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Thank you again for all you do to support the Virginia Sheriffs’ Institute!

Sincerely,

John W. Jones
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VaAware.com offers resources and the latest information for parents, healthcare providers, law enforcement members, and those seeking help with addiction. According to Governor McAuliffe, “deaths from prescription drug overdoses doubled in Virginia over the past 15 years, while heroin-related deaths tripled from 2011 to 2015.”

The goal of this online initiative, which is a collaboration among four Virginia agencies, Department of Health, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department of Criminal Justice Services and Department of Health Professions, is to make it easier for people to take that first step to find help. Law enforcement officers throughout our state are using this website and every tool at our disposal to fight the epidemic of heroin and prescription drug addiction.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: EMERGING PUBLIC SAFETY THREAT

Human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery. According to Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring, “human trafficking is an emerging public safety threat across our nation, including here in Virginia. Trafficked victims don’t come from any one place. They come from large cities, small towns, different socioeconomic situations, and diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Virginia ranks 13th in the country for the number of human trafficking reports. The majority of the cases reported in 2016 involved women forced into sex work against their will. A new partnership between the Department of Homeland Security and Virginia is providing more resources for law enforcement agencies to identify victims and combat this growing crime.

Human trafficking is a lucrative and growing business. In fact, it is the second-largest criminal activity in the world. It generates a reported $9.5 billion annually and approximately 300,000 children are at risk of being prostituted in the U.S.

If you have any information about a case of human trafficking, you are urged to contact your local Sheriff’s Office or call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888, which produces a reported $9.5 billion annually and approximately 300,000 children are at risk of being prostituted in the U.S.

STAFF COMPENSATION TOP PRIORITY OF VIRGINIA SHERIFFS’ ASSOCIATION

The Virginia Sheriffs’ Association is requesting the General Assembly and governor to address the salary disparity that exists in sheriffs’ offices across the Commonwealth. In localities that do not supplement local sheriff’s office salaries, a starting deputy sheriff with a family of four and two children may qualify for food stamps.

This has evolved because the General Assembly approved a budget with pay raises that were eliminated by a revenue trigger. The prior year, all other state funded law enforcement offices received a 3% across the board raise, compression raises and special raises, depending on what state law enforcement agency was involved.

This low salary has resulted in high turnover — 18.4% — for all localities (including the localities that supplement), according to the Virginia Compensation Board.

Given these enormous and growing responsibilities, VSA is urging elected officials, both state and local, to adequately compensate deputy sheriffs in our state.

DON’T BECOME A VICTIM OF SCAMS

The Better Business Bureau has been providing consumers in Virginia and communities all across the country with Scam Alerts for more than five years. The BBB recently shared their top five tips for spotting a scam, including:

- Always be wary of “too good to be true.” If a deal is significantly better, a price lower, or an offer greater than you can find elsewhere, be cautious. Keep in mind that businesses need to turn a profit. If a company’s offer is so amazing that it’s not sustainable, it could be a ploy.
- Don’t underestimate the power of a quick online search. An online search can go a long way in uncovering a con. Be sure to check out BBB Scam Tracker for the latest (bbb.org/scamtracker).
- Pay with a credit card and refuse unusual forms of payment. Protect yourself by paying with a credit card, which gives you additional protections such as the opportunity to dispute charges if the business doesn’t come through. Be wary of anyone who requests alternative forms of payment, such as wire transfers, pre-paid debit cards, or gift cards.
- Watch out for a change in routine. If an organization normally reaches you one way, be suspicious if you suddenly start receiving a different type of communication. For example, government agencies generally communicate through mail, but scammers impersonating them often call or send email.
- Don’t believe what you see. Con artists can spoof phone numbers, email templates, websites, letterhead, and social media accounts. Just because something looks real, doesn’t mean it is. Instead of relying on your eyes, look for other warning signs.

LIKE THE VIRGINIA SHERIFFS’ INSTITUTE ON FACEBOOK!

The Virginia Sheriffs’ Institute would really appreciate your “electronic approval”! Please visit our Facebook page today and like us at www.facebook.com/vasheriffsinstitute!
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LOOK OUT FOR SLOW-MOVING EQUIPMENT ON VA ROADS THIS WINTER

Slow moving equipment, which operates at 25 mph or less, can leave highway workers vulnerable. Sometimes signs are not out to indicate slow moving equipment ahead because a work zone is either setting up or shutting down.

That’s why we’re urging all motorists to heed the advice of the Virginia Department of Transportation to slow down, pay attention, and pass only when it is safe and legal.
NEW WEBSITE HELPS COMBAT DRUG ABUSE

END ADDICTION

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

TRAINING PROMOTING SAFE, FAIR, 21ST CENTURY POLICING

One hundred and twenty-seven Virginia law enforcement officers recently concluded a series of regional trainings on implicit bias. The sessions were part of Attorney General Mark Herring’s initiative to promote safe, fair, 21st century policing, and to help build trust and lines of communication between law enforcement and the communities we serve.

The officers who took part in the training will serve as trainers in their own agencies to help raise awareness about implicit bias and help make communities across the Commonwealth safer. According to Attorney General Herring, “this training is quickly becoming part of the new standard in 21st century policing.”

During the series, 51 Virginia law enforcement agencies sent at least one officer for train-the-trainer instruction.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE

One of the many benefits the Virginia Sheriffs’ Institute offers is our scholarship program. This award — which is funded by generous VSI supporters like you — is granted to full-time or part-time students majoring in criminal justice and attending a Virginia state college or university. In fact, with the help of loyal members like you, we awarded 87 scholarships for the 2016-2017 academic year to Virginia’s youth.

Scholarship applications are available to be downloaded from our website or they may be picked up in your local sheriff’s office after January 31, 2017. In addition to the application, students must submit SAT/ACT scores, transcripts, a copy of the student’s voter registration card if the student is 18 and an essay. A full list of application materials can be found at https://vasheriffsinstitute.org/scholarship/. Applications are due May 1, 2017.

IN THIS ISSUE …

New Website Will Help Combat Drug Abuse.............................. 1
VSA Calls for Adequate Compensation.................................... 1
Human Trafficking................................................................. 2
Tips to Prevent Becoming a Victim of Scams............................. 2
Look Out for Slow Moving Equipment.................................... 2
Training Seeks to Build Community Trust............................... 3
Scholarship Applications Now Available................................. 4
Message from John W. Jones................................................. 4

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PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM VSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN W. JONES

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