

OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND

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FIRST RESPONDER

# Mental Health & Wellness Conference



**MARCH 23-24, 2026 • 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

**ASHORE RESORT & BEACH CLUB**

10100 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD 21842

# ABOUT THE EVENT

This two-day event brings first responders and their support networks together to focus on wellness, resilience, and performance. Through expert-led sessions and real conversations, attendees will gain tools, perspective, and connection to thrive on and off the job.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND



This event is designed for all members of the first responder and public safety community, including:

- Law Enforcement, Fire, EMS, Dispatch, and Corrections Personnel
- Peer Support Team Members
- Mental Health and Wellness Professionals
- Chaplains and Spiritual Support Staff
- Leaders, Supervisors, and Agency Trainers
- Spouses, Partners, and Family Members of First Responders

## KEY THEMES & TOPICS

This conference tackles the real challenges facing first responders today—on the job, at home, and within their teams. Sessions are grounded in practical tools, lived experience, and the latest research to support lasting resilience, strong peer support, and whole-person wellness. Topics include:

- The impact of chronic stress on mind and body
- Burnout prevention and resilience strategies
- Peer support and leadership tools for healthier cultures
- Family, communication, and support systems
- Cumulative trauma and post-traumatic growth
- Practical tools for mental health and recovery
- Real stories, expert insights, and actionable takeaways

# ABOUT THE VENUE

## REGISTRATION

Secure your spot today and join us for this impactful conference. Don't wait—spaces fill quickly, and early registration ensures the best rates.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

## LOCATION

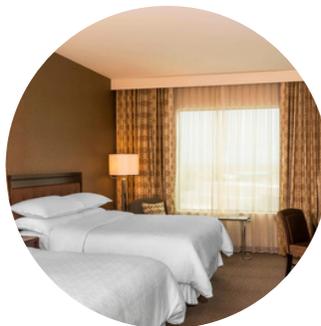


### ASHORE RESORT & BEACH CLUB

*10100 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD 21842*

Nestled along Ocean City's shoreline, Ashore Resort & Beach Club combines modern coastal style with oceanfront views. Guests can relax with beachside service, enjoy local dining, and experience the best of Ocean City just steps from the sand. It's the perfect backdrop for connection, learning, and restoration.

## DISCOUNTED RATE



### SPECIAL GROUP RATE

*\$135 USD per night*

Last Day to Book: **March 2, 2026**

[BOOK NOW](#)

*Problems booking?*

Contact [shawne@lstrc.org](mailto:shawne@lstrc.org)

# PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

Additional \$25 add-on registration required.

**SUNDAY MARCH 22 | 2:00PM - 5:00PM**

## BEHIND EVERY BADGE, A FAMILY SERVES TOO

First responder life is tough – on the responder and on the people who love them. This powerful pre-conference workshop gives couples a chance to hit pause, reconnect, and learn the skills that make relationships stronger, healthier, and more resilient.

### **A High-Impact 3-Hour Experience for First Responder Families**

This isn't a lecture. It's real talk, real strategies, and real connection. You'll laugh, you'll reflect, and you'll walk away with tools you can actually use the moment you get home.

#### **You'll Leave With:**

- Communication skills that create real connection (not more arguments)
- A simple roadmap for handling conflict without drifting apart
- Parenting tips that fit the responder lifestyle
- Ways to stay emotionally close through stress, shifts, and trauma exposure
- Five must-have habits from couples who not only survive the job – they thrive

#### **Why Attend?**

Because your relationship is the backbone of everything – and it deserves attention before burnout, distance, or stress take over. Come join a community that understands the highs and lows of the job, celebrates the courage behind the uniform, and reminds us all that we are truly stronger together, behind the badge.



#### **SCOTT WELCH, MDIV, MA, BCPC, LMHC**

Scott Welch, M.Div., MA, BCPC, is a licensed mental health counselor and founder of Mosaic Counseling of Florida. A nationally recognized speaker, he serves as a Master Level Trainer with Stronger Families, a national trainer with Prepare/Enrich, and a certified First Responder Counselor working closely with responder couples and families. He also teaches counseling courses at Trinity College and is a Florida Supreme Court-certified family mediator and Guardian ad Litem with extensive expertise in communication, conflict resolution, and family dynamics.

# PRESENTATIONS



## WHAT PEER SUPPORT REALLY LOOKS LIKE

*Eric Olson - Ocean City Fire Department*

We all talk about peer support—but what does it really look like in practice? This session covers the full lifecycle of a peer support team, from creation to deployment and performance review. Using longitudinal data from Ocean City Fire Department's Peer Support Team, we'll highlight real-world use, challenges, and lessons learned to help agencies strengthen their own teams.



## PATHWAY TO FINANCIAL WELLNESS AND RETIREMENT PLANNING

*Travis George, Creative Planning LLC*

This course empowers first responders and their families to achieve financial wellness, improving productivity, morale, and reducing sick leave. Participants will identify and correct common financial mistakes while exploring real-world examples and learning how the comprehensive and ongoing financial planning process integrates with emotional and psychological well-being.



## PREDICTING INJURIES IN FIRST RESPONDERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF TAILORED MOBILITY AND STABILITY TO PREVENT COMMON INJURIES

*Dr. Kelsey Loftus - Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services*

Public safety professionals often face predictable, job-specific injuries — from chronic back pain in firefighters to upper-body tension in law enforcement — yet many go unaddressed until they impact performance or time on duty. Drawing on experience embedding a Certified Athletic Trainer within Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services, this presentation highlights how functional movement screening, targeted injury prevention, and sleep optimization can reduce musculoskeletal injuries and improve overall performance outcomes.

# PRESENTATIONS



## **RURAL REALITIES: BARRIERS, MOTIVATORS, AND INTERVENTIONS FOR FIRST RESPONDER MENTAL HEALTH HELP-SEEKING**

*Dr. Robert Brown, Dr. Daniel Lytle, and Dr. Heather Brown*

Most U.S. public safety agencies are small and rural, yet research has largely focused on large urban departments. This study examines how stigma, burnout, and coping ability shape first responders' decisions to seek mental health support in smaller agencies, drawing on personnel sizes from 15 to 116. We'll also review evidence-based interventions—such as peer support, supervisor training, literacy campaigns, and resilience skill-building—that can reduce stigma, improve access, and strengthen trust in resource-limited settings.



## **THE JOB THAT NEVER SLEEPS: REALISTIC SLEEP HEALTH AND SLEEP HACKING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

*Dr. Kelsey Loftus - Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services*

Being a first responder means facing physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding situations—yet many struggle with the foundation of health and performance: sleep. Poor sleep impacts job performance, mental health, relationships, and injury risk. This presentation explores the importance of sleep health and equips first responders with practical tools to improve sleep quality and resilience.



## **WELLNESS DROWN PROOFING: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO STAYING AFLOAT**

*Marc Junkerman - Marc Junkerman Consulting*

The reason first responders and front-line service providers sink to the bottom is because they jump into deep water without first learning to swim. This presentation will introduce a practical action plan designed to help you adapt and apply a tailored approach to wellness. Remember, you will never conquer the sea but you can develop strategies to successfully navigate it.

# PRESENTATIONS



## **EMBERS WITHIN: LIFE AFTER THE MAYDAY**

*TJ and Sarah Prieur*

This session explores life after the mayday—both on the job and at home. Drawing from his experience as a RIT firefighter after a line-of-duty death, TJ shares powerful insights on trauma, resilience, and recovery, using lessons from fire behavior and mayday procedures to recognize internal warning signs and foster healing. In the second half, his wife, Sarah, offers a candid look at the family's perspective, sharing practical tools to maintain connection, resilience, and emotional awareness at home.



## **REAL WORLD RESILIENCE - LESSONS LEARNED FROM TRAUMA**

*Captain Brad Schriefer, Anne Arundel County Fire Department*

After losing a coworker during a call, Brad Schriefer faced his own battle with PTSD when traditional support fell short. His recovery journey led him to join his department's peer support team, where he now helps others navigate similar challenges. In this presentation, Brad shares his story to inspire resilience, readiness, and open conversations about mental health in the fire service.



## **THE FIRST RESPONDER BRAIN**

*Sue Radcliffe, LCSW*

Have you ever been told you've changed since becoming a first responder—more alert, restless, or quick to react? This workshop explains how repeated exposure to trauma and stress affects the brain and body, using clear, relatable language and first responder-specific examples. Participants will gain insight into their stress responses and learn simple, practical techniques to calm the brain and regulate the nervous system.

# PRESENTATIONS



## **SPOT THE SPILLOVER! COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR NAVIGATING TRAUMATIC EFFECTS OF THE JOB**

*Katie Bingner, LCPC and Nicola Maguire - Responders for Pride*

This presentation explains how trauma and conditioning shape the first responder nervous system and how those reactions can spill over into family life. Attendees will gain a shared language, validation for their experiences, and practical communication tools to strengthen connection at home. With clear insight and actionable strategies, participants will leave better equipped to navigate the impact of the job on themselves and their relationships.

# SCHEDULE – DAY 1

DAY 1

7am–6pm

**7:00 AM – 8:00AM**

## **Registration & Continental Breakfast**

*Check in, grab your materials, and enjoy a light breakfast before the day begins.*

**8:00 AM – 8:45 AM**

## **Opening Ceremonies & Welcome Address**

*Honor Guard, Pipes & Drums, Pledge of Allegiance, Opening Prayer, and National Anthem. Welcome remarks from event hosts.*

**8:55 AM – 9:55 AM**

## **Session #1**

*Engaging presentation focused on mental health, wellness, or personal development for first responders.*

**10:10 AM – 11:15 AM**

## **Session #2**

*Continued insight and tools from experienced professionals or peers in the field.*

**11:15 AM – 12:15 PM**

## **Catered Lunch**

*Relax, connect, and recharge with a full catered lunch provided on-site.*

**12:20 PM – 2:00 PM**

## **Session #3**

*Deeper dive into challenges and strategies related to resilience, relationships, or leadership.*

**2:15 PM – 3:15 PM**

## **Session #4**

*Interactive or expert-led session offering practical takeaways.*

**3:30 PM – 4:30 PM**

## **Session #5**

*Final session of the day, focused on real-life stories, innovative tools, or emerging topics.*

**4:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

## **Networking Social**

*Unwind and connect with fellow attendees in a relaxed, informal setting. Light appetizers and refreshments will be provided.*

# SCHEDULE – DAY 2

DAY 2

7am-4pm

7:00 AM – 8:00AM

**Check In & Continental Breakfast**

*Grab coffee, and ease into the day with a light breakfast.*

8:05 AM – 8:50 AM

**Session #6**

*Kick off the day with a powerful session focused on personal stories, lessons learned, and tools for growth.*

9:00 AM – 9:45 AM

**Session #7**

*Explore the impact of the first responder lifestyle on well-being, relationships, and identity—on and off the job.*

10:05 AM – 11:05 AM

**Session #8**

*Conversations around overcoming adversity and strengthening mental, emotional, or relational resilience.*

11:05 AM – 12:05 PM

**Catered Lunch**

*Enjoy lunch onsite and connect with fellow attendees.*

12:10 PM – 12:55 PM

**Session #9**

*Learn practical strategies or hear personal perspectives to support wellness, leadership, and peer connection.*

1:05 PM – 1:50 PM

**Session #10**

*Insightful takeaways and real-world tools to support personal well-being and professional performance.*

2:10 PM – 2:55 PM

**Session #11**

*An honest and practical conversation focused on wellness, support systems, and showing up strong—both at work and at home.*

3:05 PM – 3:45 PM

**Session #12**

*Final session of the day featuring tools, takeaways, or reflections to carry forward.*

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM

**Closing & Raffles**

*We'll wrap up with closing remarks and raffle giveaways to end the day.*

# SPEAKERS



## **ERIC OLSON**

*Ocean City Fire Department*

Eric Olson is the Peer Support Team Coordinator for the Ocean City Fire Department, where he has served as a Firefighter/Paramedic since 2013. A licensed therapist, he specializes in crisis intervention, counsels throughout the week, and serves as a part-time hospital chaplain. He is also part of the department's dog therapy program with his therapy dog, Rowan.



## **LT. TRAVIS GEORGE**

*Creative Planning LLC*

Lt. Travis George (retired) is a seasoned professional with a distinguished career in law enforcement and financial services. As a member of Creative Planning's Practice Development team, he specializes in addressing the retirement planning needs of industries such as law enforcement and firefighting. He leads a Financial Operations Team focused on client care and spearheads nationwide financial wellness initiatives.



## **DR. ROBERT BROWN**

*University of Maryland Eastern Shore*

Dr. Robert Brown is Professor and Chair of Criminal Justice and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. He previously worked as a sentencing mitigation specialist with the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, developing rehabilitation and supervision plans at state and federal levels. His research focuses on police-public interactions, first responder wellness, fear of crime, alternatives to incarceration, and the role of race and gender in justice outcomes.

# SPEAKERS



## **DR. DANIEL LYTLE**

*University of Maryland Eastern Shore*

Dr. Daniel Lytle is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and holds a Ph.D. in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati. His research examines officer wellness, recruitment and retention in rural public safety agencies, and the role of fear of crime in shaping police decision-making and satisfaction. He also uses meta-analysis to study decision-making across the criminal justice system, with work published in the *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Police & Society*, and *Deviant Behavior*.



## **DR. HEATHER BROWN**

Dr. Heather Brown is a Registered Psychology Associate and Executive Director of Behind the Line, Inc. She specializes in trauma-focused therapy for first responders, with training in Cognitive Processing Therapy, EMDR, and R-TEP. Her work centers on partnering with agencies to strengthen peer support, expand access to culturally competent care, and provide crisis response after critical incidents.



## **DR. KELSEY LOFTUS**

*Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services*

Dr. Kelsey Loftus is a Doctor of Athletic Training and Board-Certified Athletic Trainer specializing in tactical athletes. Inspired by her first responder family, she became Maryland's first Certified Athletic Trainer in fire rescue in 2023, where she built the Health and Injury Prevention Program for Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services. Today she supports more than 1,200 personnel with injury care, prevention, and wellness programs focused on musculoskeletal health and sleep.

# SPEAKERS



## **TJ AND SARAH PRIEUR**

Sarah is a Wellness & Empowerment Coach with a deep understanding of what it means to juggle the pressures of life while staying grounded in purpose. A first responder wife, homeschooling mom, and multi-passionate entrepreneur, she's walked the path of burnout, overwhelm, and reinvention. Her mission? To help people break free from self-doubt and chaotic living by replacing it with meaningful structure, daily habits that stick, and an unshakable belief in their own potential. Sarah leads with warmth, strategy, and a firm belief that authenticity is the key to transformation.

T.J. is a Peak Performance & Mindset Coach, firefighter, homeschool dad, and endurance athlete who knows what it's like to operate under pressure—and crash under it. After years of chasing adrenaline and ignoring the toll stress was taking on his nervous system, he hit a breaking point that became his breakthrough. Through mindset shifts, time and energy tracking, and nervous system regulation, T.J. went from surviving to intentionally designing his life. Now, he coaches high performers—first responders, entrepreneurs, and athletes—to stop living in fight-or-flight and start mastering structure for true freedom and purpose.



## **CAPTAIN BRAD SCHRIEFER**

*Anne Arundel County Fire Department*

Brad Schriefer is a third-generation firefighter with 25 years in the fire service and currently serves as a Captain with the Anne Arundel County Fire Department. Known for his leadership, mentorship, and engaging storytelling, he has been instrumental in training new recruits and advancing safety and resiliency initiatives. A dedicated member of his department's peer support team, Brad is passionate about fostering wellness within the fire service and inspiring the next generation of firefighters.

# SPEAKERS



## **SUE RADCLIFFE, LCSW**

*Dorchester County Health Department*

Sue Radcliffe, MSW, is a mental health therapist with over 30 years of experience supporting survivors and professionals across mental health, law enforcement, and community systems. She holds a Master's in Social Work from Yeshiva University and serves at the Dorchester County Health Department in Maryland. Trained in Trauma-Focused CBT, EMDR, iRest Yoga Nidra, and trauma-informed yoga, Sue also provides expertise in CISM and CIT. Appointed to the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission in 2023, she is passionate about making brain science practical and accessible for first responders and justice professionals.



## **MARK JUNKERMAN**

*Marc Junkerman Consulting*

Marc Junkerman is a Maryland-based advocate, trainer, and consultant dedicated to advancing wellness for public safety and front-line professionals. After 33 years in law enforcement and military service, he now applies his leadership experience and graduate studies in organizational management to develop sustainable wellness solutions. Marc contributes regularly to 1st Responder Conferences, Affiliated Sante, and the Virginia Peer Support Association, and serves as faculty for ICISF and the Haymarket Foundation's Intensive First Responder Retreats.

# SPEAKERS



## **KATIE BINGNER, LCPC**

As a licensed counselor, Katie has spent a decade guiding individuals through trauma, anxiety, and grief. Her personal journey as the wife of a law enforcement officer—having met at the very start of her wife’s career—gives her a profound understanding of the unique challenges faced by first responders and their partners. With 10 years together, her lived experience fuels her deep empathy and specialized insight into the complexities of first responder relationships.



## **NICOLA MAGUIRE**

*Responders for Pride*

As an EMS Lieutenant and the President of Responders for Pride, Nicola Maguire has dedicated her 18 years in public safety to leadership and advocacy, committed to promoting inclusivity and mental health awareness within her department and the community she serves. A leader and mentor, she enjoys sharing the lessons she has learned along her journey that have helped her to prioritize a healthy work-life balance, recognizing that dedicating time to family and personal wellness serves to bolster resilience and longevity in this challenging, yet rewarding field.

# SPONSORS

A special thank you to our sponsors! Their partnership and generous support makes it possible to keep these events accessible, impactful, and focused on ensuring vital resources reach first responders, veterans, and their families.

## CO-HOSTS

If your organization would like to become a Co-Host, please contact [shawne@lstrc.org](mailto:shawne@lstrc.org) for more information.



### BEHIND THE LINE, INC.

Behind the Line, Inc. is dedicated to supporting first responders and their families with culturally competent mental health care, peer support, and crisis response. Their team partners with agencies to build wellness programs, provide trauma-informed services, and ensure responders have the tools and support needed to thrive both on and off the job.



### WORCESTER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement agency serving Maryland's easternmost county, with jurisdiction over civil processes, patrol duties, criminal investigations, and court security. Under Sheriff Matt Crisafulli's leadership, the department emphasizes community safety, transparency, and strategic partnerships across the county's coastal and inland communities.

## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A SPONSOR?

Partner with us to support the wellness of first responders, veterans, and their families.

[LEARN MORE](#)



# ENDORISING AGENCIES

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We are honored to have the support of endorsing agencies whose stamp of approval reflects a shared commitment to first responder wellness.



## OCEAN CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Ocean City Fire Department is a combination force of over 100 career and 200 volunteer personnel, proud to protect residents and visitors across a 10.5-mile stretch of coastal and inland areas. They respond to nearly 7,000 calls annually and maintain specialized units including dive, marine, confined-space, bomb squad, and rescue teams. Their integrated approach ensures professional, responsive life-safety services across Ocean City and its surrounding communities.



## OCEAN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Ocean City Police Department is committed to providing professional, ethical law enforcement services for residents and visitors. The department adapts to seasonal population surges, employs both full-time and seasonal officers, and focuses on community policing, crime prevention, and public safety. Under its guiding mission, they prioritize integrity, transparency, and collaborative partnerships across the city.



## SALISBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Salisbury Fire Department provides fire suppression, emergency medical services, and specialized rescue across a 48-square-mile service area on Maryland's Eastern Shore. They operate three stations with a mix of career and volunteer personnel, and their mission emphasizes professionalism, innovation, and community-focused public safety. Established formally in 1872, they maintain a longstanding commitment to protecting life and property while promoting the well-being of their members.

# ENDORISING AGENCIES

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## **BERLIN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Berlin Police Department serves the town of Berlin, Maryland, providing 24/7 local law enforcement, community outreach, crime prevention, and public safety services. With a compact but dedicated team, the department focuses on integrity, respect, service, and equality while addressing the needs of its residents.



## **FRUITLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Fruitland Police Department is a full-service 24/7 agency with 20 sworn officers and 5 civilian staff that handles traffic enforcement, criminal investigations, community policing, and crime prevention. Their mission is built on ethics, open communication, and strong community partnerships to ensure quality service, integrity, and public trust.



## **MARYLAND INSTITUTE FOR EMS SYSTEMS**

The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), as the coordinating body for Maryland's EMS and trauma care network, is proud to endorse the 1st Responder Conference. With a mission to reduce preventable death and disability through systemwide leadership, training, innovation, and coordination, MIEMSS recognizes the vital importance of bringing together first responders, health professionals, and emergency service stakeholders to share knowledge, strengthen partnerships, and advance best practices.

# ENDORISING AGENCIES

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## **WORCESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

The Worcester County Health Department (Worcester Health) is a vital public health institution committed to enhancing the well-being of all residents. Accredited by both the Public Health Accreditation Board and The Joint Commission, it administers a comprehensive suite of services – from behavioral health and community health promotion to environmental protection and emergency preparedness.



## **MARYLAND STATE POLICE**

Since 1921, the Maryland Department of State Police has stood at the forefront of protecting and serving Maryland's communities. With a commitment to public safety, integrity, and service, MDSP's endorsement reflects its dedication to supporting the health, resilience, and well-being of first responders and their families across the state.



## **PITTSVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Established in 1928, the Pittsville Volunteer Fire Department services the town of Pittsville in central Wicomico County. Our mission is to protect lives, property, and the environment through dedicated fire suppression, emergency medical response, rescue services, and public education. We are committed to serving our community with courage, compassion, and integrity, upholding a proud tradition of volunteer service while continually advancing through training, teamwork, and innovation.

# ENDORISING AGENCIES

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## FOP LODGE 111

The mission of FOP Lodge #111 is to serve and support the dedicated law enforcement officers of Wicomico County while strengthening the bond between the police and the community we protect. We are committed to advancing the welfare, rights, and professionalism of our members through advocacy, education, and fellowship. By promoting ethical conduct, mutual respect, and public trust, we strive to enhance the safety and quality of life for all citizens. Our lodge stands as a symbol of unity, service, and integrity—upholding the proud traditions of law enforcement and community partnership.



## WICOMICO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Department of Emergency Services is committed to providing the highest quality customer service to the residents and first responders of Wicomico County. The department coordinates a comprehensive, all-hazard emergency operational plan and provides a professional 9-1-1 response to calls from citizens. This coordination includes effective communications for and the coordination of those first responders dispatched to calls for service.



## FOP LODGE 10

FOP Lodge 10 is dedicated to supporting the safety, rights, and professionalism of law enforcement officers through advocacy, training, and meaningful community partnerships. We adapt to the evolving challenges our officers face and the communities they serve, emphasizing peer-support, legal resources, and public engagement. Guided by integrity, respect, and collaborative service, we strive to build stronger relationships between officers and the citizens they protect.