rescission of and/or expiration of the governor's state of emergency declaration for COVID-19?

Local 231 submitted certifications from psychologist David Pilchman as well as board-certified emergency room physician Leo Burns in support of its order to show cause. Following extensive briefing and oral argument, PERC ruled against Local 231 and in favor of the Cumberland County Correctional Facility administration. This ruling occurred even though Cumberland County submitted no psychological experts or medical experts to rebut the legal position argued by PBA Local 231.

Knowing that the men and women under their leadership were suffering greatly by working 12-hour shifts, often with four hours of mandatory overtime for a total of 16 hours per day with no ability to breathe fresh air, President Bermudez and his executive board demanded that we move for reconsideration at PERC. We did just that.

## Rally for Cumberland County Corrections

Sept. 22, 6 p.m.

Cumberland County Freeholders Meeting

164 W. Broad Street, Bridgeton

PBA members are encouraged to attend to support the fight against closing the Cumberland County jail.

Additional certifications of Dr. Pilchman and Dr. Burns were submitted. Additional legal briefing was done. Reconsiderations at PERC are heard by the full commission rather than by the same commission designee who heard the original application.

Finally, Local 231, on behalf of its brave women and men who have served the taxpayers of Cumberland County with no additional hazard pay from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic through the present, received their just result. On Aug. 13, a unanimous commission (with one recusal), ordered the following:

"The Cumberland County PBA Local 231's motion for reconsideration is granted and its application for interim relief is granted. The county is restrained from implementing its directive that PBA corrections officers will no longer be permitted to leave the correctional facility for any breaks, and is ordered to reinstate the *status quo ante* permitting PBA corrections officers to leave the facility, but not the premises, during their breaks, including being able to go to their cars, while being requiring to keep their radios on. This order will remain in effect pending a final agency decision or until the parties negotiate a resolution."

PERC found:

The PBA has submitted facts sufficient to establish a substantial likelihood of success in a final commission decision, as well as irreparable harm if its requested interim relief is not granted. We find that extraordinary circumstances exist warranting reconsideration of the designee's decision based on the balancing of the parties' interests regarding restrictions on corrections officers' breaks and the undisputed fact that the county unilaterally changed break rules when it restricted corrections officers to remaining in the correctional facility, rather than just on the premises, during their contractual breaks. We find that the county's failure to adhere to the act's requirements to negotiate in good faith prior to making such a change to an existing condition of employment is extraordinary under these circumstances, where the regular stress of the corrections work environment is further enhanced by



the COVID-19 pandemic, which presents a greater hazard in indoor spaces and has infected some unit members.

PERC also found:

The issue of PBA corrections officers being able to leave the facility during their breaks is mandatorily negotiable because it would not significantly interfere with the exercise of inherent or express management prerogatives.

PERC went on to hold:

We find the PBA has established irreparable harm if the status quo ante is not restored pending the resolution of the unfair practice charge. Here, the PBA officers' ability to enjoy their contractual paid breaks by getting some relief from the correctional facility work environment has been denied by the county's unilateral decision to restrict them not just to the premises, but the facility. They cannot get those unilaterally restricted break periods back. This is analogous to leave time denied, which commission designees have regularly found constitutes irreparable harm because it represents leave opportunities which are lost forever and are not capable of an effective remedy at the conclusion of the case... The irreparable harm here is exacerbated by the heightened stress the PBA officers endure while the COVID-19 pandemic remains a serious medical threat, particularly in enclosed, indoor spaces like correctional facilities that may require close interaction with other people.

PERC awarded Local 231 more than it was requesting.

Local 231 was seeking an injunction only through the expiration of the governor's state of emergency declaration for COVID-19. Instead, PERC entered the injunction through pending final agency decision or negotiated settlement.

Attorneys are often discouraged from filing reconsideration motions. They are rarely granted in normal circumstances. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is anything but normal.

With a tenacious union president and an executive board backed by competent PBA attorneys, anything is possible, even at PERC.

---

*A former municipal police officer, county corrections officer and municipal prosecutor, Stuart J. Alterman has represented law enforcement officers for more than 25 years in all areas of employment issues. He is an NJ State PBA Lifetime Silver Card recipient.*

---

*Arthur J. Murray has represented both plaintiffs and defendants in a variety of civil litigation, including employment (discrimination, harassment, hostile work environment, retaliation, whistleblowing), civil rights, professional malpractice, personal injury, and breach of contract. He also has extensive practice in the Office of Administrative Law in law enforcement disciplinary matters.*

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# Response Time

A conversation with a prominent NJ State PBA member

## This month

Holmdel Township Local 239 State Delegate and Monmouth County Conference Chair Michael Michalski

### The Vitals

- Grew up in Middletown
- On the job since January 2003
- Local 239 State Delegate since 2013
- Monmouth County Conference Chairman since January 2020
- Assignment: Motor Unit

## First Response

### What's it like serving as chair of the Monmouth County Conference?

I kind of got thrown into the fire with the county conference right away, because at my first meeting as Holmdel Local 239 State Delegate, there was the long-time treasurer there who had just gotten promoted and they needed to fill the position. Someone had said, "Michalski, you have a degree in accounting, don't you?" Basically since no one else volunteered, I became the treasurer at my first Monmouth County Conference meeting. I've been on the executive board since day one. I was the treasurer for four years, then I was the co-chair under Mike Tardio for four years. And now here I am as chairman.



Mike Michalski (left) honors Mike Tardio, his predecessor as Monmouth County Conference chair, at the 2020 NJSPBA Mini Convention.

## Conversation pieces

### What's it like following in Mike Tardio's footsteps?

You're only as good as the people you surround yourself with, so being in the position of co-chair for about four years, I learned a lot from Tardio. He was a great leader and we really took an active role in getting involved with political action, among other things. What it boils down to is that we have excellent state delegates in Monmouth County. Any success that I have is because of them.

### How has the Monmouth County Conference stepped up during the pandemic?

We did a Monmouth County Conference-wide food drop-off for all four of our main hospitals in the county. Wall Township Local 234 State Delegate Justin Hudson came up with the idea. We had spoken in a virtual meeting that we wanted to do something for the community to give back. There's a lot of restaurants that were struggling that have always supported us in our fundraisers, so we thought about buying gift cards so they could at least have some cash flow coming in. That idea evolved into what better people to take care of than the people who are getting hit the hardest. And

that's people working in the hospitals. They're on the front lines. We then split up the county into regions and delivered food on different days in coordination with the hospitals.

### What have been the Local's greatest needs the past couple of months?

At the beginning of the pandemic, a lot of it was related to questions about how each Local deals with officers who might come in contact with the virus but have not tested positive yet. Are they supposed to use their own time? Are they given leave time or time off? Then, when you have someone who is sick, how are Locals handling that and when are they able to come back? Just kind of bouncing ideas off of each other and getting feedback from the different Locals was key. One of the most important jobs in being a State Delegate is being able to network and have the connections, so you know who to call to find out answers. Having relationships with other delegates and county conferences is extremely important. That's one of the reasons I try to attend as many events as I can.

## Last Response

### What motivates you to be a leader and take pride in your role as a PBA member?

I was involved in the union at a very early stage in my career. The one thing that has always been important to me is fair and equal treatment for everyone. That's one thing that I preach to members. I got involved in the union because I felt that members need to have a voice, someone who is willing to speak up for them at times when maybe they are not comfortable speaking up for themselves. You really have to put your members before yourself a lot of the time when you're the leader, and you have to want the job to help others. I wanted to be a voice for my members and do what's right by them. That's what unions were founded on.

## Mike Michalski's List

Our member of the month shares some of his favorite things

### Sports Team:

Oklahoma Sooners Football

### Movie:

Top Gun

### Music:

'80s Music

### PBA Event:

Any golf outing

### Food:

Seafood/ Sushi

### Hobby:

Motorcycle riding

### TV Show:

Hawaii Five-0

### Fun Fact:

Starred in a commercial supporting NJ State Senator Vin Gopal's campaign



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# Above and

# Beyond Compare



Officers from across the state salute as Bridgeton Local 94 members carry Sean Peek's casket.

## Sean Peek was that guy, the law enforcement officer everybody wanted to be

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

■ PHOTOS BY JIM CONNOLLY

Fresh out of the academy, Jen Skala knew enough to follow her partner's lead. Bridgeton Officer Sean Peek was that guy who led by example, and so when they came up on a burning building, he didn't wait for the fire department to respond.

Somebody might have been trapped inside. Mixed calls had gone out. So Peek couldn't be sure.

"I told him to wait, but he's like, 'I got to go in,'" Skala described. "It was very smoky in there. But he never hesitated. That's just the kind of cop he was, the kind of guy he was."

During the 43 years he knew Sean, John Grier never saw Sean hesitate when there was a call for help. They grew up together in Millville, and their love of Star Wars and playing Halo matriculated to law enforcing together in Bridgeton. One day on the job, they responded to an apartment building on fire and a lady screaming that her dog was inside.

"Sean went inside, found the dog and



*In Memoriam*

**Police Officer Sean C. Peek**

Bridgeton Police Department  
End of Watch: Sept. 6, 2020

returned it to her," Grier recalled.

He was that kind of guy, that kind of cop.

When assigned to the Bridgeton detective bureau, Vince Cappoli joined Sean working a case of a bomb threat at the municipal court that was called in. They tracked down the phone the call came from.

"Sean wanted the phone swabbed for DNA," Cappoli explained. "Keep in mind, this is a public payphone. But that's the kind of guy he was. If there was a chance in a million, if he had the chance to do something like that or save somebody, he was going to do it. He would always go above and beyond."

Bridgeton Officer and Local 94 member Sean C. Peek went above and beyond in the early morning hours of Sept. 6 when dispatched to a report of someone striking an ambulance with an object. At approximately 1:30 a.m., he observed a woman presumed to be the suspect flee and fall or jump into the Cohansey River. He followed her and attempted to pull the woman from the running waters.



Later that morning, after being taken to Inspira Health Center in Bridgeton for evaluation, Sean Peek was found unresponsive at his home. His end of watch came at 49 years old, a life blessed by his endless love for wife Megan, a pearl in daughter Kate, a persona all his own that touched so many lives, loyalty that endeared him to everybody he met and a dedication to service that made Peek that guy.

"Sean was somebody who gave it his all. When he put that uniform on, he was very proud to be a police officer," Bridgeton Chief Michael Gaimari praised, while gathering with his ranks before the memorial service on Sept. 11. Yes, 9/11, and Gaimari went on about how Peek exemplified the greatness of law enforcement seen that day, something Sean exhibited every day.

"I think he set a standard that's admired by the officers who worked with him," the chief continued. "I think he set the bar very high for these guys."

#### He was the cop people need to see

When arriving at the scene of the incident, Peek saw the suspect running into a wooded area. And even amid the pitch darkness, he managed to follow her down to the river.

He wasn't the best swimmer. And even the best swimmer would have had to go way above and beyond to battle the currents in full gear and pull a suspect from the water.

"He wouldn't hesitate. He wants to be the first one to help somebody," Gaimari confirmed. "He didn't think twice about whether he could swim. He would have went in there to do whatever he could, sacrifice to help that person, even though that person was somebody that would eventually be arrested."

The woman made it across the river, so Sean pulled himself back to shore. Apparently, he struggled to make it back, most likely weighed down by the gear. Even the best swimmer would have been strained, so he was released from the hospital and sent home.

Isn't this the image of policing that should be going viral? Doesn't an officer risking his own life to go into the river to save a suspect truly define law enforcement?

When considering how officers are being cast these days, Gaimari noted how he never had to worry about Sean's demeanor. He treated everybody with respect they deserved and sometimes even when they didn't deserve respect.

"He was the cop people need to see," Skala added. "He was a cop we need to



Megan Peek and daughter Kate.



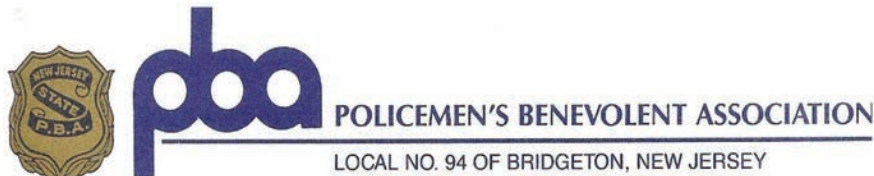
Officers line up to pay their respects to their fallen brother.



The procession to the cemetery leaves the funeral home in Bridgeton.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32





Brothers and Sisters,

We would like to thank everyone for their assistance during the loss of our brother Sean Peek, badge #1027, from Bridgeton Local 94 and the Bridgeton Police Department.

We would personally like to thank NJSPBA President Pat Colligan, Executive Vice President Kovar, First Vice President Pete Andreyev, John Hulse and his staff, State Correction Local 105 Vice President Mike Gallagher, Mike Parmenter (NJSP Retired), Rick Hatrak (NJSP Retired), Lieutenant Clement of the NJ Department of Corrections, the Glassboro Police Department, the NJ State Police and Mitchell Krugel of *NJ Cops Magazine*.

For those of you we have forgotten to mention personally, we would like to thank all of you for your support during this tough time for the members of Local 94 and members of the Bridgeton Police Department.

If we could ever be of any assistance to your local or department, please feel to contact one of our members.

Respectfully,

The Members of Local 94/94A

**ABOVE** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

put out there to show people that we care for everybody, and we want to make sure everybody goes home. Both us and civilians."

Local 94 member Ron Broomall admired the conviction that led Sean into that water on Sept. 6. That conviction sometimes caused them to butt heads when debating department issues.

But they found common ground over their belief that the oath of office means serving and protecting and ensuring the public's trust. That's what prompted Sean to go into the river without hesitation.

"It wasn't the fact that he did it because of his job. He did it because it was in his heart," Broomall reasoned. "All the values of how he thought about serving and protecting went into him teaching the younger officers the correct way."

#### He wouldn't let you fail

Sean would have admired the way officers from throughout Cumberland County and even the entire state formed rows outside the funeral home, standing at attention and listening to the memorial service. NJ State PBA President Pat Colligan, Executive Vice President Marc Kovar and the PBA's Special Services trailer also came to honor Peek. This was an illustrious and fitting way to recognize



Left to Right: **EVAN BAIRD, MD**, Assistant Clinical Professor, Mount Sinai Medical Center;  
**RAFAEL LEVIN, M.D., M.S.C.**, Chief of Spine, HackensackUMC at Pascack Valley;  
**JONATHAN LESTER, M.D.**, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation;  
**NOMAAN ASHRAF, M.D., M.B.A.**, Assistant Clinical Professor, Mount Sinai Medical Center

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an officer who earned five unit citation medals and a Purple Heart during his 15 years with Bridgeton.

Had protocol not prevented it, the assembly of officers would have sent up an ovation when the chief presented a medal of valor to Kate for her father's actions on that fateful morning. Sean's desire to serve – inspired, his sister said, by growing up near an intersection in Millville where a lot of crashes occurred and watching the first responders come to the rescue – was relentless.

If seeing Kate with that medal of honor was not tear-perking, then irony lurking cut right to the emotion of this day. On Sept. 11, 2001, Sean Peek, an EMT with the Millville Rescue Squad, beelined to the World Trade Center site to help with the rescue and recovery.

Grier reinforced that Sean volunteered for this detail as a manifestation of his purpose for a life devoted to public safety. Why he began his career by setting up makeshift police departments in his basement as a kid.

"He just wanted to be there to help," Grier added about Sean's 9/11 presence, though these words define just about everything he did as a public safety servant.

During his tenure with Bridgeton, Sean worked every assignment from homicides to sexual assaults to IA. Gaimari



The NJSPBA Special Services trailer was on hand to support members who attended the memorial service.

called him a "filler," somebody he could shift into any assignment.

"He learned the job and he would always give you a 100 percent effort and do the department and the city proud," the chief proclaimed.

Gaimari presented the eulogy for the department, and, in his remarks, he described how Sean was a great communicator, leader and role model who was always respectful and squared away.

"I don't know what more you can ask

of a police officer and family member," Gaimari submitted, his voice breaking in apparent succumb to the loss.

Sean's family extended to every corner of the department. Lieutenant Jim Filippello recalls the young detective coming to work for him in IA. Sean had a knack for this, too, a way of putting fellow members at ease while enduring the most unpleasant part of the job.

"He cared about everybody," Filippello

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



## The First Responders Partnership Health Center (FRPHC) is the most exciting health care news in many years for first responders!

FRPHC is a collaborative effort of the first responder union leadership and Integrity Health, a well-known, New Jersey-based firm specializing in managing health plans from a patient-centered medical home platform called "Partnership Health Center".

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disclosed. "He was extraordinarily fair. I valued his opinion and I knew I could always trust him."

Are there higher words of praise on the job?

Actually, for Sean, there were. Skala shared how Sean taught her to have patience, how to talk to citizens and to never judge a book by its cover.

His impact on her made Skala follow him into that burning building. She would have followed him anywhere. Sean's guidance and his leadership were infectious on Local 94 members.

"He groomed a lot of the younger officers because he was the FTO and told them the old-school ways of policing, how your uniform should look and how you do police work," Local 94 State Delegate Joe Crokus admired. "He would show you the correct way. We were all close to Peek because Peek was one of those guys who wouldn't let you fail at what you were doing."

#### He always looked at the brighter side

Sean radiated in a manner that made him memorable, even larger than life sometimes. He would sometimes show up for his court appearances wearing a top hat and wingtip shoes. Local 94 Pres-

ident Nick Rehrwig noted how Sean was always there with a smile on his face, doing something "just to make your day a little bit better."

For Megan, he was the bright light always shining. To Kate, he was larger than life. His off-hours were devoted to her, playing everything from badminton to baby dolls. Gaimari recalled how he would find Sean during breaks out back of headquarters, and he would always ask about Gaimari's son.

"But I don't think he was even listening," the chief revealed. "It was just a segue to start talking about Kate."

Sean spent some of his off hours jamming. He was a drummer who started dabbling with playing guitar. Cappoli was his guitar mentor, and they relished the time, covering some classic rock together. Sean love the Beatles but was also a big Nirvana fan.

They often closed their set with some Led Zeppelin, though no "Stairway." "The Ocean" was their go-to Zeppelin, a song that captured the bright side of Sean.

*Singing in the sunshine, laughing in the rain...*

*Play for free, I play for me and play a whole lot more, more...*

*Singing about the good things and the sun that lights the day...*

Skala observed how Sean could light it up with his laugh. She remembers hearing that contagious laugh on her first day in Bridgeton when he found she forgot her lunch money. He sprung, of course.

"I can hear it now," Skala boasted shortly before the memorial service began. "It will stick with you forever."

The gang from the Millville Rescue Squad knew that laugh. They heard it when he would come down on Friday and Saturday nights to play cards, even if he wasn't on call.


Sean was a groomsman for nearly everybody on the squad. Rob Smith was one of those who had Sean in his wedding, describing their connection as, "I knew him when he had hair."

Smith recalled how he and Sean would turn everything into a competition, even seeing who could get in an IV faster. He emphasized how Sean was a hugger and ball-buster.




"But you could call him in the middle of the night, and he'd be there with bail money," Smith hyperbolized. "He was always upbeat and always looked at the brighter side of everything. If you needed a shoulder to cry on, if you needed advice or just an ear to listen, he was every one of them."

He was that guy.

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# Reelect Ray

Keep up with Ray Heck as he moves fast and speaks even faster to keep the PFRS on the fast track to best serve members

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Podium speak from Ray Heck often goes something like this: *"We're keeping a close watch on it. We have to keep this system-sound so it's in place for the next 50 years."*

Words run together when Heck speaks with the vehemence of the Acela running from New York to D.C. But the State Corrections Local 105 State Delegate talks fast for a reason.

Vying for his second term as the elected police trustee to the Police and Fire Retirement System (PFRS) board, Heck is in a hurry because he has so much to do to make the retirement process a more pleasurable process for members. So much he wants to do to ensure the new PFRS that is a little more than a year old establishes the foundation to maximize its financial stability. So much he can do to help PBA members better navigate the system.

So when Heck steps up to the podium at a PBA meeting to offer a PFRS report, he has to talk fast. Make no mistake; he hears you when you tell him to slow down.

But we have to keep up with Ray, even if that means repeating himself. So listen to what he was saying because it is his whole reason to run for reelection.

*"We're keeping a close watch on it. We have to keep this system sound so it's in place for the next 50 years."*

Heck brings the wits, the experience, the intelligence, the dedication, the energy and the speed to be the consummate PFRS trustee. As an elected official – he is currently serving his fourth term as mayor of Millstone Borough – a State Delegate representing more than 6,000 PBA members, a certified fire marshal and a frontline law enforcement officer for more than 25 years, Heck has all the attributes to steward the independent-

## PFRS Police Trustee Position Election Timeline

**Oct. 2:** Deadline to register nominations.

**Oct. 5-7:** PFRS verifies position information and determines who qualifies for election.

**Oct. 13:** Notify winners and losers of nomination. Sole winners are automatically elected.

**Oct. 19:** Candidate names selected for position on ballot.

**Nov. 23:** Ballots distributed to members.

**Nov. 23-Dec. 21:** Voting

**Dec. 22-28:** PFRS completes final voting tabulation.

**Jan. 11, 2021:** PFRS Board of Trustees certifies official results.

**Feb. 2, 2021:** Police-elected position term begins.

ly run PFRS to reach full funding and other key objectives. And he might even deploy a little warp speed to get there.

"Ray is like a sponge. He's a very intelligent guy, so when he spews information, he wants to instill what he knows in others,"

CONTINUED ON 38

explains Roselle Park Local 27 member James Kompany, who is the vice chair of the PFRS Trustee Board. "He wants to get that point across because he wants to make the guy next to him as well-versed as he is."

### Fast and furious

About three weeks ago, the PFRS sent notice to police members about nominating candidates for the trustee term that begins in February 2021. To get on the ballot, 500 signatures on a nominating petition are required. By the first week of September, Heck had procured enough support to be nominated for reelection.

See the breakout on page 37 for a complete election timeline, but know that it will be hard for any candidate to match Heck's insight into the system. He has chaired the PFRS Retirement Process Committee since Chapter 55, signed in 2018, created the independent system that officially began in July 2019.

"We have worked hard to get the proper information to members so they can best navigate the system," Heck asserts. "We inherited an archaic system, but within any of the processes, special retirements, death benefits, we are looking to eliminate redundancies and create efficiencies to make it a better experience for members."

He works at least three jobs as a state correctional police officer, the latest being running the department's COVID-19 testing program. He is also assigned to the Chemical Ordinance Biological Radiological Aid (COBRA) unit that handles HAZMAT-type operations and works a lot of jobs in coordination with the NJ State Police. And he is part of the State Corrections Special Operations Group that does basic SWAT work and handles other assignments at facilities throughout the state.

His degrees and certifications – mini-master's in strategic communications, Certified Public Manager and Registered Municipal Clerk – form the financial pedigree that has earned him cred as mayor and has been equally valuable as a PFRS trustee. He also has extensive training in financing, budgeting, bonding, investments and risk management, and he counts organizational management as one of his most impacting skill sets on the job – all his jobs. Additionally, he has nearly 20 years of service as a volunteer firefighter.

Using such a pedigree, Heck has become renowned for deeply immersing himself in files, whether it's related to personnel decisions for hiring operating staff, evaluating retirement claims or rendering an opinion on the board's fiduciary obligations. He works his trustee job to achieve an overarching mission.

"When somebody is calling you stressing out because they can't find an answer, you give them the courtesy to address the issue," Heck reasons. "If we give good customer service to just one person, it can spread like wildfire. And when you get off the phone with a member, you want them to feel like they got their money's worth."

### The fast lane

The PFRS Board of Trustees includes seven members representing police and fire and five members representing the state's municipalities. It's a management-and-labor dynamic that members are familiar with. And often frustrated with.

Trustee board meetings can include spirited debates between the two sides. But Heck insists that they are of the same mindset, that they find common ground and they achieve a united front.

Kompany confirms that the bridge to achieving that mindset is Heck. Part of that is his acute understanding about how government boards operate. Part of it comes from serving as State



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Ray Heck reviews documents at a PFRS Trustee Board meeting.

Delegate for the largest Local in the state and developing the professionalism to be fair and equitable.

“He’s definitely exhibited that in the board decisions he’s been a part of,” Kompany continues. “He’s committed to the cause. He listens to the opinions of the other board members and brings forth the concerns of the members.”

When the NJ State PBA embarked on the legislation that would make PFRS independent from state control, President Pat Colligan anticipated resistance from the New Jersey League of Municipalities. The key to navigating that barrier would be an ally who knew the inner workings of the League. That was Heck.

“Ray has given us a multidimensional member who is that rare law enforcement officer with experience from another perspective,” Colligan praises. “That’s exactly the reason we picked him as our candidate initially, and he has proven to be a real asset to the board.”

Heck reports that through his involvement with the League, the 565 mayors in New Jersey all know him. What’s more defining is that Heck knows there are 565 mayors in New Jersey. But that’s the wealth of information he brings to the PFRS board and what makes him the uniquely qualified candidate.

“They look at me like I’m the typical nerd,” Heck reckons. “But they know that where there’s an intricate question that needs to be expounded on, that I will do extensive research and include it in my presentation.”

Going forward, Heck doesn’t want to make any campaign promises. He will continue to do the research and answer the questions. He will continue to work hard to make sure management understands what it takes to do the public safety job. And he will continue to help members understand some of the issues that municipalities face.

The elected officials talk to him because he is a mayor who is also a cop. The cops talk to him because they know he can best present their side. Dialogue is his thing, even if it’s sometimes at warp speed.

“Getting elected is easy. Getting reelected is hard because you have to show what you have done,” Heck submits. “I feel comfortable with my record. I’ve done everything I can do. Now, I want to do even more.”

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**BREAKING  
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**Trenton Police Car Involved In 3-Car Crash  
At Least One Person Seriously Injured**



# Trenton Strong

**An incident in which officers took shots from suspects and ended in a crash that nearly killed two of them showed the incredible toughness and resiliency of Trenton PBA Local 11 members**

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Trenton Officer Mike Gettler let out the “taking shots, taking shots” call, and in a matter of seconds, the brute strength and the sheer will of this unsinkable department oozed from all corners of the city.

Shortly after 2:30 a.m. on July 29, Gettler and partner Jeffrey Pownall caught up to a red Ford Focus that had been confirmed stolen. An alert had come out earlier that night about a social media post showing guys with guns and boasting they were going to shoot up a section of the city. Could these be the three guys in the red Ford?

Sure enough, when Gettler and Pownall maneuvered to make a stop, the guys opened up on them with a rifle and handguns. The shooters took off and as a Trenton officer and Local 11 member described, “A scene from a police action movie broke out.”

Not just a scene. A whole freakin’ movie.

*Sudden Impact.*

*Escape from Trenton.*



The incident of July 29 in which suspects shot at Trenton officers and ended with a tumultuous wreck left a crime scene that looked like a bomb exploded.

*The Fast and The Furious: Trenton Rift.*

“It’s still a blur. Everything happened in three or four minutes,” confided Gettler, who by recognition of others in the Local will one day become one of the department’s Super Cops. “After our patrol vehicle was struck with gunfire, we backed off. But we had to stay focused and not let them get away.”

As Gettler and Pownall pursued, officers from across the city responded. The chase went through Ewing, back into Trenton, where the suspects were doing 70 m.p.h. in a 25 heading for the North Olden Avenue bridge. Across the bridge, the red Focus smashed head on into the Trenton Officers Kevin Starkey and Brian Walker in their Ford Explorer.

Fast forward to Starkey finally coming home after a month in the hospital and rehab to a reception from nearly every Local 11 member, members from neighboring towns, including Ewing Local 111 and Hamilton Township Local 66 and Hamilton firefighters. And one extremely grateful Local 11 member: his wife Maria.

CONTINUED ON 42





Family, friends and fellow officers had hugs waiting for Kevin Starkey when he returned home after suffering life-threatening injuries on July 29.



**TRENTON** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

Kevin has overcome a stroke, needing a stent surgically implanted into his carotid artery and lingering brain damage. He vows he will be back to work no matter how long it takes, exemplifying the resiliency, determination, relentlessness, professionalism, intelligence and tenacity to always go home at the end of the shift that has become the trademark of this department.

“The outcome is tremendous,” praised Local 11 State Dele-

gate Michael Cipriano, who, as one of the officers involved in the response to the Art All Night Festival shooting in 2018 knows the power of the fight in his members. “To put it in context of what happened, we could have been burying a couple of officers from that night. Miracles happened on this one.”

### Sudden Impact

Overall, six Trenton Local 11 members were treated at Capitol Health Regional Medical Center, where most of the team that works the 12-hour overnight shift gathered and stayed almost until it was time to go back to work. In addition to recovering shell casings and projectiles, officers seized a FNPS90 sub-gun, a Glock 26.9mm and an AR-15 pistol.

As Gettler stated, “All four suspects were caught, three weapons were taken off the street and we are grateful that nobody – officers or suspects – ended up dying.”

Maria Starkey related that the way the suspects’ car hit Kevin’s vehicle was like a bullet. Starkey and Walker were spun four times and ricocheted off another vehicle. The carnage at the scene was nothing short of gruesome.

“I was at the Art All Night incident and this was even worse,” said Detective Sam Gonzales, the Local 11 executive vice president, who also was part of the response. “It looked like a bomb exploded.”

As Gettler and Pownall approached the scene along with a battery of other officers, the urgent matter was locking down the suspects. The incident occurred in a residential neighborhood, so officers had to affect some significant crowd control while taping off the crime scene.

Some of the bystanders began yelling at officers. And you can imagine what they were shouting.

“They are like, ‘Why are you chasing these poor kids?’” Gonzales reported. “We’re getting pushback from people, trying to



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take people into custody who are heavily armed and trying to get medical attention to our officers.”

What bystanders saw, though, was another example of Trenton officers being at their absolute best when it mattered most. Leadership in the department has changed recently. Political influence continues to be injected into department operations. And personnel has been moved around like a blanket that is not big enough being stretched to cover the entire bed.

“We are dealing with a lot of new officers,” Gonzales added. “But the way they responded to this situation was incredible.”

The plot thickened when trying to get to Starkey and Walker. Officer Katie Cox was the first one to approach their vehicle. Cox had just returned to patrol after suffering an ankle injury and working narcotics for several years. On her last day on patrol before moving, she had pulled Starkey from a wreck where he suffered fractured ribs and a punctured lung.

“Seeing all the blood, it was pretty bad,” she described.

According to several accounts, Starkey’s head was split wide open. Apparently, he hit it on the computer. Walker also had a head injury that was bleeding profusely.

It was so bad that there was no time to wait for an ambulance. Gonzales maneuvered a transport van to take Walker to the hospital. Starkey was able to get out of the vehicle but was dazed and confused. Cox helped him into a police unit that sped to the hospital with what they all thought was his life on the line.

#### Magnum Force

When Cox reached Starkey, she noticed his duty weapon on the ground. At some point, she deduced, he must have unholstered to approach the suspects.

With a fractured skull, a fractured orbital bone and a can-



CONTINUED ON 44

Trenton Officers Maria and Kevin Starkey.

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yon-like gash in his head, Starkey still unholstered. Maria observed that this was the military in him. He did four years in both the Marine Corps and the Army and was deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The wherewithal flowing from Starkey and Walker, Gettler, Pownall, Gonzales, Cox and a host of others that night is the foundation of what makes this department the best of the best. Gettler grew up in Trenton, and he indicated that the current state of crime is as bad as he has ever seen.

Administration has responded by changing supervisors' positions and pulling members out of detective positions to put them back on patrol. Add in influence of elected officials, and it could be nearly insurmountable.

"But it's not going to stop me from trying to make a difference, and I could say the same about the officers we work with," Gettler declared. "We still show up with the same attitude. Letting the political stuff bother me doesn't do any good for the citizens."

Clearly, these officers have been well-trained and are experienced at handling critical incidents. Gonzales recognized that they might not have the funding or the equipment they would like to make even more of a difference. But they have found ways to overcome all the challenges. There is an enormous amount of pride in play here, he said, that was elevated with the way they responded on July 29.

"That night was a big win for us," he emphasized. "It gives us the sense of hope and that drive to continue forward. We deal with a lot of situations in our city, but we come together when we have to. We show that support and encouragement to reassure people that everything is all right."

### The Unstoppables

That show of support certainly manifested when Starkey came home on Aug. 29. When Maria received the phone call around 2:45 a.m. on July 29, she said, "I knew it was bad."

As is Kevin's way, he was actually up out of bed the next day trying to exercise. But a pain in his neck lingered. Finally, an MRI was done to reveal the narrowing of the carotid that was cutting off blood flow to the brain. After three days, the condition worsened; that was over the weekend. On Monday, a doctor told Maria that the stent had to be inserted or Kevin might not make it.

So when he arrived home, the celebration could not have been more uplifting. Hugs went out in abundance, including an emotional one from Kevin's young niece that was probably the best medicine.

"That was so amazing what they did for him," Maria exclaimed. "It makes him want to get back to work."

There is a long road of rehab to get back. But those who work with him and love him, know that if anybody can pull it off, it's Starkey.

Gettler raved about Starkey's presence in the department. "He is one of the more senior members, but he doesn't care about taking the little jobs," he said.

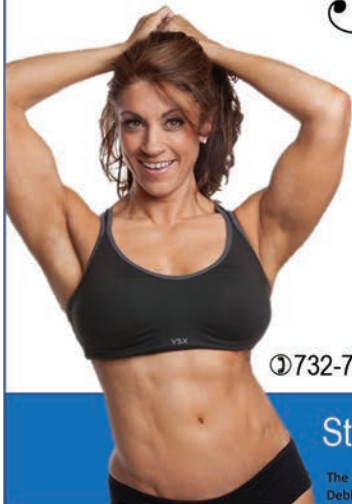
Gonzales shared that he saw the drive that will get Starkey through when they first met on their first day going into the academy together.

"He's an amazing dude. He has that drive and he loves what he does," Gonzales added. "When he came home at the homecoming, he said, 'I'm ready to go back.' His passion for the job is incredible."

Passion, indeed. That, too, oozes from every officer in this department.

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From left, NJ State PBA President Pat Colligan with Deanna Padovani-DePaco, Dr. Caesar DePaco and Hillsborough Township Local 205 member Chris Engelhardt in front of the PBA Special Services trailer. (Photo by Ed Carattini Jr.)

# Just for Fund

**An amazing contribution to the NJSPBA Survivor & Welfare Fund offers much-needed support and much-needed reinforcement for law enforcement**

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Recollections of the Survivor & Welfare flow so timely from NJSPBA President Pat Colligan. Sitting around a table in his office with the fund's newest and big-hearted benefactors – Dr. Caesar DePaco and Deanna Padovani-DePaco – Colligan relates the origin of the PBA's most substantive benevolence.

It is Sept. 10. Tomorrow marks 19 years since the New Jersey State PBA Survivor & Welfare Fund elevated its philanthropic lifeline. The union offered a \$10,000 benefit back then to families of officers lost in the line of duty. And when 37 Port Authority Local 116 members were lost in the World Trade Center attack, the PBA immediately provided relief amounting to, well, do the math.

“The Survivor & Welfare program was started by two presidents ago,” Colligan narrated. “Because there was a delay in getting pension benefits to families, Mike Madonna wanted to show up within 24 hours with a check. After 9/11, the fund was depleted. Mike went out and asked every member to put up \$3. And, by far, everybody did.”



The PBA trailer deployed at Ground Zero to support the rescue and recovery efforts following the attack on 9/11.

CONTINUED ON 48



The DePacos are perhaps the most generous law enforcement philanthropists in the state, but they are moved to misty eyes when hearing about the saving grace of Survivor & Welfare. The Fund has that power.

It has motivated PBA Locals to host cigar nights, pig roasts, comedy shows and even axe-throwing tournaments to ensure every family of a member lost in the line of duty feels the love and support. It has inspired law enforcement supporters to donate funds that finance purchasing trucks, trailers and other infrastructure fueling the PBA's nationally renowned benevolence presence.

## **\$20,000 REWARD** **NJ COP SHOT** **www.njcopshot.com**

The Survivor & Welfare Fund also supports the PBA's NJ Cop Shot program.

And now, the grace and goodwill of the DePacos and their enterprise, Summit Nutritionals International, Inc., has provided a \$25,000 donation to fund a new Special Services trailer reserved for Locals in South Jersey. Serendipitously, the donation was presented to the PBA on Sept. 10, perhaps to commemorate what Survivor & Welfare exemplifies.

"Being involved with law enforcement since 2013 has given us a perspective from the inside," Deanna responded. Take a pause for the cause, go to [summitnutritionals.com](http://summitnutritionals.com), hit the "philanthropy" tab under "media" and see nearly a dozen accounts of how the DePacos have supported New Jersey agencies. Since April, their total contributions have topped more than \$1 million in the form of vests, bicycles, tasers, vehicles and K9s.

"We hear the internal battles going on, the internal challeng-

es, the woes, complications, frustrations," Deanna continued. "We can't empathize, but we can sympathize, which really shows us which direction we can assist all the different departments."

Colligan jumps in here to express the pain of how so many "friends" in the political and business communities have walked away from the PBA and law enforcement the past few months. And that he has been to [summitnutritionals.com](http://summitnutritionals.com) to see the blue line flag prominently displayed at the top of the home page.

"We have become friends of law enforcement for this fact that although law enforcement is the top be-all, end-all, there's always something in need," Caesar shares. "There's always some sort of protocol that needs to be met or a challenge to raise funds. So we try to assist by eliminating some of the steps. And it's becoming, I would say, addictive."

Backing the blue has become more than an addiction for these humble benefactors. It's a way of life. And their reinforcement couldn't be more timely.

When the pandemic hit and so many PBA members wound up in quarantine due to being part of an exposed group early on, Colligan saw the union had a duty to help. He suggested sending out \$100 Shoprite gift cards to any member who tested positive or had to be quarantined. He thought a few groceries could go a long way.

Then Colligan, Executive Vice President Marc Kovar and First Vice President Pete Andreyev spent many of the ensuing weeks sending out cards with hand-written notes.


"We had 12 members test positive initially, so we sent out \$1,200 worth of gift cards," Colligan recounts. "Now, here we are \$97,000 later. Maybe not my greatest idea, but the letters you get from the families who couldn't leave the house to buy groceries. You know it was worth it."

Still, the pandemic was only beginning to become a matter

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of Survivor & Welfare. When nine members were lost due to the virus, the fund stepped up with the \$25,000 LODD benefit it has been donating since members helped Madonna replenish it.

That created a total contribution of, well, do the math. And, of course, the PBA offered the support to the family of Bridgeton Local 94 member Sean Peek, who was lost on Sept. 6.

Clearly, there is no time like the present to feel how Survivor & Welfare means so much to so many. Sitting alongside the DePacos, Hillsborough Township Local 205 member Chris Engelhardt notes how their desire to do even more for law enforcement led to the latest contribution. Engelhardt has facilitated many of the K9 donations the DePacos have made to departments that run more than \$20K per.

When they expressed wanting to make another donation, Engelhardt reached out to Andreyev. He responded by relating that the PBA had been working to get a much-needed addition to its trailer force, something that had to be put on hold with the pandemic.

The Survivor & Welfare trailers also date back to 9/11. That's when a passionate PBA board member named John Hulse first joined the effort that changed trailer support forever. He and hundreds of other members manned a PBA trailer – really a landscaping trailer at the time – at Ground Zero, where they reported for the ensuing 40-plus days to lend support to the rescue and recovery effort. The PBA provided hot food, non-stop coffee and beverages and an emotional resting spot for all on site.

Since then, the PBA trailer force has grown to the top-of-the-line unit that is a fixture at every major law enforcement event, from line-of-duty-death funerals across the country to rallies supporting members and Locals battling administration and government to Polar Bear Plunges to so many fundraisers.

That has spawned so many requests from Locals that the PBA

added two smaller trailers to be deployed. There are times when all three trailers are out and about. And such wear and tear creates a need for replacements.

"I was on vacation when Dr. DePaco called me and said, 'Chris, I want you to make contact with the State PBA. I want to support them. See what they need,'" Engelhardt details. "That was on a Tuesday. I contacted Pete and asked him, 'Is there anything you guys need at the PBA?' He called me back 10 minutes later and said, 'Chris, this is what we're looking to do.'"

It's still the same Tuesday. Engelhardt informed Dr. DePaco of the PBA's need for a South Jersey trailer.

"I told him they were looking for a South Jersey trailer," Engelhardt continues. "He said, 'OK, Chris, how much is it?' I told him about \$25,000. He said, 'Contact the PBA and tell them we want to give them the \$25,000 to purchase the new trailer.'"

After explaining how this latest philanthropy transpired, Engelhardt then answered the looming question: How can people be so generous to law enforcement?

"The best way to describe them is, it's their family," he emphasizes.

Caesar follows this statement by raising the left sleeve of his shirt to show his blue line flag tattoo. Deanna adds how their 4-year-old daughter went to her first day of school earlier that week wearing a shirt with a blue line flag on the back. Caesar then pages through his phone to show a picture of the three 30-foot flagpoles in front of their home. One has an American flag. One has a Portuguese flag. The other is a blue line flag.

Caesar is still a Portuguese citizen, and, in fact, will soon take on another tour as a diplomat for his country. He renews his green card every 10 years, but because he is not a U.S. citizen, he can't ever pursue his dream of becoming a law enforcement

CONTINUED ON 50



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**STEP #2:** As soon as you believe you were exposed to COVID-19, file a workers' compensation claim. This is your legal right. Don't be pressured or bullied out of filing your claim. Even if you have no symptoms or they appear to be minor, it could become serious in the months ahead.

**STEP #3:** Contact a workers' compensation lawyer. It's never a good idea to delay contacting a lawyer who handles police officers' workers' comp claims.

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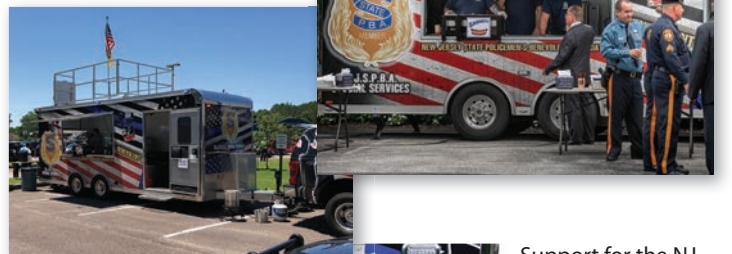
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Support for the NJ State PBA Survivor & Welfare Fund has made it possible for the union to build up its Special Services trailer force to serve members at events throughout the state and law enforcement officers throughout the country.

**JUST** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49

"So since I could not be one of you, I decided to help law enforcement in any way I could," Caesar confirms. "When I help out, they always ask, 'What do you want in return?' We don't want anything. And our driving force is even stronger because of all the things going on."

The confab at Colligan's table is about to conclude. A group hug would surely ensue if it weren't for the pandemic. But the emotion won't cease.

The PBA president adds how Survivor & Welfare also supports the PBA Cop Shot program that offers a \$20,000 reward in exchange for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals in relation to an officer shooting. He adds how when the program started in 2007, the first two officer shootings that activated the reward didn't even involve PBA members. In noting that if a county prosecutor verifies information helped in an investigation, Colligan relates how Past President Tony Wieners once showed up with cash in a bag to give the reward.

And then there is a moment of silence. The good and welfare of Survivor & Welfare has left everybody at the table speechless. How could it not? It has brought remarkable law enforcement boosters like the DePacos into the family at a time when such support could not be more meaningful.

"You're either pro-law enforcement or you're not," Caesar declares.

He could not have said it any better. Or more timely. That is the power of the Fund.





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Bariatric & General  
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# 'We will prevail'

## NJSPBA 2020 scholarship recipients exhibit true-blue resiliency ahead of an unprecedented school year

■ BY KAREN JENKINS

Kaitlyn Heck, the daughter of NJ State Corrections Local 105 State Delegate Ray Heck, ran around the house as a young girl with one of her father's many oversized uniform hats flopping over her eyes. She remembers lifting the brim, seeing Heck walk through the door in uniform and feeling deep admiration.

And now, studying biology at Rowan University in Glassboro and the recipient of a 2020 NJ State PBA scholarship, Kaitlyn has even greater admiration for her father, whose career is propelling her toward her own brothers and sisters in blue.

"I do eventually want to be on the law enforcement side, in more of a CSI [role]," Kaitlyn said. "I'd like to go into the forensic pathology field, so I'd have to be trained with law enforcement for that."

Kaitlyn stands with a family of 40 daughters and sons of NJSPBA members who fearlessly put their education first in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. Resiliency, adaptability and confidence are the prevailing character traits of this year's unique recipients.

Future law enforcement officers, doctors, engineers and artists sat down and spilled their hopes and dreams onto an essay page to awe the NJSPBA Scholarship Committee. The recipients shined among the pool of 450 applicants this year and faced the challenging effects of COVID-19 head-on while applying to schools.

"I will be the first one to say that we have stellar students. I was really impressed and inspired, especially given this school year and being in different learning environments with COVID," expressed Burlington County Corrections Local 249 State Delegate Terrance Benson, the PBA Scholarship Committee chair. "We couldn't have a ceremony, but education can't wait. The scholarships had to go out. We have tremendous potential within the youth of our brothers and sisters in blue, and they haven't let this COVID setback define them."

While an awards ceremony wasn't in the books this year out of an abundance of caution, students still received their scholarship letters at home in June, along with a personal note of gratitude from the scholarship committee.

"I thought it was still really exciting," Kaitlyn noted. "The PBA really helped me

### NJSPBA Survivor and Welfare Scholarship

Skylar Ahearn, Rutherford Local 300

### Scholarship Awards

#### Girls

- Samantha Riffert, Middletown Township Local 124
- Gabriella Luko, NJ State Human Services Police Local 113
- Riley Adam, Neptune Township Local 74
- Korrine Dibuono, East Brunswick Local 145
- Olivia Matlosz, Linden Local 42
- Monica Egnezzo, Garfield Local 46
- Kaleigh Conroy, Passaic County Prosecutors Office Local 265
- Samantha Kennelly, Middletown Township Local 124
- Jillian Ryan, South Brunswick Local 166
- Honor Rae Jennings, Bergen County Prosecutors Office Local 221
- Kaitlyn Heck, Law Enforcement State Corrections Local 105
- Kylie King, Long Branch Local 10
- Jordan Knotts, Burlington County Correction Officers Local 249
- Mary Santos, Burlington County Correction Officers Local 249
- Carly Santucci, Colts Neck Local 333
- Abigail Bennett, Atlantic City Local 24
- Emma Finnegan, Ocean City Local 61
- Brielle Stankan, Watchung Local 193
- Amirah J. Savage, Burlington County Correction Officers Local 249

### 2020 NJ State PBA Scholarship Recipients

#### Special Scholarships

#### Direct Title and Closing Agency Scholarship

Andrew Levi, Parsippany-Troy Hills Local 131

#### Boys

- Daniel Miller, Parsippany-Troy Hills Local 131
- Zachary Donnellan, Monmouth County Correction Officers Local 240
- Joseph Ferrante, Teaneck Local 215
- Kristopher Murdza, Mercer County Correction Officers Local 167
- Timothy Jordan Lee, Montclair Local 53
- Dillon Shin, Division of Criminal Justice Detectives Local 383
- Devin Shin, Division of Criminal Justice Detectives Local 383
- F. Joseph Brunner, Bergen County Sheriff's Department Local 134
- Jake Shirley, Long Branch Local 10
- Matthew Specht, Mainland Local 77
- Anthony Newhart, Retired Officers Local 600
- Dawson Nailor, Gloucester County Local 122
- Tory Amar James, Plainfield Local 19
- Holden Morelli, Parsippany-Troy Hills Local 131
- Connor Culmone, Longport Local 363
- Sean Ailara, Parsippany-Troy Hills Local 131
- Robert J. McLaughlin, Union County Sheriff's Officers Local 108
- Drew Clugsten, Burlington County Correction Officers Local 249
- Michael McDonough, Elizabeth Local 4

push my education and push myself to say, 'Hey, I can really do this thing.'"

The support of the NJSPBA runs deep for Abigail Bennett as well. She is the daughter of retired Atlantic City Local 24 member Keith Bennett, a past scholarship committee chair. Because of her scholarship, she is able to attend school at East Carolina University in North Carolina to pursue her lifelong aspiration of nursing.

And she is resolute that her public service gene is ingrained in her from witnessing her father help others her entire life.

"I've always wanted to work with kids with cancer and work hard to give them their best life," Abigail explained. "I think that drive comes from always being surrounded by public service my whole life by seeing my dad at work. I remember growing up and going to 'bring your child to work day.' He would show me everything and take me throughout the police station. It's just always been there — pub-

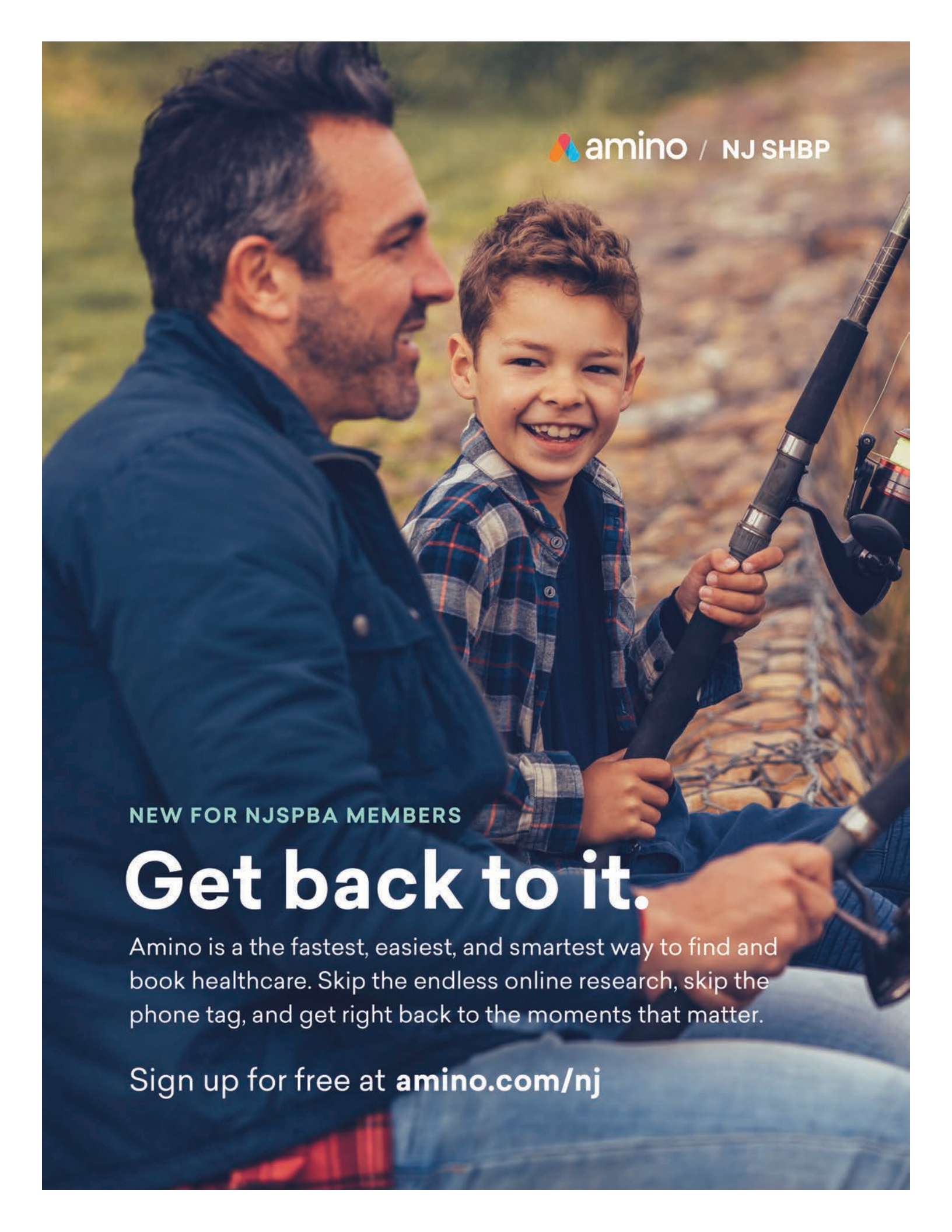
lic service is what I know."


In the group of outstanding scholarship recipients, two special recognitions were awarded this year: Andrew Levi, representing Parsippany-Troy Hills Local 131, received the Direct Title and Closing Agency Scholarship. The NJSPBA Survivor and Welfare Scholarship went to Skylar Ahearn, representing Rutherford Local 300.

As the recipients face an unprecedented school year, the young powerhouses can fall back on their law enforcement advice from their NJSPBA mothers and fathers — work hard, always.

"Having an open mind, learning to deal with life and not being too quick to judge will help these stellar young men and women get through," Benson affirmed. "These students have already achieved highly, and I can guarantee them that things will work out. They're all destined for amazing things."





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# A Hero's Welcome

State Corrections Local 105 members escort their brother home after a 111-day battle with COVID-19



NJ State Corrections Local 105 member Chris Stanek emerges on stretcher from PowerBack Rehabilitation in Voorhees on Sept. 8 to a celebration from PBA members following his 111-day battle with COVID-19.

■ BY KAREN JENKINS

Calm fell over NJ State Corrections Local 105 member Chris Stanek as he emerged on a stretcher for his victorious discharge from PowerBack Rehabilitation in Voorhees on Sept. 8. He wasn't expecting a big fanfare following his 111-day battle with COVID-19, just a peaceful drive home to his new normal.

Medical staff wheeled Stanek's stretcher into view of a crowd of law enforcement eyes excitedly watching his every move from the building entryway.

"[I'm thinking,] 'Maybe there was a car accident, and they're doing a report,'" recalled Stanek, who has 21 years on the job.

But then he saw his wife, Jean, in person for the first time in 55 days. She was standing in the group with a K-9 officer next to her. In another swift look, he noticed Class A uniforms on members from State Corrections Local 105. In an instant, the fanfare washed away months of fear and anxiety.

"I had no clue this was happening," Stanek recalled about the crowd celebrating his life. "I can't thank enough all the fellow corrections officers and brothers in blue who came and saw me off. It was really, really, awesome."

Stanek, aching but encouraged about his discharge, was wheeled into the ambulance to an underscoring of cheers. As he traveled down Route 73 to his home in Bridgeton, complete with police escort, Stanek saw flags from the fire department billowing on a local storefront.

He was caught off-guard. Typically, the fire department reserves that honor for people who have passed away, like the two beloved Local 105 members who were tragically lost to COVID-19 earlier this year.

Stanek fixed his gaze upward on the NJ State Police helicopter that was escorting them on Route 73, and sensed the magnitude of the moment.

"All these people escorting us and flying flags was unbeliev-

able," he expressed. "They all did it just to honor me. I can't even describe how awesome it felt."

The honor was well-deserved. Three-and-a-half months prior marked the beginning of Stanek's fight that affected every organ in his body.

On May 15, he shared with Jean that he wasn't feeling well. But neither thought much of the complaint, particularly because of Stanek's diabetes.

He went into work overtime Saturday, but on Sunday, May 17, he felt too fatigued to take his tour. He stayed home the next day, as well.

"Are you sure it's not time to call the doctor?" Jean recalled saying to her husband. "This is not like you to be this tired."

Stanek called his doctor and scheduled a COVID-19 test for Tuesday. After arriving back home, he seemed even more fatigued and slightly disoriented. Jean's mind started racing.

"It was concerning, and the next day when I got home from work, he was having chills," Jean relayed. "I said, 'Enough. We're going to the hospital.' And he said, 'No, I'm not going to the hospital.' But he started having respiratory distress, and that's when I called the ambulance."

Just one day after his COVID-19 test and before the results even came back, an ambulance rushed Stanek to the hospital on May 20. That would be the last time Jean could see her husband for the next two months.

Stanek remembers hazily lying on the stretcher while EMTs asked him questions about his condition. That would be his last memory for the next two months.

"It was very scary. They intubated him pretty quickly after getting him to [Cooper University Hospital in Camden]," Jean noted. "They transferred him to the trauma center the next day."

Jean followed the ambulance to the hospital, but she wasn't allowed to enter. She was devastated — "I couldn't even go past





Stanek embraces his wife, Jean Stanek, who took copious notes through daily FaceTime calls with nurses as her husband remained in a two-month coma.

the front door,” she lamented — about not being able to be in the emergency room with her husband.

Stanek lay in a coma for two months at Cooper University Hospital. Throughout that time, Jean took copious notes through daily FaceTime calls with the nurses. The first time she saw Stanek intubated was shocking.

“The whole thing didn’t really sink into me until I saw it on FaceTime,” Jean shared. “He looked so bad, and the thought every time was, ‘Is he going to make it or not?’ My faith — the Lord is my strength — kept me going. And Local 105, everybody really supported us through that time. Not a day went by that Local



Members of NJ State Corrections Local 105 gather to celebrate Stanek’s discharge from rehab on Sept. 8.

105 Vice President Michael Gallagher didn’t check in on us.”

Gallagher took it upon himself to lead the Local in standing with Jean. He knew that supporting their brother in blue as he fought for his life in the hospital meant encouraging his wife.

“When I realized how sick [Stanek] was, I saw this wasn’t just a regular sickness,” Gallagher relayed. “They needed any help they could get. I got daily updates. We made sure that the PBA was there for them.”

Gallagher created a GoFundMe profile for the family, in order to help with medical costs. The two months of Stanek’s coma while on a ventilator saw improvements, then took a nosedive. He had to be put on continuous dialysis. But Jean and Local 105 members remained hopeful that Stanek could pull through.

“Chris continued fighting, through everything,” Gallagher shared. “He is a true survivor, because he was looking death in the eye and he came back. And here he is.”

When Stanek first opened his eyes in July, confusion surrounded him.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56

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#### A HERO'S CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

"What is all this hooked up to me? Why can't I move?" he recalled thinking.

He had no strength in his body, not even enough to take off his blanket. A tracheotomy tube remained in his throat to make sure he could breathe. But over the next couple of days, his condition improved enough for a discharge to PowerBack Rehabilitation in Voorhees.

And on July 22, the date of Stanek's discharge, he finally got to hug Jean, who endured 80,640 minutes of not being able to see her husband.

"It lifted my spirits," Stanek said about seeing his wife. "The first time I got to hold her again in a couple of months was one of the best feelings in the world. There really are no words to describe it."

For 55 days, Stanek endured a comprehensive rehabilitation

program consisting of physical therapy and daily exercises. He had to relearn how to stand, and then how to walk. Though his strength gradually began coming back, he still remains paralyzed in his left foot and left shoulder.

"It is totally frustrating, like sitting here right now, I can look at my foot, but I can't get it to move," Stanek divulged. "But it's definitely a big turnaround. They had to hold me up out of bed at first, but then they got me out and walking. I can't thank the therapists I had enough. They were really good."

When Stanek was finally cleared to go home on Sept. 8, the fanfare that surrounded him brought tears to his eyes. Members from Local 105 wanted to make sure that, while leaving rehab, Stanek knew that he was still a vital part of the Local family.

"Chris is the kind of guy that's been in public service his whole life, just generally helping people," Gallagher affirmed. "And this time, he needed the help, so we returned the favor. He's such a good guy, and a true fighter."

Local 105 President Bill Sullivan praised Stanek's drive to go to work and help others every day, knowing the risks he faced with the virus.

"Chris is the true example of a hero," Sullivan asserted. "A hero is an ordinary person who, when faced with extraordinary circumstances, acts with courage, honor and self-sacrifice. We continue to keep him and his family in our prayers."

As Jean and Chris figure out their new normal in Bridgeton with nurses and physical therapists coming through the house, Jean is confident that the best mindset is to keep moving forward.

"Everything is slower now," Chris confessed. "I have to think out every move that I make before I do it, so it's definitely going to be a change of pace. I'm still in a hospital bed at home, and Jean is on the couch next to me. But we're together."

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Stanek is a true survivor, and though he's still working every day to regain his strength, the support of family and PBA members is the backbone of Stanek's 111-day battle for life.

"In the PBA, we're not just a labor organization," Gallagher affirmed. "We're a family, and you have to take care of each other. And we'll be here for Chris as he continues fighting and recovering."



Stanek arrives home on Sept. 8 with an NJ State Police helicopter escort and the NJ Department of Corrections honor guard greeting him.



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# Good Feeling

Survivor & Welfare golf outing inspires much-needed appreciation and donations

By Mitchell Krugel  
Photos by Jim Connolly



Dan Unkel of East Brunswick Local 145 lines up a putt.

**D**efinition of how much the NJ State PBA Survivor & Welfare Golf Outing meant to the Fund, the union, members, sponsors and the nearly 200 who came to Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster blared from Jeff Rosen's golf cart. The loyalist of PBA supporters, Rosen endured quarantine in coming from South Carolina to participate, and the sound of Billy Joel's "The Longest Time" playing through a Bluetooth speaker in his cart couldn't have been more apropos.

Like Rosen's Lending to Heroes, supporters such as The Florida House, Iacullo Martino L.L.C., Martyn Associates, Sharon Press of Citimortgage, Delta Capital Management, The Brownstone and a host of others gave the PBA and members a boost-er shot. The opportunity to gather at a venue created by a man who has been so good to law enforcement – and a cameo from his daughter, Ivanka, jogging by – pushed aside the malaise of the past six months and reiterated the mantra of the day.

*I haven't felt this for the longest time.*

So many feelings coursed through Trump National on this

Aug. 17 Monday. Appreciation. Recognition. Elation of participation to honor the nine PBA members lost to COVID-19 since March. An all-for-oneness that is more substantive than ever to fortify the NJSPBA Survivor & Welfare Fund. And a feeling of taking a step forward with 18 holes of therapy.

"It reinvigorated me just to walk up and see our State PBA leadership and feel that we're going in the right direction. We're going to get through," declared Chris Hatfield, who played in a group with his fellow members from Hoboken Local 2. "At times, you kind of feel alone when you're out there on your shift, thinking that maybe society doesn't have your back. There's a minority that has a big voice right now, but seeing everybody out here reminds us that we have a bigger voice."

The 2020 Survivor & Welfare golf outing was filled with a few rusty golf swings, none perhaps as rusty as Rosen. He has been a fixture on the PBA summer golf fundraiser tour for many years, sponsoring Local outings that bubble up donations to the Fund.

With the Trump National clubhouse in the background, West Essex Local 81 State Delegate Brett Keepers tees off.



The pandemic-precipitated postponement of those events made the PBA outing a breakout moment that did more than help replenish the more than \$300,000 dispersed to help families of the fallen and COVID-stricken members. It gave those who relish the opportunity to bestow goodwill on law enforcement an outlet they have been waiting for.

"It's one of the best feelings you could have, knowing you're supporting not just the men and women in law enforcement, but the families that have lost law enforcement mothers, fathers, spouses, sisters and brothers," Rosen emphasized. "It's a feeling that you can't put a price on."

The outing also created an opportunity to contribute more than sponsorship to law enforce-



East Brunswick Local 145 member Alex Danese with a shirt that captured some of the flavor of the day.

CONTINUED ON 60

## Appreciation and support



The business community came out to support the Survivor & Welfare Fund, including (clockwise from left) Jeff Rosen from Lending to Heroes, Bill Coughlin from Delta Capital, Albert Manzo from The Brownstone, and Kevin Martyn from Martyn Associates.

**GOOD** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59

ment. It brought out a dose of the blue members have not had a chance to feel for the longest time.

Albert Manzo has witnessed so much of that with the many Local and State PBA events held at The Brownstone banquet hall that he owns in Paterson. He came to the outing to express appreciation for the way law enforcement officers continue to risk their lives every day.

"Anytime you do something good for a cause that you believe in, it's really what it's all about," Manzo said. "It just feels so good, and it gives you a sense of pride like you did something. A huge part of our population doesn't really get it. So whatever I can do to help spread the word."

Clearly, there is a propensity to serve those who serve and protect that PBA members have not felt much of lately. But it was out in abundance at Trump National that was also filled with people committed to the common cause.

Perhaps that's why in the middle of several days of rain, there was nothing but sunshine on this day. And showing the appreciation spread an additional ray or two.

That included statements of appreciation like Bill Coughlin, managing partner for Delta Capital that manages the union's investments, made:

"With law enforcement, they're our first line of defense, and, especially in this day and age, it's extraordinarily important to have them there," Coughlin commented. "So to help them is the best feeling in the world."

The appreciation augmented the feeling of togetherness that has been made harder to come by with social distancing. Several Locals that participated wore special shirts that they had made as a show of togetherness. Some of the designs even ex-



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pressed support for the course owner. Green Brook Police Local 398 sported shirts with pumas on them that enhanced the unity pervading the grounds.

"Everybody's coming together as one," Local 398 member Chris Auriano noted. "Just to get out here and play some golf felt like a vacation."

It was a day to once again enjoy being a PBA member.

"It's the unity that keeps us going," Clark Township Local 125 member Andrew Medeiros confirmed. "Just to be out here with our fellow brothers as PBA members is a much-needed break from the hard stresses and the environment we're in nowadays."

The 2020 Survivor & Welfare Golf Outing had originally been scheduled for May. When pandemic restrictions eased enough to reschedule, the PBA knew the importance of having the event, and not just to raise money for the Fund.

Certainly, that was the motivating factor for many Locals to participate.

"Just to be out here supporting a great cause of the State PBA," Monmouth County Corrections Officers Local 240 President Anthony Anderson explained. Anderson added that bringing out a foursome was equally motivated by the first opportunity to get out with the State PBA since the Mini Convention in March.

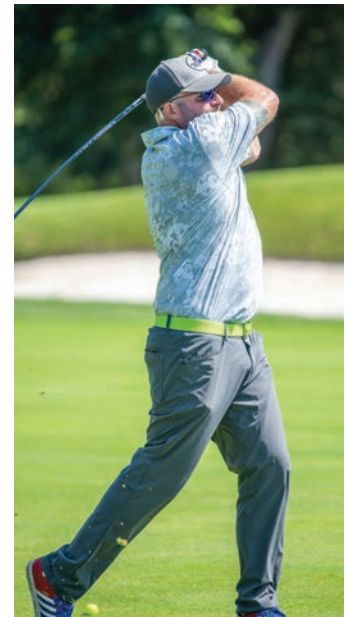
"Any time you can get out with the PBA is cathartic," Anderson continued. "Today is a step forward."

What happened at Trump National did not need to stay at Trump National. The PBA family coming together for survivor families created a feeling that can only be described as cathartic.

"You don't see it too often," said Steve Ekizian, who played with his fellow members from Port Authority Local 116. "It's all about sticking together and helping each other out during these tough times."



Hoboken Local 2 member Chris Hatfield hits a shot from the fairway.



Green Brook Police Local 398 member Chris Auriano.

In the end, the sticking-togetherness of the Survivor & Welfare Golf Outing enabled members to enjoy what they have not felt for the longest time.

"It makes you feel very proud," Local 2's Hatfield concluded. "I go back to work, and I'm reinvigorated. We're going to keep doing this through the thick and thin. We're staying strong, and we're going to stay together."

CONTINUED ON 62



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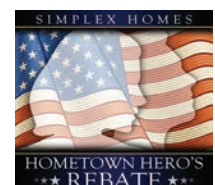
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# Best Shots

Memorable images from the Survivor & Welfare golf outing



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# AROUND THE STATE

## News about NJ Cops

### Wildwood Local 59 makes special delivery to child with brain cancer

Members of Wildwood Local 59, along with nonprofit Liv Like a Unicorn, excitedly walked with arms full of gifts toward a shyly grinning Jaxson Butkus on Aug. 3.

The nonprofit, established by Emma Lipnicky, raises funds to support families that are battling brain and spinal cord cancers. Lipnicky reached out to members of Wildwood Local 59 after hearing about 5-year-old Jaxson's condition and his second round of fighting brain cancer.

"We kind of teamed up with [Lipnicky] to help get law enforcement entities involved," said Wildwood Local 59 member Jeff Harkins, who helped organize the meetup with Jaxson. "I wanted to put out this situation to the PBA and Locals to help do something good for the organization and this little boy."

The group of Local 59 members traveled just under two hours and came with a care package holding 1,400 law enforcement patches from around the world — including New Zealand, Germany and Japan — as well as clothing items, toys, puzzles, stuffed animals and 15 pounds of fudge and saltwater taffy.

Jaxson's family was overwhelmed by the outpouring of gifts from the Local and Liv like a Unicorn, which provides resources not only for the children battling cancer, but also the families supporting them.

"Jaxson was extremely excited, so much that he needed to be kind of controlled by his mom — his two brothers that were there too were excited," Harkins said. "The kids were really excited to see our cars; they were all climbing in and out of them. We went through everything with COVID concerns and



sterilized everything, but it didn't take away from the emotion."

Harkins shared that building positive relationships within the community and with local nonprofits is important to members of Wildwood Local 59 and to law enforcement as a whole.

He also hopes that members helped inspire Jaxson, who has shared future aspirations of becoming a law enforcement officer, to pursue his goals even in the face of adversity.

"I think the most important thing that law enforcement can do is build this trust with the community and share what we can do," he said. "We're not just there to respond to your call, but we're there to help when you're in need, even when you're not asking for it. This family never asked for any of this, but we kind of stepped up and brought law enforcement to them. There's no length that we won't go to to help a kid or family in need."



# Dishing out support with Ewing Local 111

Members from Ewing Local 111 beat the heat from Aug. 10 to Aug. 14 by handing out ice cream at parks around Ewing. Members got to play catch with youth, relax and enjoy the frozen treats.

But the giving doesn't stop with ice cream — Local 111 members also partnered with Debbie Jones at the Ewing Helping Hands Food Drove to assist families with children who are struggling financially throughout the Ewing School District.

Throughout the summer and into the school year, the organization helps 75 families annually with food donations. The Local donated canned goods, non-perishable food items, school supplies and 80 folders for the Ewing Helping Hands back-to-school initiative.



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# Middletown Township Local 124 members feed the masses

Members from Middletown Township Local 124 have been giving back to their community with weekly food drives since March. The routine food donations have been feeding 60 to 80 families a week who are in need due to the ongoing pandemic.

The Middletown Township Local 124 trailer serves as the primary collection location in Middletown and is overseen by Local 124 members Brian Macdonald and Danny Flannigan.

Along with the organization Middletown Helps Its Own (MHIO), the Local collects non-perishable food items such as jellies, pasta sauce, canned meals, tuna and macaroni and cheese, which are then packaged for distribution.

And the Local plans to continue the food drive initiative into the holiday season, as members typically partner with MHIO to help deliver Thanksgiving turkeys and Christmas meals.



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## Monmouth County Conference voices support at summer event



Members of the Monmouth County Conference of PBAs attended Assemblyman Sean Kean's 30th District Summer Cocktail Party on Aug. 26 in Belmar.

The event was in support of Kean's election fund and consisted of speeches from the assemblyman and various guests voicing their support for law enforcement.

Middletown Township Local 124 State Delegate Anthony Dellatacoma, Asbury Park Local 6 State Delegate Gene Dello, Neptune Township Local 74 President Tom Blewitt and Howell Township Local 228 State Delegate Ryan Hurley all attended the event to proudly represent the NJSPBA and the Monmouth County Conference.



## A generous donation for the Monmouth County Conference

Members of the Monmouth County Conference met with Frank Luna of Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) on Aug. 20 to present the Locals with a donation.

Luna, a liaison to Monmouth County who partners with police departments to ensure smooth operation, presented a check in the amount of \$1,000 to help offset costs associated with the ongoing pandemic. The state delegates all exchanged cell phone numbers with Luna as they continue building positive relationships within Monmouth County.

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# Bridgewater Local 174 member retires after 26 years

Bridgewater Local 174 member Cliff Delaney celebrated his retirement with a walk-out ceremony on Aug. 28. Delaney served an honorable 26 years in law enforcement before transitioning into this new phase of life.

"It has truly been an honor to serve you. The path of experiences that come with a career in law enforcement are seldom easy. But I stand here today telling you I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world," Delaney said in his retirement speech. "I'll think of this second family often, and I wish for you to know that your safety and continued well-being will always be on my mind, for each and every one of you, today, tomorrow and in the future. Be safe and be well."



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## Bridgewater Local 174 celebrates four new promotions



Bridgewater Local 174 celebrated four promotions within the department on Sept. 8. Thomas Rice and Kevin Lamey were promoted to the rank of lieutenant, while Daniel Hennessy and Douglas Thorsen were promoted to the rank of sergeant.

Each member stood with his respective family members while being sworn in during a socially distanced and masked ceremony. The department looks forward to what the members bring to their new roles.

## Playing ball with Old Bridge Local 127 members



Old Bridge Township Local 127 members Joe Candurra and Mike Walsh stopped by one of the neighborhoods they were patrolling on Sept. 3 to shoot some hoops with children they saw playing in the street.

Candurra, who has previous experience showing off his basketball skills during a similar exhibition in 2018, decided not to dunk this time around. But the neighborhood children enjoyed chatting and getting some time on the court with the Old Bridge Local 127 members.



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## Five promotions for New Providence Local 132



New Providence Local 132 celebrated five new promotions in an outdoor ceremony in September. Sean Bubb, a 19-year member of Local 132 and former vice president, was promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

Jason Labaska, a Local 132 member for 23 years, 18-year member of Local 132 Joseph Parlapiano and Chad Wilson, New Providence Local 132 State Delegate for 14 years, were all promoted to the rank of sergeant.

Kevin Gutierrez also advanced to the rank of patrolman after serving the New Providence Police Department as a Class II Special for two years. The Local is excited to see what these members bring to their new roles.

## New Providence Local 132 members participate in Hurricane Laura relief



Members of New Providence Local 132 participated in a supplies donation drive on Sept. 12 to benefit residents of Louisiana who were affected by Hurricane Laura.

The Local partnered with the charity "SUP BRO" for the Stuff a Truck event in New Providence and East Hanover. Members loaded a 53-foot tractor trailer donated by Frisard's Trucking of Gramercy, Louisiana, with several thousand pounds of non-perishable food, water, paper products and clothing.

The successful event brought vital assistance to residents of Louisiana, bringing relief from New Providence Local 132 across the country.



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## New Providence Local 132 honors the victims of Sept. 11



In a touching display of solidarity with the New Providence Fire Department, New Providence EMS, Mayor Al Morgan and members of New Providence Local 132 held a ceremony and prayer on Sept. 11 to honor the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Several members of the New Providence community perished during the attacks, and a monument was erected from steel beams recovered from Ground Zero in New Providence's Centennial Park.

## An act of Congress for Wildwood Local 59 members



Members of Wildwood Local 59 accepted their invitation to attend the opening of Congressman Jeff Van Drew's campaign office in South Jersey. Van Drew, the representative for New Jersey's second congressional district, has held his position since 2019.

Wildwood Local 59 Vice President Michael Griser, State Delegate Michael Szemcsak and President Leonard Larkin — along with Brigantine Local 204 State Delegate Joe Sweet — attended the opening to thank Van Drew for his support of law enforcement.

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# Operation Clear Track 2020 going virtual



THOMAS J. JEDIC

New Jersey law enforcement is proud to be joining forces with first responder agencies in the U.S. and Canada for “Operation Clear Track” — the single largest rail-safety initiative in North America.

Coordinated by Amtrak, Operation Lifesaver Inc. and Operation Lifesaver Canada, Operation Clear

Track aims to reduce the number of railway crossing and trespassing incidents in the U.S. and Canada — incidents which seriously injure or kill more than 2,100 people each year. The event is held during the annual observance of Rail Safety Week, September 21 to 27.

I am very proud that my colleagues in New Jersey traditionally have been the largest participants in this important safety effort. Each year, New Jersey police officers have met the challenge by adding even more patrols to their rail assets and paying close attention to the seriousness of trespassing.

“The goal of Operation Clear Track and Rail Safety Week is to raise awareness of the importance of safe behavior near tracks and trains, in support of OLI’s mission to save lives,” said Operation Lifesaver, Inc. Executive Director Rachel Maleh.

Because of the ongoing pandemic, first responder agencies will be participating in a virtual Operation Clear Track event this year. These agencies across North America will be promoting rail safety through social media messages, by sharing Operation Lifesaver’s #STOPTrackTragedies public service announcements and other videos, and by posting other rail safety information to their department websites. Participants will also be emphasizing the importance of obeying rail crossing and trespassing laws throughout Rail Safety Week.

For more information about Rail Safety Week, Operation Clear Track, and other rail-safety initiatives and tips, please visit [www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org).

Operation Lifesaver, Inc. is a nonprofit public safety education and awareness organization dedicated to reducing collisions, fatalities and injuries at highway-rail crossings and preventing trespassing on or near railroad tracks. A

### Railroad Trespassing

- **Never** walk, run, play or take pictures on the railroad right-of-way. If you are on or near the tracks, you are trespassing on private property and breaking the law.
- **Never** attempt to outrun an approaching train. It can take a train a mile or more to stop.
- **If** you’re standing on the train tracks, you may not hear or feel an oncoming train in time to get away safely.
- **Only** cross the tracks at designated public crossings.
- **For** more safety tips, visit [oli.org](http://oli.org)




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national network of trained volunteers gives free presentations on rail safety, and a public awareness campaign — “See Tracks? Think Train!” — provides tips and statistics to encourage safe behavior near the tracks. OLI leads an international observance of Rail Safety Week each September. Learn more about Rail Safety Week by following OLI on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube.

We have a slight advantage here in New Jersey with a PBA member on the Executive Board of NJ Operation Lifesaver: me. That enables all of you to be ready to address whatever your community needs. Have an issue with school bus drivers not stopping at grade crossings? We have safety material for that. Have a spot where young adults and kids cross the tracks and place themselves in danger? We have one for that, too. Hopefully you read my articles from time to time. I will always make time and materials available for any agency looking to make an impact in their community by combatting the issue of trespassing.

We can even supply your community with a standalone safety kiosk full of safety materials for you to display at the location of your choice. These convenient displays have been placed in libraries, community centers, PAL buildings and the like. Several are scheduled to go into convenience store lobbies to get the material out in a fast, efficient

way. And never worry about material re-fill. NJOL will assist you in keeping your supplies plentiful.

Since we are aiming virtually this year, please visit the following links to videos available as part of our safety campaign:

- Amtrak Police Crossing Safety PSA “Don’t let your life end like this” :60 <https://youtu.be/qNfsk2gdE4k>
- Amtrak Police Crossing Safety PSA “Don’t let your life end like this” :30 <https://youtu.be/8BGDKqF0Q-A>
- Amtrak Trespass Safety PSA “Train vs. Stick” :20 <https://youtu.be/rvy-HQal4nJk>
- Amtrak Trespass Safety PSA “ATV” :20 <https://youtu.be/sNQpDRfUgxw>
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc. Trespass Prevention PSA: “Near Miss – Headphones” video :30 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmvW9-IJ6Ds>
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc. Crossing Safety PSA: “Find the Blue and White ENS Sign” video :30 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_aolAr4GIa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_aolAr4GIa)
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc. Crossing Safety PSA: “Stop Track Tragedies: Ashley’s Story” video :30 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B-D429UVvxo&list=PLectm-xzcd-pqL5xzHcXeLhEeJY1URJzh2&index=1>

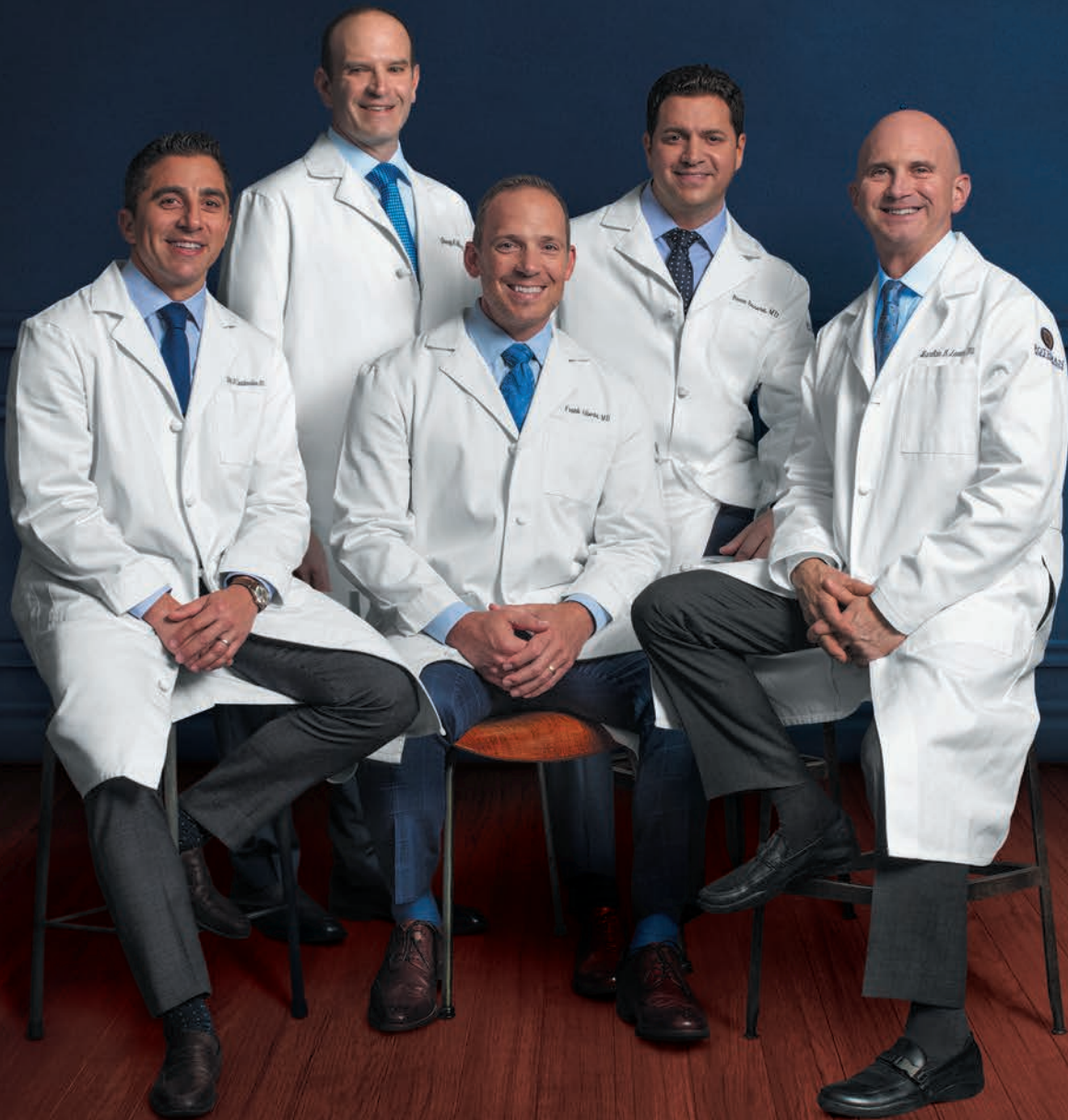
Take a few minutes to watch them, and please pass them on to educators, civic groups, PTSS and anyone who would benefit from learning something new about the dangers of rail trespassing.

We still have a number of “Look, Listen & Live” bumper stickers left for your agency to request at no cost. The decals have a web address on them so viewers can log on and learn more as well. They would look perfect on the back of any cruiser or traffic safety unit. In closing, please reach out to me for any rail safety program you may need, from educating your citizens to instructing your police personnel.

*Brother Thomas Jedic is the Railroad Police of New Jersey Local 323 State Delegate, a member of the Norfolk Southern Police — Special Operations Response Team (SORT) and an executive board member of NJ Operation Lifesaver. He can be reached at 201-207-1394 or [thomas.jedic@nscorp.com](mailto:thomas.jedic@nscorp.com).*



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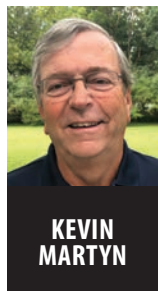


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MARTYN

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Many PBA Locals have postponed their fund drive efforts in the last several months. However, you may be surprised to hear that the PBAs that have pursued their fundraising efforts are pleased to find great support from their residents and businesses. The numbers of donations are increasing, as well as the average dollar amounts of those donations. This confirms that the silent majority support the police and their efforts to keep their towns safe and protected. Residents are donating at record levels to show their support for the local PBAs. Your efforts during the pandemic are being rewarded with increased donations for your fund drives.

Martyn Associates concentrates on raising the most money for PBAs through their town fund drive mailings. Our work consists of first meeting with your Local's executive committee to understand your local PBA's involvement in the community. Second, we work together designing an eye-catching mail piece consisting of photos and stories that are unique to your local PBA. Next, the mailing list is a critical part of the process. Martyn Associates obtains up-to-date mailing lists and reviews the lists with the local PBA for accuracy of town coverage. We then analyze the mailing list to get the best possible postage rates. Finally, we deliver the fund drive mailing on a timely basis to generate the most donations possible for your PBA.

I would welcome the opportunity to work with your PBA and help you take advantage of our experience to improve your overall fund drive results.

*Kevin Martyn has been president/owner of Martyn Associates, Inc. since 1984. More than 20 years ago, Kevin began working with nonprofits to guide them through the fund-drive mailing process in order to generate an increase in donations. For more information about fundraising options, email [kevin@martynassociates.com](mailto:kevin@martynassociates.com) or call 908-693-7536.*



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penalty may apply (unless an exception applies). The guarantees of an annuity contract depend on the issuing company's claims-paying ability. Annuities are not guaranteed by the FDIC or any other government agency.

Variable annuities are sold by prospectus, which contains detailed information about investment objectives and risks as well as charges and expenses. You are encouraged to read the prospectus carefully before you invest or send money to buy a variable annuity contract. The prospectus is available from the insurance company or your financial professional. Variable annuity subaccounts will fluctuate in value based on market conditions and may be worth more or less than the original amount invested when the annuity expires.

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These payments will last the rest on Robert's life. Assuming he lives to age 85, he'll eventually receive over \$265,000 in payments.

*Bruce Linger is a representative with Lincoln Financial Advisors and may be reached at [www.goforanswers.com](http://www.goforanswers.com), 201-556-4564 or [bruce.linger@lfg.com](mailto:bruce.linger@lfg.com). Securities and advisory services offered through Lincoln Financial Advisors Corp., a broker/dealer (Member SIPC) and registered investment advisor. Insurance offered through Lincoln affiliates and other fine companies. 61 South Paramus Road, NJ, 07652, 201-556-4500.*



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**My law enforcement connection**

My husband is a retired New Jersey law enforcement officer and past Oceanport Local 364 State Delegate.

### What inspired you to become a realtor?

Over the years, my biggest asset has been real estate. Although most people buy with their heart and sell with their head, I realized it is important to buy with your heart and head. Good real estate decisions can create major wealth. I want to help people make financially sound decisions and buy right the first time.

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# The Home Team

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## Seven signs you're being scammed

You've heard the warnings, and you know the saying: "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." Too many people still keep falling for one or more of a variety of scams that cost Americans more than \$1 billion a year.

In an effort to help you avoid scams, keep your hard-earned money and skip the embarrassment of admitting you were taken, here are seven clues that a text or email offer could be (and most probably is) a rip-off:

1. You've got money due but need to pay a small fee.
2. You notice a lot of grammatical or spelling errors or a logo that doesn't look right.
3. You are asked to click on a link in an email or text.
4. The offer is from overseas, as is the address they ask you to send funds to.
5. You are asked to provide personal or banking information.
6. You receive an email or text that you need to reset passwords or other information to keep your account.
7. The sender is overly pushy or threatening.

Keep in mind, cybercrooks are always finding new ways to trick us. That's why it's a good idea to check the Federal Trade Commission's webpage, which is filled with information on the most recent scams being reported across the country. Here are some signs that your personal information or accounts are compromised:

- You see withdrawals from your bank account that you can't explain.
- You don't get your bills or other mail.

- Merchants refuse your checks.
- Debt collectors call you about debts that aren't yours.
- You find unfamiliar accounts or charges on your credit report.
- Medical providers bill you for services you didn't use.
- Your health plan rejects your legitimate medical claim because the records show you've reached your benefits limit.
- A health plan won't cover you because your medical records show a condition you don't have.
- The IRS notifies you that more than one tax return was filed in your name, or that you have income from an employer you don't work for.
- You get a notice that your information was stolen in a data breach at a company where you do business or have an account.

The best advice is to be suspicious and very aware. Criminals are always coming up with new ways to try and separate you from your money. It's a good idea to monitor your credit cards and bank accounts weekly (or even daily), have strong passwords and get a yearly credit report.

California Casualty understands how important protecting your personal data is. That's why every auto and home/renters insurance policy comes with free credit monitoring and resolution services from CyberScout.

*This article was provided by California Casualty, providing auto and home insurance to educators, law enforcement officers, firefighters and nurses. For more information, visit [www.calcas.com/njspba](http://www.calcas.com/njspba). For a free quote, visit [www.readyforquote.com/alina](http://www.readyforquote.com/alina), or call 866-829-5867.*

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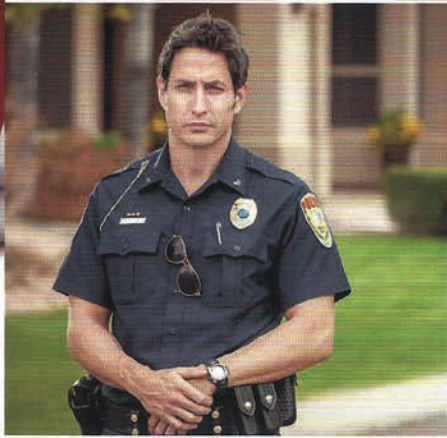
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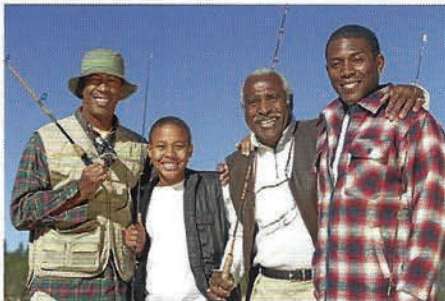


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# When Helping Hurts

## Compassion fatigue, burnout and secondary traumatic stress in first responders



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The consequences of “being on the job” for first responders during the pandemic are clearly significant. Police officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel and other first responders never know what a day on the job is going to bring. The COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of incredible traumatic stress for all first responders.

It is the first responders who arrive ready and able to take care of individuals at what is most likely their most desperate moment. First responders must face challenging, dangerous and extremely demanding events. They are also the ones to reach out to provide emotional and physical support to survivors.

They respond, knowing full well that during this pandemic, they may be in harm’s way due to the high potential risk posed by transmission of the virus. These job duties also put them at increased risk of trauma.

### Inevitability of harm

If we want to build a healthy recovery support system, we have to acknowledge that trauma is a given. Responses including compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress and burnout are inevitable. Despite the fact that there is much overlap in concepts, significant differences underlying these terms exist. Accurately diagnosing the condition is the first step that can lead to appropriate interventions for the first responder.

### Hazardous results of the traumatic stress phenomenon

We should be concerned about our first responders serving those who are traumatized. This is different from experiencing trauma personally — for instance, EMTs who made call after call to homes in New York City during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, only to arrive to meet an inconsolable family and an already deceased victim. Experiencing the same situation repeatedly, with no ability to change or improve it, can lead to indifference, called compassion fatigue.

Some events are so often described by the victim or by colleagues that a first responder begins to feel as if they experienced the situation themselves. Be it an uncontrollable fire, social unrest or the 9/11 terrorist attacks, sometimes an unlivable experience becomes the source of a trauma response. We call that secondary traumatic stress or vicarious traumatization.

And, of course, some first responders experience a single traumatic event in the line of duty, or cumulative traumatic events. All these have an impact on physical and mental health.

An estimated 30 percent of first responders develop behavioral conditions including, but not limited to, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as compared with 20 percent of the general population (Abbot et al., 2015). In a study about suicidality, firefighters were reported to have higher attempts and suicidal ideation rates than the general population (Stanley et al., 2016). In law enforcement, the estimates suggest that between 125 and 300 police officers commit suicide every year (Badge of Life, 2016).

### Symptoms of traumatic stress

Repeated exposure to trauma can cause the first responder to be at a high risk of making poor judgments, so it is important to recognize symptoms in yourself and others. Each person may experience different symptoms, but those we often see in the first

responders we work with at Princeton House include:

- intrusive memories, dreams or flashbacks of specific incidents
- feelings of hopelessness, guilt or low self-worth
- feeling tense or anxious all the time
- sleep disturbances
- paranoia or overwhelming fear
- irritability or aggressive outbursts
- feeling anxious and startling easily
- risky, dangerous or self-destructive behavior
- suicidal ideation
- depression
- physical symptoms, hypervigilance and impulsivity
- problems with alcohol, drugs, sexual acting out or other addictive behaviors.

### Regular job stress vs. trauma

As a therapist with the First Responder Treatment Services, part of the inpatient program at Penn Medicine Princeton House, I’ve heard first responders talk about “regular stress” versus “trauma.” Regular stress, as they describe it, may result from long hours of work, frequent shifts, physical hardships, and other negative experiences.

Experiencing a traumatic event on the job will always be layered on top of regular stress.

First responders often have fears about infection and concerns about personal safety for them and their families. The first responders discuss how pervasive and cumulative the current exposure to trauma has been during the pandemic. As a result of this exposure, individuals report what is described as secondary or vicarious traumatization, meaning they experience similar symptoms to trauma victims as a result of traumatic exposure via close contact with the victims or survivors.

### Help for the first responder

Recovering from trauma and developing the skills to deal with symptoms is possible, but it requires focused attention, effort and guidance. Trauma recovery may include:

- learning to manage emotional reactions
- increasing awareness of body reactions to trauma
- allowing an openness to authentic feelings
- connecting to support systems
- developing skills in building resiliency core strategies
- a willingness to remove the mask of invincibility.

If you are experiencing any trauma-related symptoms, you may need to seek help in order to begin the healing process. It is important to realize that asking for help is the first step for recovery and healing, and possibly the most courageous act of all.

When first responders, with support, acknowledge trauma and begin to understand it, they can start managing and protecting their health and wellbeing.

*Iris Perlstein, clinical specialist for Princeton House Behavioral Health First Responder Treatment Services, is a licensed clinical alcohol and drug addiction counselor, a licensed professional counselor and a board-certified registered art therapist. She received her master’s degree in professional studies from Pratt Institute in New York City. Ms. Perlstein specializes in trauma treatment, with additional expertise in addiction recovery interventions.*



# First responders are at risk: Get a screening

The evidence is pretty clear. First responders have higher occupational hazards with well-documented side effects. The taxing conditions of the profession, which is physically and emotionally demanding, also require dangerous work, heavy uniforms, stress, smoke inhalation, dehydration, and gas and chemical exposure, among other things. In fact, the United States Fire Administration estimates that 47 percent of line-of-duty firefighter deaths are cardiac-related, and the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) reports that police officers have the poorest cardiovascular disease profile of any occupation.

Because of this, Deborah Heart and Lung Center, which has more than 30 years' experience diagnosing and treating first responders, has designed an evidence-based cardiovascular and respiratory health assessment specifically tailored to firefighters, emergency medical responders and police and law enforcement personnel.

## Know your risk factors

Dr. Paula Seth, medical director of Deborah's First Responder Health Assessment, knows that in addition to occupational hazards, many first responders also face lifestyle stresses.

"Many of our frontline heroes juggle not only work-related risks, but also issues like smoking, obesity, lack of exercise, eat-



ing 'on the run' and hypertension," she says. "These all add up to a recipe for disaster."

Dr. Seth points to the value of a baseline assessment specific to first responders as a step in the right direction.

"Deborah's board-certified cardiologists can do a thorough review of your risk factors through a complete health history, comprehensive physical, glucose and lipid profile, blood pressure, EKG, and pulmonary function test to get a comprehensive picture of your individual health and job-related risks," she says.

She adds, "This confidential health assessment allows us to individually tailor a wellness plan to guide you in the right direction."

## Care close to home

Dr. Seth notes that appointments are conveniently scheduled through the Deborah Specialty Physicians network in offices throughout Burlington and Ocean counties.

"This allows for care close to home, but if needed, the vast resources of the world-renowned Deborah Heart and Lung Center are readily available," she says. "I strongly urge all our first responders to call and get a screening. It could be the most important call you make."

*For more information, visit [www.demanddeborah.org](http://www.demanddeborah.org) or call 833-227-3996.*

## Custom Health Assessment for New Jersey First Responders



The Deborah® First Responder Health Assessment is a critical lifeline in first responders' health. Conducted by our board-certified cardiologists, you will be evaluated for risk factors related to heart disease, lung disease, diabetes and sleep apnea—common hazards for first responders everywhere.

**Appointments: [DemandDeborah.org](http://DemandDeborah.org) or 833-227-3996**

\*Insurance co-pays or deductibles may apply.





## ASK THE PHYSICIAN

**Paula Seth, M.D.**

Medical Director, First Responder  
Health Assessment Program  
Deborah Heart and Lung Center

**Q:** Between COVID-19 and the stresses of my EMT job, I have been running nonstop. My doctor told me I need to slow down, lose a few pounds and take a break, but I don't see that happening in the near future. My wife is worried about me. Any thoughts?

— Jacob, Mt. Laurel

**A:** Jacob, yes, I do have a few thoughts.

First, your doctor is probably right. Slowing down and taking better care of yourself is always good advice for ev-

eryone. But given your job stresses, you could be at higher risk for cardiovascular disease. At the very least, you should carve out an hour to see a cardiac specialist and get a health risk assessment.

Our specialists are specifically trained and have many years of experience of diagnosing and treating first responders. I would recommend that you take the time to have a thorough checkup. We'll be able to detect if you are at higher risk for a heart attack or other adverse event. The last thing in the world you need is to go five steps backward with an unexpected — and possibly preventable — heart condition. Make the call and get an appointment. Make your wife happy!

Call 833-227-3996 or visit [www.demanddeborah.org](http://www.demanddeborah.org) to learn more.

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# Exclusive NJ State PBA Member Benefits

If you would like more information on joining the PBA or starting a Local, please contact the NJ State PBA Office in Woodbridge at 732-636-8860.

## State PBA Meetings

Every month except August, the State Board of Delegates meets to discuss the business of the organization. All members in good standing are welcome to attend. See Page 8 for meeting locations and dates.

## Clinical Services

On-site counseling for individuals and family members, training seminars (e.g. suicide, stress, PTSD, etc.) & general consultation on mental health is available to PBA Members at no cost. For services, call 732-636-8860 or for the 24-hour emergency hotline call 732-609-3554.

## PBA License Plates

Every member of the PBA may have PBA license plates issued to them for display on vehicles owned or registered to the member or the member's spouse. There is a \$50 fee.

## Courtesy Cards

Each year, members are issued 10 PBA Courtesy Cards that can be given to law enforcement supporters.

## Family Member Courtesy Cards

Special member courtesy cards are available to members through their State Delegate.

## PBA Car Shields

Every member may have up to three shields licensed to them for display in vehicles owned or registered to the member or the member's spouse.

## Special Services

The PBA maintains three trailers equipped with refreshment services and other event support functions. These trailers are used at events such as law enforcement funerals, the Polar Bear Plunge and other events members attend. The trailers are also available for Locals' functions.

## Keeping the Members Informed

The State PBA is the only Law Enforcement Union in New Jersey that provides its membership with a full-color, monthly magazine that contains real-time news and information about events and happenings that affect your working conditions. *NJ COPS* is mailed directly to the homes of our active and Local 600 members.

## Peer Assistance Response Team

For assistance with any issues related to mental health, addiction, suicide prevention or critical incidents, contact:

- **Dr. Eugene Stefanelli**  
Clinical Services Director Hotline: 732-609-3554  
Cell: 973-768-5300
- **Mauro Farallo**  
Peer Liaison Committee Chairman  
Cell: 973-902-7821
- **Cherie Castellano**  
Executive Director Cop-2-Cop  
Hotline: 866-267-2267  
Cell: 732-713-8037
- **Dr. Michael Bizzarro**  
(On call backup doctor for Dr. Stefanelli.)  
Cell: 732-771-7165
- **Kenneth Burkert**  
Volunteer Peer Liaison  
Cell: 908-346-1691
- **Father John McCrone**  
Clergy for all NJSPBA members  
Cell: 201-707-2678

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## PBA Legal Protection Plan

The LPP is owned and operated by the PBA, exclusively for PBA members. It is not an insurance policy purchased from some out-of-state company or one concocted by an attorney for profit.

## Line of Duty Death Benefits

Beneficiaries of PBA members killed in the line of duty as a law enforcement officer or member of the National Guard or Reserve will receive a \$25,000 death benefit provided by the NJ State PBA Survivor & Welfare Fund.

## NJ COP SHOT

A \$20,000 reward will be offered for the arrest and conviction of an assailant who seriously injures any law enforcement officers regardless of their employer or union affiliation.

## Labor Relations Assistance

Labor consultant Mike Freeman is available to assist PBA Locals and SOAs with labor and discipline representation and research questions.

## Union Leadership Training

Training for Local State Delegates, presidents, and other executive board members is provided at the State PBA office on a regular basis.

## PBA Scholarships

40 scholarships are awarded annually to children of PBA members.

## California Casualty Auto and Home Insurance

Auto, home and renter's insurance available exclusively for PBA members' households. For information, members can call 866-829-5867.

## Benefits and Retirement Planning

Pete Andreyev conducts regular retirement and benefit planning seminars at PBA Headquarters in Woodbridge and throughout the state. The workshops are open to members and their spouses. The service is provided at no cost to members.





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