



NEWSLETTER
SPRING EDITION 2023



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MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



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2022-2023

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**We Want to
Hear from You ...**

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VIRGINIA'S MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS



May is Mental Health Awareness Month. During this important month, we want to focus attention on the growing mental health crisis in Virginia and highlight the legislative action that is being taken to help residents in your community, and all communities across our state, address this public health emergency.

There are thousands of Virginians who are currently living with a mental illness. Unfortunately, Virginia's current mental health system is overwhelmed and failing to meet the needs of Virginians who are suffering from a mental health illness.

In response to the growing crisis which has put an enormous strain on law enforcement and first responders, Governor Glenn Youngkin has released a three-year plan to transform Virginia's behavioral health system. At the time of

my writing, there is bipartisan support in the General Assembly for making the kind of critical investments in mental health care offered in the governor's amended budget that will help address these challenges.

The governor's budget includes \$20 million to fund 30+ new mobile crisis teams; \$58 million to increase the number of Crisis Receiving Centers and Crisis Stabilization Units; \$15 million to expand the elementary, middle and high school-based mental health program to dozens of communities; \$20 million to fund partnerships with hospitals for alternatives to emergency departments for crisis; \$9 million for transportation and in-hospital monitoring by law enforcement and other personnel; and more.

Among the six pillars outlined by the governor in his "Right Help, Right Now" initiative is Pillar #2: Relieving law enforcement community's burden and reduce the criminalization of mental health. VSI fully supports the governor's efforts to ensure Virginia sheriffs and deputy sheriffs have the resources and training they need to help address the mental health crisis in our state.

NEW MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS HOTLINE

Virginia now has a new mental health crisis hotline. By dialing 988, callers will be connected to mental health counselors and mental health services.

The 988 dispatchers can direct the caller to local resources based on their area code. The hotline will help limit



the amount of mental health emergency calls that 911 receives while ensuring callers can access rapid access to mental health assistance.

The goal of the new hotline is to help provide early intervention and prevent a situation from reaching a crisis point.

90TH ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association Annual Conference and Exhibition will be held September 19-21, 2023, at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront Marriott. The conference program will consist of an array of speakers relating to criminal justice, legal issues and sheriff's office management, and there will be numerous exhibitors displaying the latest equipment and merchandise.

2023 SHERIFF OF THE YEAR AWARD



The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute is pleased to announce that Loudoun County Sheriff Mike Chapman was selected as this year's "Sheriff of the Year" award recipient by the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA). The award will be presented to Sheriff Chapman this summer at the National Sheriffs' Association conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

In recognizing Sheriff Chapman this year, NSA cites his approach to leadership, stewardship, and innovation, along with his successful efforts to protect the Office of Sheriff from efforts to replace the law enforcement responsibilities of his office with a police department and appointed chief. Sheriff Chapman was selected from sheriffs who were nominated all across the country. Members of the Virginia Sheriffs' Association, Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, sheriffs, deputies, and members of the law enforcement community from across the Commonwealth join in congratulating Sheriff Chapman on this well-deserved award.

This is the second consecutive year a Virginia sheriff has been selected for this esteemed award. The National Sheriffs' Association 2022 "Sheriff of the Year" Award was presented to City of Petersburg's Sheriff Vanessa Crawford.

VIRGINIA SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION 2023 LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION

Governor Glenn Youngkin, Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Bob Mosier, Secretary of Health and Human Services John Littel, agency heads, and legislators all attended the VSA Legislative Reception on January 17, 2023, to kick off the Virginia Sheriffs' Association Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Day on the Hill.

Lieutenant Governor Earle-Sears and Governor Youngkin thanked sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, and all office staff for their service, remarking on their sacrifice.

VSA sheriffs and deputy sheriffs were also delighted to welcome representatives of the Attorney General's Office, Colonel Gary Settle of the Virginia State Police, legislators, and their staff to discuss critical issues facing the law enforcement community.



PREPARE FOR SPRING STORM SEASON

In Virginia, there is the potential to experience many different forms of bad weather events, including tornadoes, hailstorms, flash floods, lightning, and even hurricanes. That is why it is so important you and your family know what to do well in advance of a severe storm event. Be prepared by selecting a shelter everyone in your family can retreat to, if necessary, ensure your flashlights have batteries, and make sure cell phones are charged and vehicles have plenty of gas.

Here are a few other tips to help plan for severe weather:

- Understand what your insurance does and does not cover and create an inventory of all of your belongings (it is helpful to take photos or videos and keep receipts).
- Store important documents in a fireproof and waterproof place and take these documents with you if you must evacuate.
- Clear yard and gutters of debris.
- Assemble an emergency storm kit with bottled water and non-perishable food, flashlights and extra batteries, a first-aid kit, and hand tools.
- Practice your emergency plan with everyone in your household.



BEWARE OF NEW PHONE SCAM

A recorded voice will ask, "Can you hear me?" when a victim answers the call. The question is designed to trick the victim into responding "yes," while the person or computer on the other end is recording. From there, the scammer can use the recording to access important online accounts, make purchases and commit fraud like identity theft.

If you hear this question when you answer the phone, hang up immediately. You can also protect your identity and money by creating strong passwords and using two-factor authentication where you can.

PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM VSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN W. JONES



On behalf of all of us at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI), I hope you and your family are eager to welcome the return of spring to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The return of warmer weather means many Virginians will be taking to the roadways, enjoying the change of season, and exploring all of the wonderful family-oriented

events, parks, and scenery Virginia has to offer. So, I encourage drivers to be extra vigilant, especially as this time of year brings many out-of-state visitors to our area.

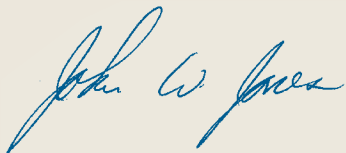
If you are traveling out of town on vacation, there are some simple steps you can take to keep your property safe, including refraining from publicly sharing your travel plans on social media. Ask a neighbor or friend to pick up your mail and deliveries while you are gone. Bottom line, you do not want to advertise that your house is unoccupied!

The goal of VSI is to support law enforcement and their tireless work fighting crime and promoting public safety. As a strong partner in these efforts, I urge you to report crimes and suspicious activity when you see them so that they can do their very best to keep your community a safe place to work, play, live, and raise your families.

I want you to know it is my privilege to serve as Executive Director of VSI, and I urge you to contact your sheriff's office if you have any concerns about crime prevention or public safety efforts in your community.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,



John W. Jones, Executive Director
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KEEPING GUNS SAFE FROM CHILDREN



There have been a rising number of incidences of children accessing unsecured guns in households. As a reminder, it is a crime in Virginia to

leave a loaded gun out with access to children under the age of 14.

According to the 2021 National Firearms Survey, 5.4 million children in the U.S. live in a home with a least one unlocked and loaded firearm. Nearly 40% of all unintentional shootings of children 11-14 years of age occur in the home of a friend. Each year 15,000 children and teens are shot and killed or wounded, and approximately 3 million are exposed to gun violence.

Safe storage is essential to ensure children cannot access weapons. That is why we want to remind all gun owners of a few safety tips: 1) Be sure to lock and unload all guns in your home; 2) Store unloaded firearms in a locked container, compartment, or cabinet; and 3) Store ammunition separately.

Make sure children and teens cannot access the keys or combination to lock boxes or gun safes, and always make sure to check to be sure the gun is unloaded before you put it in storage. As our members who are responsible gun owners understand, the safe and proper storage of firearms is essential to preventing tragedies.

NATIONAL PEACE OFFICERS MEMORIAL DAY

On May 15, we remember and honor local, state, and federal peace officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice or have been injured while serving in the line of duty.

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The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute solicits articles and comments from associate members of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles and comments should be directed to: John W. Jones, Executive Director, Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, 901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1301, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or phone (804) 225-7152.