



October 2026

THE FRONT LINE

A Southern States PBA Newsletter

VOL. 5 - Issue 1



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Gadsden Officer of the Year balances gravity of job with levity of dad jokes



Gadsden police Sgt. Grimes in work mode

By KATHARINE JEF COATS
EDITOR

A lot of men and women seek a career in law enforcement because they were influenced by a mentor or a desire to help others.

Gadsden, Ala., police Detective Sgt. James Grimes first strode into the Calhoun County Jail with the confidence of a man looking for work.

"I starting working in the Calhoun County Jail because I was in need of

a job," he said. "From there, I fell in love with law enforcement and have never looked back."

Grimes completed mandate training at Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Training Academy. Almost two decades later, Grimes is satisfied with his decision.

"I have served over 18 years now and served in every job I could," said Grimes. "I have been a deputy sheriff and state ABC agent."

His hard work and dedication



Grimes in dad mode with wife Candice and their children

culminated in his being named 2024 Officer of the Year at the inaugural Etowah Chamber First Responders Award Ceremony presented by Servpro.

The award announcement by the Gadsden PD noted Grimes' work ethic and also his penchant for "dad jokes."

"Sgt. Grimes serves as our Detective Sergeant over Major Crimes, a long-time member of the Etowah County Joint Special Operations Group, a trusted use of force instructor, involved in multiple other assignments, and according to reliable sources he's the reigning, undisputed Master of the Dad Joke. His work ethic, his leadership, and the way he shows up for both his team and this city set a standard that makes all of us better. Proud doesn't even begin to cover it."

True to form, Grimes jokingly downplays the true meaning behind the award.

"I received this award because a supervisor said, 'I'm always being mean to you, I think you've earned an award,'" he said.

Seriously, Grimes understands the importance of his position in Gadsden.

"Things he used to justify the award was being a part of the narcotics investigation that resulted in the seizing of 10 kilos of meth, which is the county record for us," he said. "Also, being a part of two successful hostage rescues and being a part of in-depth homicide investigations where the suspect was unknown and at large. With hard work, teamwork and prayer, we got 'em."

Grimes grew up in Anniston, Ala., about 30 miles from Gadsden. He and his two sisters were homeschooled.

"Growing up, we were outside all the time, in the woods or on bikes," he said. "I've always had a fascination with guns. Some of my greatest achievements have been being a firearm instructor and being able to teach and develop people making them better law enforcement officers."

Throughout high school, Grimes worked at one of his favorite fast food restaurants, Chick-fil-A. He later



Grimes with a young fan

joined the U.S. Marine Corps, serving eight years.

He is assigned to the detective division, where he investigates crimes against persons. He also serves on the SWAT and dive teams, as traffic homicide investigator and staff instructor in several disciplines.

He and his wife, Candice, have a son and a daughter. Grimes also joined ALPBA.

"I am a huge fan of the PBA and had to use their services three times throughout my career," he said. "They have always been an asset and took care of me and were extremely helpful."

As far as the dad jokes, Grimes said he finds his affinity useful in several ways.

"I've always been a joke teller," he said. "It's therapy for me. It helps people relax, and I'm able to connect better and build good relationships. What did the socks say to the pants? What up, BRRRITCHES!!!"



Grimes with a fellow police officer



Learning the ropes with dad



Grimes accepting his OOTY award

PBF presents plaque of appreciation to MSPBA president

The Police Benevolent Foundation recently presented a plaque of appreciation to the Mississippi PBA Division President Andy "Ski" Matuszewski.

In his capacity, Lt. Matuszewski furthers the interests of some 5,000-plus law enforcement officers at the local, state and federal levels. His involvement with the PBA dates to 1997. As president of the division, Matuszewski was instrumental in bringing the Behind the Badge Seminar to Mississippi earlier this year.

The seminar educates law enforcement officers and their families about the dangers of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide prevention. Research shows that the biggest threat to an officer's career may be the officer himself.

Each year, more than 100 officers die in the line of duty – the suicide rate is double that amount. The CDC and suicide researchers identify law enforcement as having one of the highest suicide rates among occupational groups in the nation, with job-related stress being a major contributing factor.

Behind the Badge is the PBF's signature seminar series established to combat law enforcement officer suicide.

In addition to his efforts to get the seminar to the state, Matuszewski went to work to promote and support the event by seeking sponsors to donate financially. He also sought media involvement and was successful in getting an online news source to promote the event.

On the day of the seminar, he took the stage to introduce the PBF, recognize the agencies represented, thank the sponsors of the event and introduce the instructor.

Randy Byrd serves as the director of foundation and media relations for Southern States PBA. His duties include the coordination of the Behind the Badge seminars.

"This seminar was one of the most successful seminars



Randy Byrd (I) presents plaque to President Matuszewski

we have had because of Matuszewski's efforts," said Byrd. "He is passionate about mental health for officers and has developed a statewide reputation in this arena. We were proud to be on hand to recognize him for his efforts."

Matuszewski has been involved in the emergency services field as a first responder since 1988, and he made the transition from fire/EMS to law enforcement in 1994 when he was hired by the Meridian (Miss.) Police Department.

He came on board with the Lauderdale County Sheriff's Office as former Sheriff William D. "Billy" Sollie's first hire shortly after he took office in January 1996. Matuszewski operates as the accreditation manager, Crisis Intervention Team program manager, SWAT crisis negotiator, legislative liaison, county ranger and special projects manager for LCSO.

He has also taught entry-level law enforcement



Seminar attendees in Madison, Miss.

students on the staff of the Meridian Public Safety Academy in general law enforcement with a focus on CIT, ethics, biased-based profiling and cultural diversity for over 15 years, and he serves as the academy's assistant director.

Previously, Matuszewski served internationally with the U.S. State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau on the police training mission to Iraq, ending his time there as the operations manager.

He continued his overseas service with an assignment to the United Nations Mission to Kosovo where he served in a dual capacity as a deputy regional contingent commander as well as the administrative chief of the Special Operations Unit.

In 2012, Matuszewski became one of the first CIT trainers certified in Mississippi. He was part of the initial team that led to the creation of the East Mississippi CIT program, which has since become the training site for many other programs in the region. He continues to teach CIT courses held in the East

Mississippi region and also travels extensively to help other CIT programs grow and flourish.

Matuszewski's overseas experiences, together with his time in domestic law enforcement and his passion for CIT, led him to the Law Enforcement Alliance on Peer Support. He became a member in 2021, and in this role, he now combines his love for his fellow officers with his background in CIT to better serve the law enforcement profession, and in turn, our communities.

He has also volunteered his time as a member of the board of directors for CIT International and serves as the president of the Mississippi CIT Association.

"My career path has allowed me to understand that there is no higher calling than to serve those who serve others," said Matuszewski. "Working to foster more awareness of the challenges we all face day in and day out in the first responder world is a monumental task. It takes all of us working together to see to it that those in need have access to not only competent care, but also compassionate care from people who understand the unique nature of our work."

WVPBA member honored with ESGR Patriot Award

By CINDY BAUGHER
ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Cpl. Gabriel Wood, of the West Virginia Natural Resources Police, regrets not having served in the military.

He recently received an award in his law enforcement career, though, that clearly demonstrates his remarkable understanding and respect for the military personnel under his supervision.

The award, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Patriot Award, is presented to individual supervisors who – according to the ESGR website – “go above and beyond in assisting their military-affiliated team members.”

Wood said that he just did what he hoped would be done for him if he was in the same situation.

“I believe that my job as a leader is to help improve my men’s ability to do their job,” he said. “As a supervisor, I am just support staff. I was nominated by NRPO Tuck, who serves as a captain in the W.V. Air Guard. NRPO Tuck wrote lots of very nice things about me, but I like to think I was just doing my job to the best of my ability. Truthfully, I don’t feel very humble answering these questions, but I am humbled by this award.”

Assigned as a field officer in Mercer County, W.V., Wood enjoys the variety of things he is able to see and do in the day-to-day and season-to-season cadence of his profession.

“I may spend a day patrolling the river on a kayak, and the next working an event helping introduce children to the outdoors,” he said. “I may go from checking hunting licenses to assisting with a barricaded suspect. As a full-service agency, we see all aspects of law enforcement. While our focus is on enforcing game and fish laws, we encounter drugs, DUIs, domestics and the like during the course of the day as well.”



Wood (l) with Tuck, who nominated him for the award.

Growing up in Princeton, W.V., where he spent hours at his grandparents’ farm hunting, fishing and just being outside, Wood treasured his time trouncing through the woods. Along with developing his love for the outdoors, he also realized that may have led him to his career.

“That is where I began to appreciate God’s creation and what it means to people,” said Wood. “How it needs to be used wisely and protected from abuse. I was blessed to have a fairly large extended family that instilled the values of Christian belief, work ethic and education, which are still important to me today.”

In high school, Wood spent his time on sports and JROTC but also found time to win awards for academic excellence and to serve in leadership roles. In addition, he was a member of the National Honor Society and earned academic scholarships.

With this track record, Wood went on to Bluefield

State University and earned a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice administration and an associate's degree in law enforcement.

Upon completion of rookie school at the West Virginia State Police Academy, he joined the Princeton City Police Department to begin his law enforcement career. Twenty-four years later, Wood continues to serve with officers – sometimes called conservation officers or game wardens – in the Natural Resources Police.

Wood described some of the hats he's worn during his career.

"I have taken on many additional duties during my career, to include being a firearms instructor and armorer, a member of training staff for the park ranger academy, ERASE and many others," he said. "I have quite a few certifications for a variety of things, such as tactical boat operator and incident management.

"The only special assignment, however, was my short time supervising the Hatfield McCoy Trail units," continued Wood. "The trails consist of over 1,000 miles of off-road trail systems across nine counties and are used by over 100,000 riders a year on motorcycles, ATVs, side by sides and other off highway vehicles."

Back when the first WVPBA chapter was created in 2016, Wood joined. He calls himself a proud member. In his 24 years with law enforcement, Wood finds it difficult to choose just one colleague as the greatest influence in his career.

"I have learned something from every officer I've been around, from some, what to do and from some, what not to do," he said. "I learned something from them all. If I had to choose a single officer, however, it would have been retired Capt. Antolini, who was my direct supervisor for years. He was firm but fair, had clear expectations and clear consequences, and was always direct and to the point, a quality I prefer – but one that isn't often appreciated."

For those thinking of becoming a LEO, Wood shared some "free advice, for what it's worth."

"Don't lose yourself in the job," he said. "I put the job first for many years and gained nothing and nearly lost what is truly important. Take the time for your family. The work will always be there. The department will replace you quickly, but the time with family and friends can never be replaced. Work hard and do your job well, but leave it in the cruiser at the end of the day."

Motivating Wood to do just that are his wife of 21 years, Penny, and their two children, Elijah, 18, and Gretchen, 16.

His family has supported him completely in his chosen profession, even though there have been many

Next issue of FRONT LINE will focus on these divisions



If you have story ideas from these
divisions, please email

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To read past issues
of the FRONT LINE,
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The Wood Family: (l-r) Penny, Gabriel, Elijah and Gretchen

occasions when he had to work instead of spending time with them.

“They have put up with 16-hour days, phone calls in the middle of the night, leaving in the middle of supper to answer a complaint, and so much more,” he continued. “I have a great extended family as well, my mother who never understood my entering police work, but supported me fully, and too many others to list, uncles, cousins, all of whom taught me so much and inspired me in different ways.”

Wood keeps the love of his family at the forefront and reminds himself of them with this mantra: “Go home every night. Whatever happens, be willing to do what

is necessary to go home every night.”

Though his family is certainly his No. 1 interest, Wood enjoys many hobbies, including hunting and fishing. He attends church regularly and owns a small business. Woodworking is another pastime for Wood, if time permits. But, like most of us, his spare time is scarce.

Wood tries to reflect Christ in his daily decisions but acknowledged he fails at times. He keeps his favorite quote in mind, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called, according to His purpose,” Romans 8:28 (KJV).

2005 Silver Star hero serves TN town as police sergeant

By KATHARINE JEFACOATS
EDITOR

Franklin police Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester was passionate about the military and law enforcement as a child growing up in Bowling Green, Ky., and later, the Nashville, Tenn., area.

"I wanted to be a police officer since childhood, and always admired those, especially women, who wore the uniform," she said. "As a kid, I loved all things outdoors, hunting, fishing, playing sports – basketball and softball. I was a daddy's girl and tomboy, and enjoyed getting my hands dirty. Still do."

Hester said a grandfather, who served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and an uncle, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War, "greatly influenced" her decision to serve her country.

At 19, Hester applied for delayed-entry into the Kentucky National Guard in April 2001 – pre-9/11. Between then and the beginning of boot camp, 9/11 happened. In a 2019 interview with the Military Times, Hester recalled that period of anticipation.

"So, it was a sense of realism when I went to basic training," she said. "The drill sergeants and everybody were really trying to gear us up because they knew that there was going to be a mission coming out after that, and our training was tightened up, I guess."

Hester graduated from Greenwood High School, attended Western Kentucky University, and earned her bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Bethel University. Her parents, Jerry and Shelia Hester, supported her in all her endeavors, she said.

Hester was deployed to Iraq in 2004. Since then, she has completed four additional deployments, including two to Afghanistan, a Southwest Border mission, and a year-long deployment to Kuwait from 2023 to 2024.

She plans to retire in 2026 from the 267th Military Police Company in Dickson, Tenn., with over 24 years of military service, all as a military police officer.



Franklin police Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester

"After returning from my deployment to Iraq in late 2005, I applied to the Franklin Police Department and was hired in 2006," said Hester. "I attended the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy, Class 1283."

As impressive as her background is thus far, Hester carries a distinction no one else can claim. On March 20, 2005, her squad engaged in a 45-minute battle in Iraq with at least 50 insurgents.

In an APB podcast interview with the Franklin police Public Information Manager Max Winitz in June 2025, Hester recounts some of the details of that confrontation.

"My squad was one of the more aggressive squads," she said. "We would go out and clear the main supply routes for IEDs for insurgents, that kind of thing. And we also made sure the convoys carrying supplies in and throughout the Baghdad area were protected, if you will."

The squad then encountered a convoy under attack by insurgents who were using rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns, said Hester.

"We basically put ourselves in between them and the insurgents and the convoy and the soldiers that were escorting that equipment and eliminated all but a handful of those insurgents," she continued.

Through her actions, courage and bravery, Hester was awarded the Silver Star, making her the first female to receive the prestigious recognition since WWII.

The following year, Hester was hired by the Franklin PD in Tennessee.

"I currently serve as an Alpha Shift Patrol supervisor," she said. "Throughout my career, I have held a variety of specialized assignments, including firearms instructor, SWAT operator and grenadier, field training officer, master patrol officer and detective."

Outside of law enforcement and the military, Hester is an avid CrossFitter and a CrossFit Level II coach.

"I enjoy mountain biking, road cycling, hiking, fishing, camping and traveling," she said. "I am a strong believer in maintaining a healthy lifestyle as a way to manage the stress and physical demands of police work and shift schedules."

Hester, a member of TNPBA, said she is proud of the impact she's made in her military and law enforcement careers.

"I joined the SSPBA in 2016 to ensure access to legal representation and additional benefits that protect officers and their families in the event of injury or death," she said. "I am proud of both my military and law enforcement careers and grateful for the opportunity to positively impact the lives of those I serve."

Sources:

Franklin, Tenn., APB Podcast, June 26, 2025, episode 8, hosted by Franklin police Public Information Manager Max Winitz, accessible where podcasts air.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/off-duty/military-culture/2019/06/14/this-sergeant-became-the-first-woman-in-the-us-army-to-earn-a-silver-star-for-combat-valor/>



Hester in 2015 serving her country in Afghanistan



Military ball with first sergeants Erik and Layne



Hester with her parents in 2025

SCPBA member keeps Beaufort Co. safe on ground, in air

BY KATHARINE JEFACOATS
EDITOR

Beaufort County (S.C.) Sheriff's Office created an Aviation Unit in 2014 with the U.S. Department of Defense 1033 Program.

More than a decade later, the unit boasts two OH-58 Bell helicopters, two pilots and eight part-time Tactical Flight Officers – six of whom are female deputies.

One of those deputies is Sgt. Brittany Smith, a Beaufort native, wife to Josh and mother to their son, Conner, 11. The family includes a golden retriever and a black Labrador.

Smith is a member of SCPBA.

Through her extensive background, training and experience, Smith – whose primary duty is as an SRO – proves her dedication to her 17-year career.

"I take great pride in taking initiative by anticipating needs and stepping in without being asked," she said. "I am reliable and organized. My true passion is community-oriented policing and working toward expanding our Junior Deputy Academy, which I have a lead role in coordinating for BCSO."

Smith began her career at BCSO in 2009. She was 21 and had a year of college under her belt. Smith started out as an animal control officer and then transitioned into an SRO. She's part of the recruiting team and is an emergency management technician.

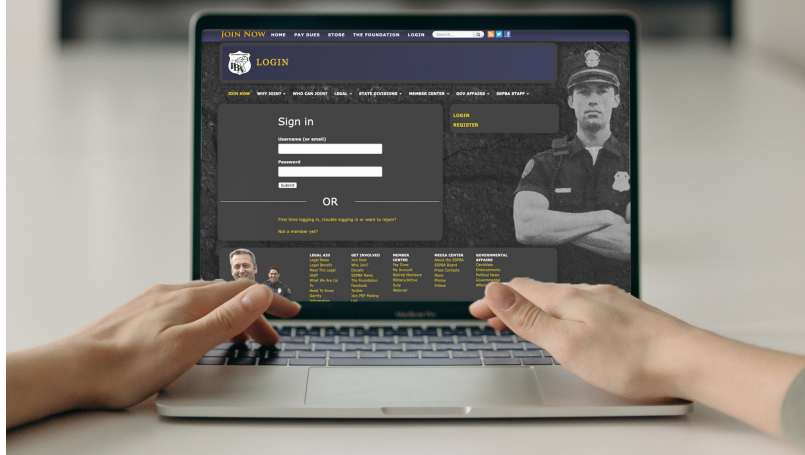
Smith began her journey to becoming a Tactical Flight Officer in February 2021.

"I grew a passion for flying when my father obtained his fixed wing license and took me on a few flights around Beaufort County," she said, "When the opportunity was presented to apply to join our agency aviation team, I knew it was something I wanted to do. All training in the beginning was in-house. Col. Neil Baxley, pilot and instructor, conducted the TFO ground school and taught us about the equipment around the hanger where the



Beaufort County sheriff's Sgt. Brittany Smith

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helicopters are kept.”

In April 2021, Smith was able to combine her newfound air skills with her SRO ground duties on Career Day.

“I flew my first ‘mission,’ which was a planned school visit for the first time in Beaufort County,” she said. “I coordinated to have us fly to the school and land for the kids. They absolutely loved it, and I felt like a true hero when I stepped out of the helicopter. I then paved the way for more school visits to follow, and all kids get to experience a piece of aviation education.”

One purpose of operating an Aviation Unit is to coordinate with the boots on the ground in searching for suspects, missing people and vehicles.

“We are the ‘extra eyes in the sky’ and help the pilot navigate,” said Smith.



Beaufort County sheriff's Sgt. Brittany Smith



Beaufort County sheriff's Sgt. Brittany Smith with Col. Baxley

Other responsibilities include:

- Tactical coordination: direct officers on ground and give a broad situational picture of the scene
- Communication: handle radio traffic between pilot/dispatch/ground units
- Equipment operation: camera (day/night/zoom/infrared)
- Mapping/navigation

- Spotlight
- Recording video for evidence
- Search and rescue support- missing persons/hurricane disaster damage assessment
- Ceremonial flyovers for fallen officers

Smith said that the aviation unit gives deputies an aerial vantage point for a variety of law enforcement operations, such as manhunts for fugitives; missing adults and children; missing boaters, especially being in a coastal county, as well as parades, community and static display events.

The aviation unit is available to respond 24/7 to assist with law enforcement agencies within Beaufort County, and through mutual aid agreement throughout South Carolina.

Smith's aviation training and certifications timeline



Sgt. Smith, husband Josh and their son, Conner, after winning a baseball tournament

began when she joined the unit in February 2021:

- Night Vision Goggles Certification – March 2021
- Tactical Flight Officer Course Certification December 2021 (Tampa, Fla.)
- Tactical Flight Officer Certification – BCSO – November 2022
- Airborne Thermographer Certification – December 2022 (Tampa)
- Various emergency procedures and safety seminar trainings
- About 75 flight hours

BCSO promoted the unit in September 2025 in the first community event aimed at empowering females in aviation.

“Where dreams take flight’ was a huge success,” she said. “Kids were invited to enjoy a day of exploration into the world of aviation for young females. They were able to discover what it’s like to have a career or hobby in aviation with female pilots and TFOs and see aircrafts up close. Five of the six female TFOs of BCSO attended this event at our local airport.”

Smith was recognized in December 2022 for her help during the capture of an armed suspect following a shooting incident:

“At 1023 this morning Aviation was requested by



Sgt. Smith with her son, Conner, at the beach.



Five female tactical flight officers at the Girls in Aviation event and Col. Baxley

Enforcement for a manhunt after a shooting incident. Air 2 launched at 1103 (40 minutes from initial notification). Working with K9 we observed tracks through the marsh adjacent to McCally Creek. Tracks turned back towards Dorchester Drive. K9 requested Air 2 position itself in the vicinity of the area to block the suspect.

After about 30 minutes, a 911 call was received that a suspect covered in mud was at 1608 (address taken out). Aviation held its position with 08 directly in front of it. The caller stated it was where the helicopter was circling. Smith observed a white female walk from the residence to an outbuilding. Several minutes later and a second 911 call reported suspect had changed clothes and gave new clothing descriptions. Minutes later suspect was taken into custody in front of 1602. His discarded muddy clothes were found inside the shed mentioned earlier.

Gun recovered.

Suspect was pinned in place by Aviation and forced

to take drastic measures to change clothes by intimidating residents. Great job Sgt. Smith!"

Synopsis by Col. Baxley

When Smith isn't keeping students safe on the ground or capturing dangerous criminals from the sky, she enjoys several pastimes.

"My hobbies include boat, beach, horses and being a baseball mom," she said. "My son plays travel baseball."

Smith said her career goals include continuing education and always moving forward.

"I hope to accomplish as a law enforcement officer to always keep learning, adding tools to my toolbelt and continue climbing the ladder to success," she said. "I also constantly remind troops who are new to the department to never forget where you came from as you move up through the ranks."

PBAGA sheriff's lieutenant finds peace in PTSD education

By KATHARINE JEFACOATS
EDITOR

In May 2014, Habersham County (Ga.) sheriff's Lt. Matt Wurtz, with other local deputies and police officers, participated in a no-knock search warrant to look for narcotics at a Cornelia home.

The nature of a no-knock warrant centers on the element of surprise for occupants of a targeted dwelling. A flashbang, a type of grenade that delivers a bright flash and overwhelming noise meant to disorient subjects, was used during the entry.

LEOs were surprised to learn a 19-month-old toddler

was also inside. A flashbang landed near the child's playpen, which was near the front entrance, causing serious injuries. The child recovered after multiple surgeries.

Wurtz, married with children, carries the weight of that event with him. He was a 2025 guest speaker at a PBF Behind the Badge PTSD Seminar held in Georgia and presented by Tim Rutledge.

"The hardest part is keeping it together," he told the participants. His face reddened and he wiped away tears at the triggering memories. "The biggest thing of what we see on a daily basis is the kids. We didn't have peer counseling within our department so we



SCHOLARSHIPS

Our 2026 PBF scholarship window has closed. We will soon start sharing stories about our recipients.

The 2027 window will open Dec. 1.

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Lt. Matt Wurtz

went through the GSP peer counseling. Talking with someone else helped me.”

Turned out, talking helped Wurtz work through the toll the incident took on him as a LEO.

“What do we do with these images and thoughts?” he said. “My way was to talk it out. If you don’t have an outlet, it’s a vicious cycle.”

Wurtz grew up in a Navy family. He was born in Southern California and lived all over the country, landing in Camden County, Ga., long enough to graduate from St. Mary’s High School.

In 1990, Wurtz joined the Marines and served his country during Operation Desert Storm/Shield. He was discharged in 1994 and moved to Hollywood, Fla.

He worked for a private security company for a commuter railroad from 1994 to 1996 before joining the White County (Ga.) Sheriff’s Office.



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their sacrifice.*

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Behind The Badge

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Lt. Matt Wurtz presents facts on his own PTSD experience

In early 1998, Wurtz moved over to Habersham County SO and entered the police academy in mid-1998.

In 2005, Wurtz left Habersham and joined the Doraville PD until 2010 when he returned to Habersham.

He is married to a Hall County deputy, so even if he takes an incident home, he has a sounding board who can relate, not that he makes that a common occurrence.

"How much can I compartmentalize?" said Wurtz. "You tend to take your feelings and put them in your pocket. You don't share your feelings, you keep them to yourself.

It's a protective thing."

Wurtz welcomed the advent of PTSD seminars that teach LEOs how to handle job-related trauma so feelings don't go into pockets and collect dust. He has been a member of PBA for more than a quarter-century, so he well remembers the days of silence and lonely coping.

"We weren't given a way to take stuff off our plates," he said. "It's just been within the last 10 years that we've been offered peer support and trauma training. We're being shown a way to deal without having to carry it all around. It makes life easier. Each traumatic incident sets you up to deal with the

Meet NCPBA member Apex SRO Alex Trisano

By CINDY BAUGHER
ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Over the course of his 30-year law enforcement career, Alex Trisano has served both the streets of New York City and the hallways of Felton Grove High School in Apex, N.C.

After 22 years with the NYPD, he retired and moved south and took on his new position as an SRO. In his time with NYPD, he had roles with anti-crime, street narcotics and with the firearms discharge review board. Now, he finds himself with the daily opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of those around him at FGHS.

“As a high school resource officer, the most rewarding part of my current assignment is building relationships with students,” Trisano said. “I have the opportunity to be more than just a police officer. I can serve as a mentor, role model and someone students feel comfortable talking to. I enjoy helping students navigate challenges, promoting a safe learning environment and working closely with school staff and parents to support student success. Seeing students grow, make good decisions and knowing I’ve had a positive influence on their lives is the most fulfilling part of my job.”

Trisano is proud of his work as an SRO, calling it “the most rewarding assignment” of his law enforcement career, as well as one for which multiple officers within his agency applied.

“I regularly visit classrooms and spend time speaking with students about a variety of topics,” he said. “Sometimes we discuss my career in law enforcement, including my experiences with the New York City Police Department and the Apex Police Department, but the conversations often go much deeper than that. I want students to know the person behind the uniform. I share my background, my life experiences and the challenges and lessons that have shaped who I am today. My goal is to show them that I am not just a police officer – they can see me as someone they can trust, talk to and turn to when they need guidance or support.



Apex police SRO Alex Trisano

“I want students’ first experiences with law enforcement to be positive ones,” he continued. “I want them to feel comfortable approaching me, asking questions and having conversations about anything that may be on their minds.

“I never want a student’s first interaction with a police officer to be during a crisis, a difficult situation at home or a negative encounter,” said Trisano. “I want them to already know who I am, know that I care about them and understand that law enforcement officers are here not only to protect them but also to support them.”

Trisano credits his background – he grew up in The Bronx – with helping him to have a unique perspective on how to connect with people from all walks of life. This experience likely helped throughout the various stages of his law



Trisano at Felton Grove High School in Apex, N.C.

enforcement career.

“The Bronx exposed me to both the challenges and the strengths of city life,” he said. “Those experiences helped shape my character, strengthened my work ethic and inspired my desire to serve others.”

While growing up in The Bronx gave rise to his people skills, his parents rounded out his character. Trisano said his parents, Koscuisko and Minerva, instilled in him his core values of integrity, hard work and compassion. After graduating from Mount Saint Michael Academy in The Bronx, he went on to earn his bachelor’s degree in management information systems from Iona University in

New Rochelle, N.Y.

Married to Dori, the couple have three children, teenagers Anthony, Anastasia and Alexa. Trisano said family is the “center of my life” and eagerly recognized his wife as being the foundation for their family because of her countless sacrifices to support both him and their three children during his law enforcement career.

Together, his family enjoys relaxing on beach trips and spending time together at Disney World. A big fan of the Yankees and the Vikings, Trisano and his son have a shared goal to eventually visit every pro baseball stadium and football venue across the country.

As a sports fan, it’s not surprising that Trisano’s favorite quote is from the movie, “Rocky Balboa,” – an iconic message Rocky shared with his son, “Life ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done.”

Pointing out that policing is about so much more than enforcing laws, Trisano shared his thoughts for those considering working in this field – and that “Rocky” quote of his is applicable here.

“Law enforcement can be one of the most rewarding careers, but it also comes with challenges that many people will never fully understand,” said Trisano. “Police officers will often see and experience things that the average person may never encounter. During my career, including my time working at Ground Zero after the Sept. 11 attacks, I witnessed some of the most difficult moments imaginable.

“This career requires integrity, compassion, dedication, and resilience,” he continued. “You have to be prepared for the difficult calls, the long hours and the emotional challenges that come with the job. At the same time, you have the opportunity to help people on their worst days, mentor others and make a lasting impact on your community.

"I would encourage anyone considering law enforcement to understand the responsibility that comes with wearing the badge. Take care of yourself, take care of your fellow officers, continue learning and never lose sight of why you chose this profession."

"After 30 years in law enforcement, I can say that the greatest rewards have come from the people I have helped, the relationships I have built and knowing that I have been able to make a difference in the communities I have served," concluded Trisano.



With daughters Anastasia (l) and Alexa at Disney



Officer Trisano with his son, Anthony



Alex with Dori and children, Anastasia, Alexa and Anthony



Trisano with members of NYC's 048 Precinct