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I am very pleased to officially introduce to you our Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This program is spearheaded by Chaplain David Thornton and focuses on our employees emotional well-being and mental health.

As everyone knows, Law Enforcement is a very difficult profession for a number of reasons. One of the largest stressors that we deal with are the events we see every day. Dealing with child crimes, domestic violence situations, rape, sexual assaults, suicides, homicides among other crimes takes a toll. This program is designed to give our men and women in uniform an outlet when they are struggling.

In conjunction with our EAP, Chaplain Thornton teaches Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement. This class is mandatory for all employees within our agency and is designed to help identify warning signs that our deputies may exhibiting due to the stress of the job. If an employee is feeling overwhelmed they can call a counselor and they will then receive three visits to a counselor free of charge. Any counselor visit after the third one is covered by our insurance.

According to Chaplain Thornton, we have had a few employees take advantage of the counseling sessions so far. In the last four classes he has taught, he had 50 of the 72 employees that attended express their appreciation that this subject is being addressed. The suicide rate among Law Enforcement nationally is alarmingly high and our hope is that this program can help someone who is struggling before they reach that point.

It is our hope that we will soon be able to offer this class to the families of Floyd County Public Safety Officers so that they can understand what their spouse, parent, child, or sibling deals with on a daily basis. We want them to know how to help their loved one cope with the issues they face and recognize any warning signs that may be present.

We began introducing the classroom portion of this program about a year ago and Chaplain Thornton has worked diligently to ensure that our staff is taken care of. His dedication to not only our employees, but those of the Floyd County Police Department, Rome Police Department, Metro Drug Task Force, and 911 is invaluable. Chaplain Thornton has taught this class in 13 counties and has had positive feedback everywhere he goes.

I am grateful to Chaplain Thornton for his dedication to our employees. He truly goes above and beyond whenever we have someone in need.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Tim Burkhalter

July 29th, 2020