

Good News

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TEAM TWO



Good News Bulletin—Far too often, the public does not hear about the really good work going on by law enforcement and mental health crisis workers.

The Team Two Grant is administered by Vermont Care Partners

“I just wanted to thank you and your team for the training you conducted yesterday. It was highly informative and provided crucial information in dealing with mental health issues. It is training that we all need, and in my opinion, should be a required annual refresher. This issue isn't going away, and we must constantly evolve and adapt the way these incidents are handled if we are to be successful.”

Berlin P.D. Chief
Bill Wolfe

Team Two is a year to year grant funded one day scenario based training provided in 5 different regions around Vermont 6-8 times a year. This training is a collaboration between the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Mental Health to promote a collaborative response among

first responders to a mental health crisis. The training is designed to build the relationships necessary for the best possible outcomes to a person in a mental health crisis. It focuses on the safety, clinical and legal aspects of three different scenarios, as well as provides an overview of current legal issues and

community and statewide resources. A person with lived experience gives a brief presentation along with a law enforcement officer and a crisis clinician to further demonstrate responses that have worked well for them.

St. Albans

St. Albans police officers and Franklin County sheriffs responded for a welfare check to a local hotel to a report of an individual who was expressing suicidal thoughts. St. Albans PD embedded worker Josh Cate responded with law enforcement. The individual had recent contacts with law enforcement that included threats towards self and others. He was known to possess firearms and to not be fond of local police. This man was estranged from his family and was known to be experiencing many life stressors. He would not open his hotel room door and had the door dead bolted. Josh was able to contact him on his phone and negotiate with the man for two hours. He was not backing down with his suicidal thoughts and would not safety

plan. He was anxious about the police presence, which grew as the hours passed - to include a full tactical team. Eventually the individual agreed to open the door for Josh. After police deemed the scene safe, the individual allowed Josh to come into the room and talk. He continued with the same presentation and did not want support.

However, he was talking and remained calm. It ended with police taking him to the Emergency Department without incident, where he could be screened by crisis and hopefully receive the supports he needed. The incident was a perfect example of the embedded model

working as designed and the smooth collaboration with mental health and law enforcement in St. Albans. While there was a large law enforcement presence, the officers allowed for Josh to take the lead and spend the needed time building a rapport with this individual and arrive at a positive outcome.



Group Discussion, Middlebury, Vermont

Montpelier

Montpelier has had its share of tough calls this year. Chief Tony Facos reflected on a recent tragedy where collaboration made a difference: "One of the more gut-wrenching aspects of our job as police officers is conducting death notifications. Our team approach with Washington County Mental Emergency Services Team provides the family

and loved ones with immediate support when they receive the tragic, un-expected news that someone close to them has died. Having skilled personnel from WCMHS with us can help ameliorate the trauma caused when learning about the sudden loss of a loved one." While not all mental health emergency services teams take on this piece

of work, WCMHS has had training in sudden death notification and is ready when called. The connections that are made when a screener and law enforcement officer goes to a home to deliver bad news creates strong work ties when the next call comes along.

"WCMHS Emergency Services Director Karen Kurrle truly appreciated the Barre police department's willingness to take the time to collaborate on a solution.."

Barre

Barre City Police, ambulance and fire sat down with Washington County Mental Health (WCMH) screeners to try and problem solve a difficult situation involving an elderly couple who needed medical attention but who did not want to go to the Emergency Department. This situation arose in the middle of the night and rather than rush in and forcibly remove this

couple, Barre PD took the time to collaborate with the WCMH screeners to thoroughly discuss the most respectful way to provide emergency care to these folks. The situation resolved itself the next day when screeners and the police were able to convince this couple to go voluntarily with EMTs to the hospital to be checked out. Chief Tim Bombardier reached out to

WCMH CEO Mary Moulton the following day to express his gratitude for the expertise and compassion of WCMH screeners. WCMH Emergency Services Director Karen Kurrle truly appreciated the Barre police department's willingness to take the time to collaborate on a solution that would result in the highest level of care for these Barre citizens.

Middlebury

Vermont State Police New Haven barracks commander, Lt. Jeff Danoski, and Counseling and Support Services (CSAC) Emergency Services Director

Marian Greenberg have a collaborative relationship that has resulted in each agency creating a liaison for the other. Michael Linn is the CSAC liaison, and

Sgt. Blake Cushing is the VSP liaison. CSAC is providing mental health training in response to Lt. Danoski's request.

Rutland

Rutland County Mental Health has an embedded crisis worker at the Rutland Police Department. One late night in February, 2018, Alecia Armstrong heard a call go out for assistance with an oppositional teen who was not listening to her father. The father requested the police

to come and intervene. An officer responded and ended up taking the teen to the Emergency Department. Alecia followed up with the officer and discovered that he thought it was easier to take this young woman to the ED rather than call out Alecia who was available to go to

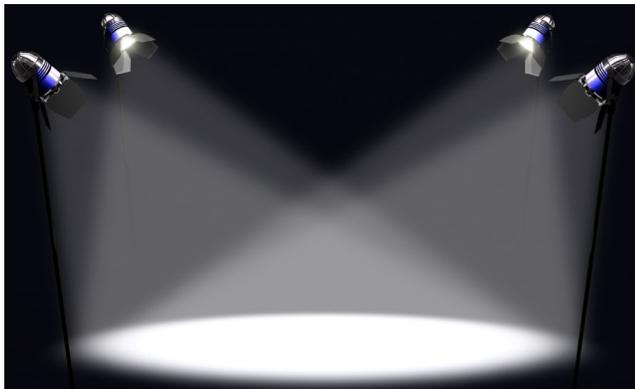
her home to talk with her. Rutland Police commanders are working with Alecia to educate their police force that sometimes, a trip to the ED is not necessary and there might be another alternative.

St. Albans

Vermont State Police Tactical Team arrived at a house after being requested by another police agency to provide support to pick up a man on a mental health warrant. Police had information that this individual intended to assault officers when they arrived. He had made traps in his house, had a safe room, and was prepared for the police's arrival. VSP St. Albans barracks commander Lt. Maurice LaMothe spoke to their embedded crisis worker,

Nic Tebbetts, and together they made a plan. The male agreed to meet with only the worker and a plain clothes trooper. Lt. LaMothe changed out of his uniform and into plain clothes and he and Nic went to the man's house. There were knives and machetes hanging from the ceiling, behind the doors, and on this individual's person. He was holding syringes and a knife at the door. Nic was able to speak to him at length about

what was occurring. After some time the male was taken into custody with minimal effort. This male was highly agitated the entire time but Nic knew the terms to use and was able to talk him into being mostly compliant and not rising to the level that it could have gone. Lt. LaMothe firmly believes that if they had pushed this individual with a more aggressive approach, it would not have turned out as positive.



“I found this training to be THE best training I have attended in all my years with the city. It was informative, educational, interactive and downright excellent!”

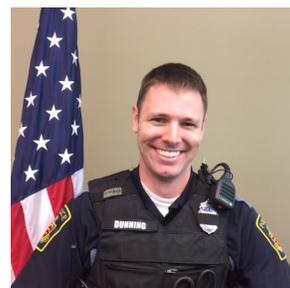
**Brandi Barbeau,
Burlington P.D.
Dispatcher**

Instructor Spotlight

Essex Police Department's **Stephen Dunning** has been a Team Two instructor since 2015, when he attended a training held in the Northwest Region and had so many good things to say that he was immediately asked if he'd be willing to join the NW Region team of instructors. Now a veteran instructor, Stephen stands out as an officer who thinks of the small gestures that allow a per-

son in the midst of a mental health crisis to feel a bit calmer. When he has to transport someone to a hospital for an evaluation, he'll ask what their favorite radio station is when they get into his patrol car. When he can tell that someone in crisis is hungry, he'll offer them a sandwich. He has been known to convince people in crisis to "let me take your burden" in order to help them get the

treatment they need. In addition to being a patrol officer, Stephen is also a member of Essex Rescue and has coached the Essex High School women's rugby team – to a State Championship.



Frank Silfies, Jr. 2017 Awards

The Team Two 2017 recipients of the Frank Silfies Award, presented to a law enforcement officer and a mental health crisis clinician who exemplify collaborative response to mental health crises, are Officer Kevin LaPlante, of the Morristown Police Department, Sergeant Jason Wetherby, of the St. Albans Police Department, and Alecia Armstrong, of Rutland Mental Health.

Team Two is a statewide training curriculum where law enforcement, police dispatchers and mental health crisis workers train together to strengthen collaboration when responding to mental health crises. The program is funded by the Vermont Department of Mental Health and the Vermont Department of Public Safety and implemented by Vermont Care Partners.

The Frank Silfies Award was created in memory of Frank Silfies, the former Emergency Services Director at Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) and a valuable member of the original Team Two Steering Committee. This award honors Frank's commitment to first responders working collaboratively to find the safest, best outcome for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Ms. Armstrong was nominated by her supervisor, Mike O'Brien and by Rutland Police Sgt. Greg Sheldon. Sgt. Sheldon wrote, "Alecia responds to mental health calls with the officers to assist them with individuals either in crisis or

who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and are struggling. The officers appreciate her efforts and support more than we could have imagined. Her assistance is sought out so often now that we have assigned her an officer number and a police radio so officers can call her directly via radio. "Sgt. Sheldon went on to describe a particular call where in his mind, "Alecia saved this woman's life." Alecia is a Team Two instructor for the Southwest Region of Vermont. She has developed a course entitled Environmental Safety, Pre-Attack Indicators and De-Escalation Techniques that she presents alongside Sgt. Sheldon. Alecia is also an FBI certified crisis negotiator. Officer Kevin LaPlante was nominated by Lamoille County Mental Health's Emergency Services Director, Monique Reil. Ms. Reil, in nominating Officer LaPlante, described him as "a good listener, very empathetic and demonstrates genuine caring and concern. He establishes positive and therapeutic connections with our clients and is flexible in responses within his limits. He often will respond to a situation and then call [LCMHS] to join for additional support and planning for folks and it never feels heavy-handed or punitive." Ms. Reil went on to describe a particular situation where Officer LaPlante went above and beyond by giving a person in crisis a ride to a crisis bed.

Sgt. Jason Wetherby was nominated by Josh Cate, the embedded Northwest Coun-

selling and Support Services (NCSS) mental health clinician at St. Albans police department. Mr. Cate wrote, "Sgt. Wetherby consistently operates in a manner that demonstrates his insight and understanding in regards to mental health challenges. His level of collaboration with NCSS to seek effective outcomes for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis has been above and beyond his scope of duty. He recognizes when a law enforcement approach is not appropriate in a given situation and assists in facilitating the acquisition of mental health resources in efforts to create a supportive and positive outcome."

The Committee received numerous nominations this year, from both law enforcement officers and crisis clinicians, nominating their counterparts in the field to be recognized for the good, collaborative

work they are doing every day. The large number of nominations is a sign that first responders in Vermont are doing tremendous work toward working together to ensure a safe and appropriate outcome for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Presentation of the award was held in January, at the State House, on Mental Health Awareness Day.



Josh Cate and Sgt. Wetherby

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AND MENTAL HEALTH
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