



Newsletter Staff

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Being There

Hearts full of grace

A Newsletter for & about
Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chaplains

*"Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve.
You don't have to have a college degree to serve.
You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve.
You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."*

—The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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The quiet work of a law enforcement chaplain goes unnoticed until you are met by one—in that terrible instant when life as you know it changes because someone you love deeply is suddenly gone, when the immediate hours that follow are disorienting, when death and grief strike so hard and fast that it's difficult to process what's happening. Being there with others in such moments is meaningful and conscientious work.

American author and clergyman Edward Everett Hale once said, *"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."*

And so it is with law enforcement chaplains. You might be only one, but you are one. You cannot do everything, but you can do something. Call it an act of kindness, see it as a calling or consider it your soul's purpose, but whatever you name it be sure to underscore the beauty that lies within the pain. Remember that by being there your kindness and compassion can soften the blow, ease the pain ever so slightly or change the course dramatically. I'm proud of each of you and sincerely thank you for another year of service to Sonoma County.

From the Editor: Our inaugural issue

Ours is a fellowship bound by our mutual calling to chaplaincy, our commitment to LE and the community we serve, and most especially by our allegiance to one another. The purpose of this bi-monthly newsletter is to provide another way for us to keep connected.

Many thanks to those of you who participated in our editorial development survey last fall; your feedback was much appreciated and is reflected in this first edition. Please accept our thanks (in lieu of cigars) as we celebrate the birth of our baby.

Publishing bimonthly gives us a valuable opportunity to pause, reflect, and do a deeper dive into issues and experiences that matter to us as LE chaplains. As your newsletter editor and colleague, I invite each one of you to participate in this new communication hub in whatever way is right for you: provide your own stories or story ideas, send pictures, share resources with your fellow chaplains, or even just read and react to what we offer here. Please let us know what you think of this issue and what you want to see in further editions—this newsletter is "digital clay," customizable to whatever is meaningful to our group.

So put the kettle on (or pop the cork), settle in, and read on.



The Year in Review: Highlights from 2022



ED Rita Constantini & Ollie

2022: The Year in Review, by Rita Constantini

Coming off what many would consider a harsh couple of years, it stands to reason that most of us were ready for change on many levels. A global pandemic notwithstanding, I found myself eternally hopeful that some kind of cosmic shift would occur to set the world into a more kind and gentle way of being or that we might at least avoid any more natural disasters or suffer traumas ourselves.

With clear eyes and high hopes, I started the year as your new Executive Director inspired and hopeful, truly feeling that we are standing on the shoulder of giants—that those who served before us have blazed a trail worth preserving, worthy of our time, commitment and effort. Now, after a year of leading our Chaplaincy and witnessing the impact of this work more intimately than ever before, I am still inspired and hopeful. It's because of each you that I remain so. Your actions speak louder than words. The way you give and how you serve have not gone unnoticed. This work is indeed heavy, and as Chaplain Emeritus Warren Hayes would say, this work comes at a cost to us spiritually and emotionally. I am grateful for all the Chaplains who have ever served, and I am especially proud of those serving today.

Read on for links & details on these accomplishments, and stand tall as we continue to proudly serve the community we love.



We grew our ranks in 2022. Our Chaplaincy nearly doubled in the number of commissioned Chaplains with the completion of Chaplain Academy XXII in July, and today we count 38 active Chaplains. Academy XXIII started on January 10 with 16 candidates. Good luck to the new recruits!



We did a lot in 2022 with our county service partners. Our efforts are making an impact and the community is responding: We received 125 requests for service, more than any year previous. We reached out and strengthened relationships with LE agencies, especially SRPD, RPPS and CHP, and made 16 presentations for SRPD & the Police Academy. We activated REDCOM as our primary dispatch agency. We participated in three Critical Incident Stress Debriefings with county agencies, and our Chaplains participated in 12 community events (one a month).



KSRO Sonoma County Focus interview with Rita Constantini & Shaun Ralston July 3, 2022 bit.ly/LECS-Interview

And we got more [press coverage](#) than ever, thanks to LECS outreach efforts.





Message from
LECS Board of
Directors

A Message of Gratitude from LECS Board of Directors, Shaun Ralston, President

Shaun Ralston was elected President of the [LECS Board of Directors](#) in 2022. We also welcomed two new Board members: KT McNulty & Justin Thompson.

There aren't enough words to express gratitude(s) for LECS volunteers who selflessly serve Sonoma County first responder agencies and our community. You play a vital role in providing support to officers, others on the scene(s) and their families. Your listening ears, kind words, and comforting presence on someone's worst day are priceless. The dedication required to fulfill this task - including your robust Academy training - along with your individual compassion and time commitment is truly an inspiration to me and our Board of Directors. With the exception of a very small stipend for our Executive Director, our 100% volunteer organization is fueled by compassion, unselfish caring, patience and just plain love for one another. We are individually blessed to have so much in this life and I'm grateful that we've collectively found a way to give back in service and thanks to our community. May the comfort you will inevitably provide others in 2023 bring you peace and fulfillment. We are so grateful for you.



Shaun Ralston



KT McNulty



Justin Thompson

Tour de Fuzz
update from
Shaun Ralston

The 2022 TdF was the hottest ever: in the number of riders ... and the temperature!

The Tour de Fuzz (TdF) is the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy's annual fundraising and public awareness event, held in early September. For the past 12 years, bicycle enthusiasts - including law enforcement officers - from around Northern California have participated by paying an entry fee to cycle beautiful Sonoma Wine Country routes (50k, 100k or 100 miles). The affordable single-day ride has developed a reputation as one of the "funnest" events of its kind with outstanding SAG (on-road Support And Gear), frequent/well-stocked rest stops along with a finish line music celebration, BBQ feast, unlimited local beers/wines, awards ceremony and cycling expo. With nearly 1,800 registered participants, the event takes 200+ volunteers to execute and raises enough funds to cover 70% of the Chaplaincy's annual operations.

Each year, the event is themed around LECS mission and values. For 2023, we're honoring first responders (you'll notice the colorful first responder flag in this year's logo, below). The ride starts and ends at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts in Santa Rosa. The TdF is organized via a small incident command team that coordinates all promotion, permits, insurance, vendors, volunteers, donations and sponsors. Chaplains interested in participating may contact Executive Director Rita Constantini.

For some fun facts about the ride, visit www.tourdefuzz.org.





Chaplain Peer Support

Taking Care of Each Other: Three Levels of Peer Support

Defusing

A brief, less formal version of debriefing conducted within one to four hours after a critical incident. This is a process of talking it out.

"The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing ... that is a friend who cares."

-Henri Nouwen



Debriefing

A process for helping Chaplains process their direct involvement with traumatic events. Done with individuals or small groups held shortly after an unusually stressful incident, strictly for the purpose of dealing with the emotional residual of the event.

Pods

A protective and proactive practice to avoid burnout within the organization, and to strengthen our connection to each other as a way of sharing the responsibility of debriefing to avoid overburdening or overexposing fellow Chaplains. Each Chaplain will belong to a pod and each pod will have an administrative leader to help guide the process. Pod members can debrief with each other after they have defused with their Backup. The happier and healthier we remain as individuals, the greater our collective health and longevity.

Call-Out Reports

Call-Out Reports: The Value of Takeaways

Writing a detailed report can be beneficial for many reasons. Some Chaplains use the writing process to help process their feelings and sort out the events of the day, while others might view it more like a task and offer a clinical approach to report writing.

Sharing the specifics, like what agency made the request, the date and time of the request, and a summary of the circumstances are required for context. When you can dig deeper and offer how the call impacted you, what you learned or how you felt, we then get a sense of you and your journey.

No matter the style, method or manner in which you write, your report (including insights and takeaways) tells an important part of the story: **your part of the story.**





Chaplain Insights

Insights from fellow Chaplains in different callings from around town & around the world

Forest Bathing:

A reflection from the Rev. Sarah Farrow, Chaplain at King's College, London (2022, abridged)



Have you heard of 'forest bathing'? No, it's not trying to do the breaststroke through a pile of leaves. It's the idea (with a lot of science behind it) that time spent in mindful exploration in a forest can help both your physical and mental health.

There is a saying, attributed to the Zen tradition, 'You should sit in nature for 20 minutes a day. Unless you're very busy... then you should sit for an hour.' It reminds me of a similar quote attributed to Martin Luther, 'I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.'


It's often those times when we are stressed out or at our busiest that we think the simple things can be skipped. It's easy to think we may not have time to just be in nature or time to just be in God's presence - whether in prayer or meditation. Or we may think that taking time for such simple things is selfish when we should be using that time more productively. But it can often be the case that it is the simple things that feed us the most - that nourish our souls.

...

There is a life-giving element to taking the time to stop and be mindful - whether that is to commune with nature or commune with God or commune with whatever else is life-giving for you.





Fall/Winter 2022 Photo Gallery 

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."


-Rabindranath Tagore

Celebrating compassionate volunteer chaplains at our ANNUAL APPRECIATION DINNER. We are so grateful for their dedication and service "being there" for community members who have suffered tragedy and loss.

HopMonk Tavern,
Sebastopol
December 4, 2022





Fall/Winter 2022 Photo Gallery 

Thanks to our chaplain elves Perkins, Passarino, Warren, Williams & Constantini (not pictured) who boarded two special Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) trains this rainy Saturday morning, for our ANNUAL TOY DRIVE

Windsor
Dec. 3, 2022




Chaplains Vavra, Egan, Hollingshead and Williams represented LECS at the WINTER LIGHTS tree lighting event and luminary remembrance booth. The event kicked off the holidays with ice skating, Santa Claus, lights and community.

Courthouse Sq.,
Santa Rosa
Nov. 26, 2022





Fall/Winter 2022 Photo Gallery 

Congratulations to former LECS Board Director and now Sebastopol Police Chief, RONALD NELSON, on today's swearing in ceremony. So grateful for the Chief's service to the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Service In Sonoma County and our community.

Sebastopol
Nov. 7, 2022



"Being There" isn't always during tough times. Gratitude to Sonoma County Chaplains Hsieh, Williams, Heinzl, Taylor, Vavra, & Jackson (not pictured), who joined the Santa Rosa Police Department for drive-thru TRUNK OR TREAT, bringing joy to children on Halloween

#FirstResponders
#Halloween

Veterans' Memorial
Santa Rosa
Oct. 31, 2022





Fall/Winter 2022 Photo Gallery



ALL PAWS ON DECK. So grateful for hardworking volunteers assembling registration packets for Tour de Fuzz, the 'funnest' day on a bike!

Luther Burbank Center for the Arts, Santa Rosa, CA

Sept. 2, 2022



The 2022 Tour de Fuzz was our best ever: Read the details in the Board President's report in this issue. Check out more photos at tourdefuzz.org.





Milestones

Farewell to Heidi Fortkamp and Rocky Call

We all have experienced how wondrously life brings us together as Chaplains and also how, at some point, it leads each of us in a different direction. **Heidi Fortkamp (Academy X) and Rocky Call (Academy XIV), both 10-plus year veterans of LECS, are retiring from the Chaplaincy.** We salute you, Heidi and Rocky, and thank you for your years of service, for your unflagging care and compassion for all those whom you have served, and especially the example you have set for all of us.

With love and best wishes to you both on your new direction!



Heidi Fortkamp
(L to R: Gayle S., Karen M., Cat S., Maryann M., Heidi S., Heidi Fortkamp)

"What an absolute honor it has been representing the Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chaplaincy. *Being There* for our community, alongside the many dedicated fellow Chaplains I've loved serving with, has been such a rewarding experience of a lifetime. I'm grateful to know all of you will be responding to future calls! I think I'll always have an ear to hear those sirens and that automatic response to go! Thank you, dear friends, for *Being There* with all of your hearts." *Love, Heidi*

*May the road rise
to meet you,
May the wind be
always at your
back.
May the rain fall
softly on your
fields,
And may God
hold you in the
palm of his hand.*

-Irish blessing

"Being a chaplain has been part of my extended family. The love, support and camaraderie has been earnest, honest and unconditional. I've been honored to be part of the school crisis team lead by wonderful Heidi. Being part of the jail team supporting correctional officers and deputies has also been so rewarding. My experience being with families after the Santa Rosa and Paradise fires was so humbling. Many of my call outs will forever be seared in my heart. But mostly I am so grateful for the relationships and bonds I've been blessed to have with my fellow chaplains. I certainly will always support the chaplaincy and hope to be invited to "be there" still in the future wherever needed. Kindness matters has never meant so much as when I was a chaplain." *Rocky*



Rocky Call

