

InForce

A quarterly publication of the Berks County Sheriff's Office

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Spring 2014

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"Making a Difference"

A Message from Sheriff Eric J. Weaknecht

I receive many letters from the citizens of Berks County thanking me for my position on the rights of law-abiding citizens to purchase and carry firearms. My position on a citizen's right to bear arms is consistent with the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association whose members [the Sheriffs of the 67 Counties in the Commonwealth] have sworn to uphold the Constitutions of the United States and the Commonwealth, which, under the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives people the right to keep and bear arms. The Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association will rally against any legislation that would limit the rights of law-abiding Americans, including current legislation that would put a limit on the number of handgun purchases and/or further increase restrictions for the right to carry a firearm.

The Pennsylvania Sheriffs'

Association relies on memberships to keep its Association strong; it receives no state funding. I am proud that Berks County is one of the top five Counties in the Commonwealth in membership numbers. As a whole, membership numbers are down from the highest of 17,000 in 2009. Membership funds allow the Association to continue its mission to not only support legislation which further improves the Office of Sheriff, but to also provide information on changing trends in criminal behavior and training opportunities. The Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association serves as a hub for every Sheriff to exchange ideas and experiences and to attend specialized training conferences for Sheriffs and their Chief Deputies.

PSA membership levels vary based on individual, family or business membership. Applications for membership and additional information can be found at www.pasheriffs.org. Becoming a member of the PA Sheriffs' Association allows the Association to continue its mission which began on June 14, 1923 following passage of a bill by the Pennsylvania legislature recognizing the formation of the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association.



Features

In Memory



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BERKS COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Star Of
The Quarter

Deputy Sheriff Ryan Swartz

Deputy Ryan Swartz, a member of the Berks County Sheriff's Warrants Division, is recognized for his quick actions while attempting to serve a warrant on November 27, 2013. After knocking on the door where a fugitive was known to be living and identifying himself as a Deputy Sheriff, Deputy Swartz heard the sound of a rifle slide being cocked. Deputy Swartz immediately evacuated his team members and called for assistance. After a brief standoff, deputies gained entry into the home. The fugitive was found deceased



inside the home after taking his own life.

Deputy Swartz began his career with the Sheriff's Office in May of 2006. He previously worked as a police officer for Millcreek Township, Wernersville and Greencastle Police Departments. He is also an operator on the Berks County Emergency Response Team. During his tenure as a Deputy Sheriff, Swartz has received both a unit combat citation award and unit citation award for outstanding service.

Deputy Swartz attended the Pennsylvania College of Technology and was captain of the soccer team which won a state title in 2004. Following graduation in 2005, Swartz attended the Harrisburg Area Police Academy and later the Pennsylvania Deputy Sheriffs' Academy. Deputy Swartz is also a member of the Berks County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard and is a sworn member of the US Marshals Fugitive Task Force.

3rd ANNUAL



RIDE TO REMEMBER

June 28, 2014



KYLE PAGERLY



To register, log onto
www.ridetorememberkylepagerly.com
or call 484-955-2503

“The Sheriff’s Office has lost a beloved brother, friend, colleague and public servant.”

Sheriff Eric J. Weaknecht

In Memory

Deputy Sheriff Dean Raifsnider

5/14/57 – 2/25/14

Deputy Sheriff Dean Raifsnider lost his long battle with cancer on February 25, 2014.

His presence, dedication, and smiling face will surely be missed. Dean began working in the Sheriff’s Office on May 27, 2009, and all his colleagues would agree that no one loved being a deputy more than Dean – he was so proud to wear the uniform and would arrive for his shift every day eager to fulfill his duties. Always wanting to work in law enforcement, Dean would say the Sheriff’s Office was a place he could call home.

Dean was truly committed to public service and had an insatiable thirst for knowledge and self-improvement. As one colleague recalls, “Dean had a strong desire to do a good job and was serious about wanting to learn.” This fellow deputy then talked about how Dean would spend his free time in the office just to learn all that he could.

Dean had the same high level of commitment when it came to looking out for the interests and the needs of others, especially his two young nephews. For these boys, Dean was a surrogate dad and, from his bed in the hospital, worried about who would help them build their pinewood cars for the upcoming Boy Scout Pinewood Derby race. His commitment to these boys may have only been surpassed by his commitment to his wife, Richelle (Shelly), to whom he would have been married 19 years this coming May.



Dean was diagnosed with Acute Myeloblastic Leukemia (cancer of the blood and bone marrow) in November, 2011. He approached the fight of his life with the same dogged determination to learn all he could and do all he could to beat this disease. He began treatment at the Johns Hopkins Cancer Center in Baltimore and returned to work in June 2012. When the cancer returned a year later, Dean was optimistic that he would win the fight following a bone marrow transplant. Dean never gave up and never gave in, even after learning that the bone marrow transplant didn’t work.

It is with heavy hearts that we say goodbye to someone we are thankful to have known. Dean was a shining example and a proud representation of the Berks County Sheriff’s Office.

We are thankful Dean chose the Sheriff’s Office as his place to call home.

Kyle Pagerly Explorer Post #027 Second Annual Banquet



Look
Who's 2!
Savannah
Pagerly

Explorer Xavier Martinez was named Explorer of the Year at the second annual Kyle Pagerly Explorer Post #027 awards banquet held December 18 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Wyomissing. Xavier also received the Lifesaving Award from Hawk Mountain Council's Learning for Life program (chartered by the Boy Scouts of America) for pulling a friend, Ifedapo "Ife" Benjamin, from the bottom of a pool and saving his life by using CPR skills learned as an Explorer.



Explorer of the Year, Xavier Martinez (4th from left), with Ifedapo Benjamin (3rd from left) and members of the Boy Scouts of America Hawk Mountain Council (L-R Charles Broad, Council Commissioner; Jeff Lewis, District Director; Bill Garret, Scout Executive; and Brian Beddow, Field Director). (R-L Deputy Chris Gorel, Alecia and Savannah Pagerly and Sheriff Eric Weaknecht)



Explorer Nathan Bentz receives Sheriff Leadership Award

Explorer Nathan Bentz received the Sheriff Leadership Award and Explorers, Steven Piech and Tyler Shriver, received awards for attending a week-long National Law Enforcement Explorer Academy this past July in Washington, DC. Other awards were presented for attendance, participation, communications and physical fitness.

A special thanks to Berks County Register of Wills Larry Medaglia, who emceed the event, and keynote speaker, US Marshal Brian Hicks, who underscored the importance of justice, integrity and service as he spoke of fallen Deputy Kyle Pagerly, for whom the Explorer

Post is named. Deputy Kyle Pagerly, Badge No. 27, was killed in the line of duty on June 29, 2011.

The Berks County Sheriff's Office also thanks the families of the Explorers for their contributions toward hosting this memorable event and for the support of their children the entire year.

LEARNING FOR LIFE partners with thousands of businesses and organizations to provide "real-world" career experiences to young men and women through its Exploring programs.

... EXPLORER HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013 ...



Fundraisers



Physical Fitness



Skills (CPR Training)



Instruction (radio communications)



Community Outreach (Berks Encore)



READING PET EXPO

SAVE THE DATE: May 2-4, 2014

NEW LOCATION: The Reading Fairgrounds

County Welfare Road, Bern Township

Friends of the Berks County Sheriff K-9 will once again feature K-9 demonstrations at the 2014 Reading Pet Expo on May 2 through 4. Members of the Sheriff's Office will be on site to answer questions regarding the K-9 Division and the special skills of each K-9. The Office's newest K-9s, Knight and Roxy, will join Blitz, Rökk, and Storm in demonstrating narcotics, explosives and cell phone detection. K-9 Division merchandise and renewal memberships with Friends of the Berks County Sheriff's K-9 will also be available.



Donated Vests Nothing To HOWL About



The Berks County Sheriff's Office K-9 Division received two ballistic vests donated by H.O.W.L. (Hounds on Working Leashes), a nonprofit organization formed to raise money to provide protective gear for service K-9s. James Kutz, president of H.O.W.L., began operations after learning that many law enforcement agencies can't afford

to buy protective equipment for their K-9s. H.O.W.L. is unique in that each donated vest is fitted for the K-9 who will wear it. A one-size-fits-all approach is not the organization's philosophy as H.O.W.L. team members know that an ill-fitted vest will restrict a K-9's mobility so much so that a handler often prefers not to use it.

Deputy Melissa Seidel and Deputy Scott Henry of the BCSO K-9 Division met with James Kutz and H.O.W.L. board members, Jeremy Nyemscek and Roger Scheirer, in January. Their K-9s, Knight and Storm, were fitted with general-sized [dummy] vests and specific measurements were taken. Knight and Storm took turns practicing training maneuvers while wearing the vests to ensure each had mobility. From the data gathered, individual bulletproof vests will be manufactured to more precisely fit each K-9.

H.O.W.L. receives funding from businesses, individual donors, and fundraisers. Visit houndsonworkingleashes.org for more information.



(L-R) Deputy Scott Henry w/ K-9 Storm; James Kutz, present of H.O.W.L.; Jeremy Nyemscek and Roger Scheirer, H.O.W.L. board members; and Deputy Melissa Seidel w/ K-9 Knight.



K-9 Knight and K-9 Storm are fitted for vests



Safety Tips



ROAD RAGE – KEEPING YOUR COOL

Aggressive drivers exhibit dangerous behaviors that can lead to accidents, injury, and even death. Crossing paths with an aggressive driver creates stress and can require all of one's energy to keep from being involved in a motor vehicle collision. The stressful occurrence can all-too-often lead to a response of retaliation against the aggressive driver (road rage), which can further escalate dangerous driving behaviors.

According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 50 percent of drivers respond to aggression with aggression, by either honking their horns, flashing their headlights, ranting and raving, or retaliating with an obscene gesture. A small percent of those aggressive drivers will attempt to run the aggressor off the road. Although it may be very difficult to remain calm when an aggressive driver is barreling down on you in your rearview mirror or has swerved in front of you without

warning, try to remember that the way you respond can further antagonize the aggressive driver thus further endangering your own safety.

The following are some road rage safety tips to avoid road rage incidents:

First, don't be an aggressive driver. Driving is not a competitive sport. How much is really "won" by cutting ahead of another car? Stay calm, focus on getting from one place to another safely, and try to forget about time if you're running late. Be sure to use your turn signal so drivers around you are not surprised by your maneuver. Don't cut off other drivers and make sure you have plenty of room when you merge onto a highway. Also make sure to leave room between you and the car ahead of you. Tailgating not only reduces your ability to respond to sudden situations, but it can annoy the other driver.

Secondly, when faced with an aggressive driver, don't allow yourself to get drawn into a confrontation. Don't make obscene gestures and avoid any visible sign that you may be angry. If a driver is displaying signs of aggressive driving, get away from that driver. Rather than retaliate against the driver who cuts you off, slow down and give him room to avoid a possible escalation in aggressive behavior. If it's you who made the mistake, try to apologize with an appropriate gesture. And even if you are obeying the speed limit, move to the right lane if someone wants to pass you. If you always err of the side of being courteous, you are doing what you can to avoid becoming a target of road rage.

Should you become a target, under no circumstances should you stop your car. Drive to the nearest police station or call 9-1-1 from your cell phone.

License to Carry - Know your Rights



Sheriff Weaknecht speaks at Cabela's on right to carry laws.

Sheriff Weaknecht speaks periodically at Cabela's in Hamburg on an individual's Second Amendment right to carry firearms. The 45 minute presentation addresses your gun rights inside and outside of the home, where you can and cannot conceal carry, and the importance of gun safety. The recent change to Pennsylvania law under the Castle Doctrine relating to the use of deadly force inside the home is also explained.

Sheriff Weaknecht will next present the "Know your Rights" seminar on April 15 at 6:30 at the Lebanon Valley Sportsmen's Association, 841 Sportsman Road, Robesonia. To attend the presentation, please call 610-670-0139.

Most Wanted



Name: Ezequiel Santiago
Ht/Wt: 5ft 7in, 135 lbs
DOB: 10/19/1952
LKA: 438 S. 15th St. Reading, Pa 19602
Charges: Bench Warrant



Name: Alby Velasquez
Ht/Wt: 5ft 5in, 110 lbs
DOB: 12/25/1989
LKA: 516 Greenwich St. Reading, Pa 19604
Charges: Arrest Warrant



Name: Chris Wentzel
Ht/Wt: 6ft 1in, 220 lbs
DOB: 3/14/1967
LKA: 1833 Friedensburg Rd. Reading, Pa 19606
Charges: Probation Violation



Name: Mark Koles
Ht/Wt: 5ft 9in, 180 lbs
DOB: 2/25/1968
LKA: 406 Penn St. Reading, Pa 19602
Charges: Bench Warrant

If you have information that can help apprehend any of the fugitives in this publication, call the Berks County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Tip Line at 610-478-6390 or Crime Alert Berks at 1-877-373-9913.

All your information will be kept confidential.

Deputy Sheriffs Deliver Holiday Goodies

The Berks County Sheriff's Office partnered again this past Christmas with Berks Encore to deliver a little holiday cheer to Meals on Wheels program recipients. The Sheriff, members of management, deputies, and civilian personnel donated various goodies such as candy, crackers, cookies and canned goods which were then placed into baskets and beautifully wrapped with festive paper and bows and delivered by deputies to the Berks Encore downtown Reading office.



Left Photo:
Deputy Brian
Noecker and
Sergeant Keith
Neiswender



Right Photo:
Deputies Ron
Uczynski and
Jason Wolfe

Congratulations to Sergeant Eric Heckman

Congratulations to Sergeant Eric Heckman who was promoted from the rank of Deputy Sheriff effective November 27, 2013.

Sergeant Heckman graduated from the Reading Police Academy in November of 2003 and was hired by the Berks County Sheriff's Office in July of 2004. After a short time assigned to the Courts Division and assisting in warrant executions and patrol division duties, Heckman was transferred to the nightshift in the Central Booking Division where he will continue as Sergeant.

As a Sergeant in Central Booking, Heckman is responsible for the timely processing, arraignment and transport of inmates and for ensuring effective communication with judges, central court staff, and outside agencies. In addition, Heckman, who praises the deputies in Central Booking for their professionalism and efficiency, will continue to work alongside those deputies in the Division's daily operations.



Sergeant Eric Heckman with Sheriff Eric Weaknecht



Support Your Sheriff by Becoming a Member

The Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association provides important ongoing education and training for the 67 County Sheriffs of Pennsylvania. Your support helps to keep our communities safe by ensuring that our Sheriffs have up to date training in new technology, court security and anti-terrorism procedures.

www.pasheriffs.org



Support Law Enforcement

Eric J. Weaknecht, Berks County Sheriff,
PSA Secretary - Treasurer