



Newsletter Staff

Rita Constantini,
LECS Executive Director
executivedirector@sonomacountychaplains.org

Inese Heinzel, Editor
inese@sonic.net

Being There

Hearts full of grace

A Newsletter for & about
Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chaplains

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.
Do justly now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now.
You are not obligated to complete the work,
but neither are you free to abandon it. *

In this issue

Message from the E.D.

Feature:
Compassion Satisfaction
The Why & How of Pods

New column:
The Chaplain's Voice

Wellness & Peer Support,
Part II: First Responder
Resiliency

LECS in the Field:
SCI Merit Award
Faith+Blue Event
Trunk or Treat

From the Board
of Directors:
Wrap-up-
Tour de Fuzz 2023

Milestones

From Rita Constantini, Executive Director:

So many people I meet tell me that there is no way they could ever serve as a law enforcement chaplain and that they have no idea how anyone is able to step right into the middle of another person's grief to offer comfort.

Personal fortitude is absolutely required—and this is commendable work—but the real test of the heart comes over time. Watching the struggle of so many that have gone before me, and by acknowledging my own struggles, I have to ask myself how it is that one person can withstand tons of exposure and take limited damage emotionally and spiritually while another may suffer from the same or similar exposures. In this issue we explore the power of **compassion satisfaction** and its role in personal resilience. Also, in this the second of a multiple series inquiry we hear from another expert in first responders' resiliency about the impact of secondary trauma and what they—and we—can do to heal. Thanks for reading another issue of *"Being There"*.



From the Editor

NEW COLUMN!

The Chaplain's Voice:
Independent Insights,
Inquiries &
Inspirations by LECS
Chaplains

Introducing...

The Chaplain's Voice– Independent Insights, Inquiries & Inspirations by LECS Chaplains

This is altogether **your forum** ... your thoughts, tips, aha moments, images, quotes, prayers, recommended readings: whatever moves you and you feel might move fellow chaplains.

That's it. No pre-determined format required. Just send your inspiration to me via email or text and we'll go from there. Read on for two Chaplain contributions to this new forum.

On this cusp between holidays, I send Magnitudes of Gratitude for YOU.

Inese
inese@sonic.net
415.450.0592

**An interpretive translation of the Talmud by Rabbi Rami Shapiro*





Compassion Satisfaction

In the summer issue we delved into self-care as an important contributor to resilience (the ability to recover from difficulties and avoid compassion fatigue or burnout). This issue explores another component of resilience: **compassion satisfaction**.

According to Meaghan Lightbody-Warner, LCSW (University of Texas McGovern Medical School), compassion satisfaction is "the rewarding feeling that comes from helping others ... providing healing, encouragement, and support to others who are facing anguish ... [It] is coming home from work feeling good about the work we did and spreading the positivity and encouragement of ongoing work life."

Looking deeper: In their study "Factors Predicting Burnout Among Chaplains: Compassion Satisfaction, Organizational Factors, and the Mediators of Mindful Self-Care and Secondary Traumatic Stress," board-certified Chaplain Jason T. Hotchkiss and psychologist Ruth Lesher reported that chaplains experiencing compassion satisfaction and practicing multiple and frequent self-care strategies had lower burnout risk:

Chaplains, like other helping professionals, benefit from many intrinsic emotional rewards from caring for others ... The ability to feel good about one's contribution at work can assist in better overall mental well-being. Our compassionate core requires us to either avoid negativity or to transform it. **Given that empathetic practitioners will face negativity, the chaplain profession requires a constant source of inspiration that increases our positivity.*** (emphasis mine)

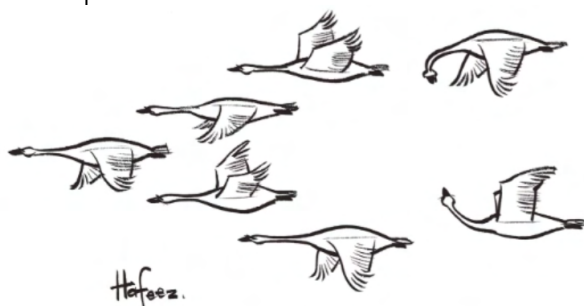
As volunteer chaplains, we find focused inspiration in bi-monthly chaplaincy meetings, special team activities such as community outreach, school support and the like, and participation in law enforcement debriefings when called to do so.

Pods: The Why and How

Another source for inspiration is the formation of **chaplain pods** now underway at LECS, potentially the *über* form of peer support, instituted to keep us motivated and in touch with one another day-to-day, between on-calls and call-outs.

During Academy training we were organized into pods to build camaraderie, collaboration and trust as we worked through the curriculum and practices together. Those lessons and connections continue to bind us to this day. The goal of pods in the greater chaplain cohort is the same, and more: to deepen chaplain connections and continue to learn and grow from one another's experiences and insights.

Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else."



"We tried forming a collective—no leader, no structure, no power dynamics—but we just ended up flying in a circle over Winnipeg."

Smaller groups without focus or stated purpose may never fuse; however, the formula for successful pods is simple and the results can be spectacular:

Step 1 - Set some parameters for the process: [interim] leadership, frequency, location, timing, and format of sessions (e.g., in-person, zoom or hybrid?)

Step 2 - Have a preliminary meeting to firm up and collectively agree on the parameters together as a group.

Step 3 - Communicate out. Choose your topics. Buy snacks.



We invite pods to report back as they form up and get together.

* USA Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling (2018)

Pods =
Shared Commitment +
Structured Focus +
Culture Creation +
Friendship =
Compassion Satisfaction





LIFE WITHOUT A CHAPLAIN by Harry Hollingshead, Chaplain (Academy XIII)

I started my career as a police officer in 1980 in the Cotati Police Department. The department was very small and it was not unusual for me to work alone. As a rookie I quickly learned to use my verbal skills to mitigate violent situations, but I was not properly equipped or trained to deal with death situations. I was self-taught when it came to being with families during the death of a loved one, or God forbid, delivering a death notification.

After 4 years, I transferred to Petaluma Police Department. Although this was a larger department, I still felt that I was ill-equipped when it came to serving those who had suffered the loss of loved one. Again, there was the constant pressure of handling "the next call."

Some calls stay with you. There was the couple who had been caring for their friend's 6-month-old daughter. The parents were at work during the day. The couple had placed the baby down for a nap and when they went to check on her, she was not breathing. Paramedics pronounced the baby dead at the scene. This was my call. I was in my "investigative mode," but it was also necessary for me to attend to the grieving and distraught couple. They had already called the parents who were on their way. The couple told me they felt responsible because the baby had been entrusted to their care. They worried that their friends would hate them forever. I had them wait in the living room, while I conducted a cursory exam of the baby and the baby's room. Nothing appeared obviously criminal, but I knew that the final decision would have to be made after the autopsy. I returned to the couple and obtained statements from them. I had to remain in my "investigator role," while also trying to be as empathetic as possible.

The parents arrived at the same time as the corner's removal team. The parents and their friends hugged each other, but still the moment was indeed tense. I tried to be as empathetic and sympathetic as I could, without knowing whether a crime had, or had not occurred. When my investigation was done and the baby was removed, there was nothing more for me to do but give my condolences and clear the scene to handle the "next call." There was no one left behind for the loved ones. Hugs felt inappropriate to me, but the desire was there. I felt empty. I felt like there was more I could have done to serve that family, but I couldn't and I didn't.

This call and many others like it were very disturbing throughout my career. I remember feeling hollow when I left that call. It wasn't just the death of a baby, but the fact that I had to be the "investigator" in the situation and the possibility that a crime may have been committed prevented me from letting down my guard too much with the caregivers and parents. It was further upsetting for me because I had a 7-month-old baby boy of my own at the time. I could have used a chaplain.

I retired after 19 years as a police officer. I never had the advantage of having a chaplain at any of my calls. None of us did. Now there is a brand-new generation of law enforcement officers and deputies on the job. Nevertheless, the song remains the same. They all are still required to respond to the same types of death-related calls as I did. Many of the rookies are like I was, new to the job and to the reality of the world. Some are still working their beats or zones alone, with little or no assistance from their partners, while others have backup readily available. I would venture to say that most of the law enforcement professionals on the job today in Sonoma County, regardless of their level of experience are great "investigators," but are not trained or allowed, (for many reasons), to provide the comfort and presence to the grieving loved ones left behind that we can.

Here is what I know to be true:

We are valuable. We are important. We are a "Force multiplier."

We can remain with families and loved ones while the necessary "investigation" is conducted.

We are a presence. We can hug. We can cry.

We can "BE" with people in their darkest hour.

We can allow that officer or deputy to clear the scene to handle their "next call," but we can also listen if they want to talk about their own baby at home.

Damn, I wish I'd had us!



The Chaplain's Voice:
Independent
Insights, Inquiries &
Inspirations by LECS
Chaplains

*"Life begins at
the end of your
comfort zone."*

-Neale Donald
Walsch



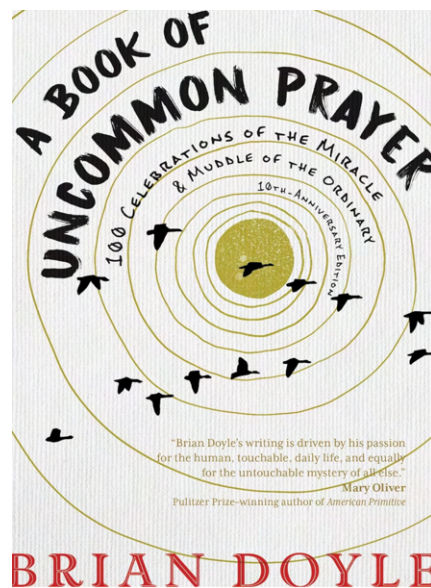


The Chaplain's Voice

Gary Passarino, Chaplain (Academy XXII): *This is by the late Brian Doyle, a terrific essayist. I know most of it doesn't apply to us, but I like "They are a great sweet patient diligent amazing tribe"—and that's us!*

PRAYER FOR HOSPITAL CHAPLAINS by Brian Doyle, *A Book of Uncommon Prayer*

Of any creed and religion and tradition and spiritual practice whatsoever, for they are the ones who knock gently on the doors of patients who are dazed and afraid and in pain, and stick their heads in and ask gently if they can be of service, and many times endure the lash of rude and vulgar response, and have to accept that as the price of doing business; and they are the ones who sometimes walk softly into the room and lay hands on hands or heads and whisper prayers and ask for blessings and healing and restored strength if at all possible, and those are hard things to ask for when the being in the bed is so patently broken and bruised and frightened and helpless no matter how hard you pray or how huge your empathetic heart; and they are the ones who then knock on the next door and the next, day after day week after week, sometimes for many years like a dear friend of mine who became a priest after a while just so he could bring the sacraments to those bedsides. They are a great sweet patient diligent amazing tribe, chaplains; and this morning, in the chapel of the hospital with its huge windows and small simple unadorned crucifix, I pray for them, with all my heart. And so: amen.





First Responders on Peer Support

"It's okay to not be okay, but it's not okay to stay that way."

- Cherylynn R. Lee, M.A., PhD.

This is the second article in our series on the impacts on first responders working in the world of trauma. With input from current working professionals, retirees, and mental health professionals involved in wellness and peer support, we aim to learn how we as chaplains can best support them. (Ed.)

In this issue we hear from Susan Farren, Founder and Executive Director of First Responders Resiliency, Inc.

LECS: Different departments and agencies have developed programs around wellness. In your experience what does your command staff or agencies do that promotes whole health or wellness? Do you have literature that you can share with us that will help us understand your approach?

Susan Farren [SF]: Our approach is fairly unique. Instead of waiting until people are broken or showing symptoms of PTSD, we train them about the physiological impacts that affect us all. Specifically, how to identify and prepare for them to assist in mitigating the symptoms if and when they show up. We do this through lecture, PowerPoints, modality and multi-media presentations.



LECS: How would you describe peer support as it applies to wellness in agencies you serve?

SF: Peer support is a vital part of the assistance offered to first responders today, but typically involves little more than conversations and resource referral. We have begun working with departments across the nation to train their peers FIRST, so they don't exacerbate the trauma they are most likely already storing in themselves. Even casual conversations about calls amongst first responders can unconsciously precipitate a chemical cascade of adrenaline and cortisol as well as stimulate painful memories for both. Being aware of these facts and having an action plan for how to complete a conversation with nervous system balancing techniques can be vital for both parties.

LECS: As law enforcement chaplains we understand that talking about feelings is not the most comfortable thing for first responders to do. We also know that talking does help to alter one's perspective and can be a healthy coping strategy. From your experience, what is the best approach to getting a first responder to talk?

SF: Honoring an individual's level of comfort around communication is a superpower of the chaplains. Personally, I would encourage chaplains to allow the first responders to decide how or if they want to talk about an event, and then offer clarifying non-emotional questions or statements, i.e., "that must have been really frustrating," "does that take a toll on you?" "I'd love to hear more if you'd like to share." That gives the first responder an open door, but one they can choose to go through or not. There is sometimes a perception that chaplains represent clergy and are looking to pry—time and experience will heal that.

LECS: What do you do now or have done to take care of yourself that really works for you? What kind of support would you, as a first responder, like to have that can contribute to your wellness?

SF: In the past, all of my efforts for self-care were involving my body, but the work I do now and teach is directly related to the nervous system. Today, meditation is my go-to for all things

(continued on next page)





First Responders on Peer Support

stressful in my life—even just daily living. Journaling is another powerful way to get what’s going on in your head out onto paper where it seems to have less power and chaos attached to it. Getting the good, bad and ugly to settle down and then get it out on paper can be incredibly healing. Like going to the gym, these are practices that have to be done regularly to get results, but the results when dealing with the impacts of first responder work can be priceless. Having educational change supported by our chaplains and departments is the key to changing our world.

LECS: *How can our chaplains be helpful and impactful for our first responder community?*

SF: I believe the greatest gift any first responder resource and support system can provide is being GROUNDED. When people carry nervous energy or the desire to be needed, it’s palpable. Training folks to work within their own nervous systems, staying calm, confident and present is a gift for the chaplain AND the first responder.

LECS: *Thank you.*



The series continues in the next issue with Part III: Interview with Dian Barkan, LCSW, of West Coast Post-Trauma Retreat, and Justin Thompson, LECS Board Executive Secretary, RPDPS (ret.)





LECS in the Field

Photos also available on our Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/sonomacountychaplains>



Santa Rosa's Outstanding Community Volunteers Receive 2023 Merit Awards



To "listen" to another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.

- Douglas Steere (from Cleanings: A Random Harvest)



We are deeply honored to receive the **City of Santa Rosa Merit Award**. This recognition is for the outstanding work of our Chaplains, who were swiftly called upon to offer trauma and grief support following the tragic loss of a Montgomery High School student. We are grateful for this acknowledgment and want to give a heartfelt shoutout to our dedicated 24/7/365 volunteers. Their unwavering commitment helps make our community a more compassionate and better place to live. (September 2023)

LECS chaplains presented at the National Suicide Prevention Day resource fair at Courthouse Square in Santa Rosa, which showcased the strength of our community and the wealth of mental health and social service programs available. #MentalHealthMatters (September 2023)



A successful **Faith and Blue** "meet & greet," event, organized by Rohnert Park Police & Fire. Our Chaplains loved connecting with law enforcement, first responders and the community. Together, we are stronger during emergencies and disasters, always ready to serve together. (October 2023)





Trunk or Treat 2023

October 25 found the mighty (and scary) Chaplains of LECS returning once again to SRPD's Trunk or Treat Event. It was a wonderful night of kids, costumes, silliness, and candy. Hundreds of youngsters were chauffeured down the line of First Responders to receive their Halloween goodies. And then.....we did it again! October 31 was Rohnert Park Department of Public Safety's event on the plaza in front of RPDP's Headquarters in City Center. This was a smaller event in scope; starting earlier in the day, children and their parents walked through the plaza visiting the various participating First Responder agencies. Thanks to our participating Chaplains for putting LECS "on the map" for community events and activities.



The kids got candy. We got lots of love.

-Bob Williams, Lead Chaplain, LECS Community Engagement Team



Chaplains Bob Williams, Gloria Morrison, KathRyn Barry, Susan Keehn, Harry Hollingshead, Jeannie Altman, Mike Schramm, & skeletons at SRPD's Trunk or Treat



SRPD Chief John Cregan looking cool in in his Elvis disguise with cool chick Chaplain Jeannie Altman



Would you take candy from this gang?
Chaplains Harry Hollingshead, Kelly Egan, Jessica Gerard & Bob Williams at RPDP's



Chaplain Gisela Babb & "Chip"



SRPD Sgt Tanya Potter with Angelicat (aka Chaplain Susan Keehn)



RP Deputy Chief of Police & LECS Board Vice President Kevin Kilgore, with RP Fire & CHP officers at the ready for trick-or-treaters





Wrap-up:
Tour de Fuzz 2023



It was an incredible day at this year's **Tour de Fuzz (TdF)**. Held on September 2, 2023 at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts, our annual LECS charity bike ride surpassed all expectations, even with a bit of morning rain. A heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone involved - from our dedicated Chaplain volunteers and board members to the supportive bike shops and community partners. Your efforts culminated in an unforgettable experience for participating Northern California cyclists.

Our riders embarked on a journey through the picturesque wine country routes of 50k, 100k, and 100 miles, punctuated with four well-stocked rest stops. Their journey was rewarded with a warm welcome at the finish line, complete with cheerleaders, valet bike parking, sponsor booths, and even massage tables for some well-deserved relaxation. Law enforcement agencies contributed with engaging equipment demos, and the top climbers of the 100-mile route were honored in a special awards presentation.

The spirit of celebration was in the air, with a delicious finish-line BBQ, gourmet sides, an assortment of craft beers and wines, and hand-scooped ice cream. The kickin' music added to the afterparty ambiance, embodying the unique family spirit that defines the Tour de Fuzz.

Participants' feedback through the post-event survey was overwhelmingly positive, especially highlighting the warm hospitality extended by our chaplain volunteers. Together, we poured through 15 kegs of beer, served up 2,000 meals, and offered a plethora of Tour de Fuzz branded merchandise, like t-shirts and beer pint glasses, further supporting our chaplaincy.

As a testament to our commitment to environmental stewardship, the event was powered by the LBC's solar panels, and we proudly used 100% compostable bowls, plates, and cutlery, minimizing our impact on the environment. This one-day event is a cornerstone for LECS, funding most of our operations for the entire year.

Looking ahead, mark your calendars for our next adventure on Saturday, August 31, 2024. Until then, relive the magic of the 2023 event by watching our short event video, posted on the website, www.tourdefuzz.org.

- Shaun Ralston, Chair, LECS Board of Directors

(continued on next page)

Scroll down
for more great
TdF photos







More TdF 2023

PD THOUSANDS RIDE IN TOUR DE FUZZ

PHOTOS BY KENT PORTER THE PRESS DEMOCRAT



Thanks to Jeremy Hay of *The Press Democrat* for reporting and Kent Porter for the great photos: <https://bit.ly/3LvMJwX>





Milestones:
Gayle Shirley

In Memoriam: Chaplain Emerita Gayle Shirley (Academy II) 1943-2023



(L to R): SRPD Chief John Cregan, Gayle Shirley, Sebastopol PD Chief Ron Nelson, LECS Exec. Dir. Rita Constantini

*When each day
is sacred
when each hour
is sacred
when each instant
is sacred
earth and you
space and you
bearing the sacred
through time
you'll reach
the fields of light.*

-Eugene Guillevic

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of **LECS Chaplain Emeritus Gayle Shirley**, a true champion of law enforcement. Gayle's love and dedication to the profession were unparalleled. She volunteered tirelessly with the Santa Rosa Police Department, serving as a vital role-player during training and faithfully supporting law enforcement as a Chaplain in Sonoma County since our inception.

Gayle's unwavering commitment earned her the prestigious title of Chaplain Emeritus, a recognition bestowed upon her after more than two decades of exceptional service. Even in retirement, Gayle continued to support the Chaplaincy program, training new Chaplains and answering countless service requests. She embodied the qualities required of a law enforcement Chaplain: grit, guts, strength of character, trust, hope, and an infectious sense of humor. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Gayle for a lifetime of service and dedication to the Sonoma County first responder community and the law enforcement chaplaincy service. She made an indelible, positive impact, and we will be forever thankful.

Funeral services were held on Friday, October 20th at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Santa Rosa. A large contingent from LECS attended to pay tribute to Gayle and provide comfort for her family.

Rita Constantini, Executive Director, LECS: A Tribute to Gayle Shirley

"Gayle Shirley was a giant in our community. In the Chaplaincy we strive to do well and do right. We believe the world is changed by our example, not by our opinion. Gayle set an extraordinary example for us all. She shared something with me on my last visit with her, she said she read this and carried it with her on every callout:

*Lord, take me where You want me to go;
Let me meet who You want me to meet;
Tell me what You want me to say, and
Keep me out of Your way.*

Steve Potter, LECS Board Member, Assoc. Dean, Director, Basic Police Academy

"Gayle was a beloved member of our first responder community and a dear friend to many. She will be missed. Gayle was also a fixture at the Public Safety Training Center and had served honorably as a role player for the Basic Police Academy since 2011. She rarely missed a shift, even this summer when fighting her illness, she managed to show up on multiple days to role play and benefit our program. She was a remarkable woman and will be missed dearly here. Over the last few weeks, Jeff Weaver and I discussed an idea to honor her service at the training center. We collaborated to make a sign that reads, "Gayle Shirley - Proprietor - Est. 2011", to be hung in our "Eagles Nest Bar" in the scenario village at the PSTC. Jeff Weaver was able to visit with Gayle about two weeks ago and gave her framed photos of both. Jeff spent some quality time with her and the photos seemed to bring her a great deal of joy in her final days. Her memory will live on forever at the PSTC and I am grateful for this."



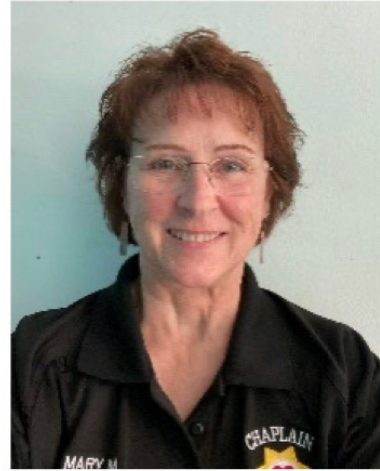


Milestones:
Mary Miller

Happy Trails, Chaplain Mary Miller

*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



*Thank you for your dedicated service as a LECS Chaplain
and much success and personal reward in your next life's chapter!*

How important it is
for us to recognize
and celebrate our
heroes and
she-roes!

- Maya Angelou



In recognition of Veterans Day, November 11, we salute
all our LECS Chaplains who have served in the armed
forces.

In the words of John F. Kennedy, "As we express our
gratitude, we must never forget that the highest
appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

- The Editor

