



The Indiana SHERIFF

Winter 2023

A special newsletter from your Indiana Sheriffs' Association



The President's Message
Page 2



Beside the Badge
Pages 4 & 5



Mental Health Awareness
Page 6



Ride with the Star & ISA Renewals
Pages 7



Executive Director's Perspective

Steve Luce, Executive Director,
Indiana Sheriffs' Association

I hope that this newsletter finds you healthy and well. Allow me to begin with a heartfelt *THANK YOU* for the important role you play as members of the Indiana Sheriffs' Association. The 92 Indiana Sheriffs echo my gratitude.

During the recent State Fair, the ISA staff and I were overwhelmed by the number of people who took the time to stop by our booth to thank us for our service to the sheriff's offices across the state. *We couldn't do what we do without you!* The sheer number of people stopping by was encouraging, showing us that, together, we really are doing good for our communities and making a difference, especially after so many law enforcement losses in our state this year. The experience really reinforces that Hoosiers are special people!

In this issue of *The Indiana Sheriff*, you'll meet a couple of our sheriffs in *Beside the Badge* features. You'll also read about a couple of programs your support of your ISA helps to fund, our *Sheriff and Family Emergency (SAFE) Fund* and a new partnership with *The Stella Center*. These two programs exist to come alongside our men and women, meeting needs in times of

difficulty and distress.

The SAFE Fund is especially near and dear to my heart. The ISA started the SAFE Fund to assist any sheriff's employee in their time of need, a major sickness, an accident, or family emergency. An example of where and how this program works—a Brown County Sheriff's Deputy was in a terrible motorcycle accident recently. Through the SAFE Fund, the ISA was able to step in and provide some financial assistance for his family.

Part of my responsibility as Executive Director is to build our programs to support our men and women in uniform who serve across our state. The reason that I love doing this is because *I was that deputy working three jobs; I was that Sheriff who was scrounging for resources for my rural office*. I take that first-hand perspective and try to apply it to assist and support our Sheriffs and their families.

All of us Hoosiers, standing together, are realizing the promise of *Building Communities of Trust*. This is another reason that so many of you visiting with us at the Fair was so encouraging; *we value your ideas and*

(continued on page 3...)



Each Member an Important Part of the Whole

A Letter from the President

I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve as President of your Indiana Sheriffs' Association. It is an honor and a privilege to work so closely with the many dedicated men and women of law enforcement serving all across our great state.

As the entire nation faces stresses and pressures, our Sheriffs face many new challenges. Things are very different than they were when I began in law enforcement 30 years ago; we can't just remain stuck in "the way we used to do things." We've experienced a lot of tragedy and loss with the law enforcement community these last few years. This has made hiring quality personnel very difficult. Finding, hiring, and retaining officers who take pride in what they do, who embody the virtues of honesty and integrity, who exhibit professionalism in carrying out their duties, and who are compassionate and caring towards those they serve can be a daunting task.

Taking care of those who serve us all is another challenge impacted by today's climate. In this issue of *The Indiana Sheriff*, you'll learn about our *SAFE Fund*. I'm very excited to be able to provide this assistance for sheriffs and deputies in situations and seasons of need.

We're also putting renewed emphasis and efforts into meeting the mental health needs of our law enforcement community. In two *Beside the Badge* features, you'll read about the efforts of two of our Sheriffs in addressing these challenges within their offices, examples of the attention being given to this growing concern across our state.

In Wayne County, we've quadrupled the number of chaplains reaching out and checking in with our staff. The stigma around law enforcement and trauma—getting the help we need when we need it—is easing. Law enforcement officers are now volunteering to go to counseling whereas, even just as recently as a few years ago, they'd only go if under orders. The ISA is pressing ahead on this. A new ISA partnership with *The Stella Center* is helping us to both learn more about and respond more effectively to the needs of our own.

We're also learning more about the needs of the communities we serve; a staggering percentage of those incarcerated in our jails have mental health struggles.

The ISA is at the forefront on this matter. Recently, in a connection made through the ISA, my Chief Deputy and I took a trip to Davidson County Tennessee to visit a mental health wing in one of the jails. Their diversion program has been very successful; someone arrested with needs can be recommended to this program on the mental health side, where they're able to get the help they need. The overall goal isn't simply to treat the symptoms but to get to the root and to do more than simply file offenders away in protective custody, but to serve them as members of our communities.

As President of our Association, I'm very proud of our sheriffs. We lead the nation in many ways; what we're doing here is being looked at by other Sheriffs' Associations and other law enforcement agencies across the country. *Hoosiers are leading the way!*

This is due entirely to the incredible support of our membership. I'd love to say, "Look what we're doing," but a more truthful representation would be, "Look what YOU'RE doing!"

Our Association is like family—each member an important part of the whole. I want you to know that your part in this family is greatly appreciated by us all.

Sincerely,

Randy Retter
Wayne County Sheriff | 2023 ISA President

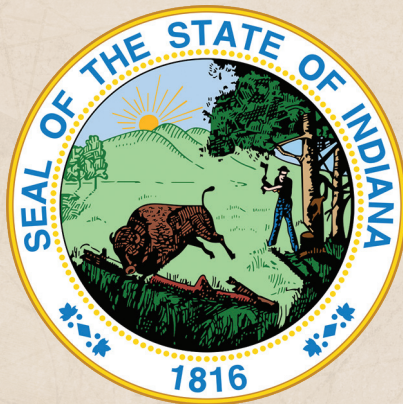
The History & Importance of the Office of Sheriff

Where It All Began: Sheriff John Small (1759 – 1821)

Indiana's first constitution, adopted in 1816 when Indiana joined the Union, established the office of Sheriff as an elected official in each county and outlined the law enforcement, judicial, and correctional functions of the office.

A quarter-century earlier, Colonel John Small became Indiana's first Sheriff (Knox County before statehood). Knox County, at the time, included almost all of the Indiana Territory.

John Small immigrated with his family from Ireland to the American colonies in 1768. He began his career as a gunsmith at 14 and served as a militia soldier during the Revolutionary War. Small moved to Vincennes, Indiana in 1785, where he established himself



as a merchant, silversmithing, blacksmithing, and carpentry among his skills. Along with being Indiana's first Sheriff, John Small also owned and operated Vincennes' first tavern. He was appointed sheriff on 4 July 1790, and his tavern was used as the first Knox County Courthouse.

John Small was so well known for his talents that he was commissioned by Indiana's

Governor at the time, William Henry Harrison, to design the Seal of the Indiana Territory, which later became the Indiana State Seal.

Our history speaks to the importance of the Constitutional office of Sheriff and the role the great men and women who serve play in our communities.



Executive Director's Perspective (continued...)

your perspective. We care about our members, and we want to hear from you any time you see us!

One of the items on the horizon (in 2024) is meeting with a construction manager to discuss a "Building Communities of Trust Family Memorial" dedicated to Sheriffs and Deputies lost in the line of duty, where their families and their brothers and sisters in arms can come together to pay their respects to their loved ones. You'll be hearing more about this project in the near future.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the ISA newsletter. You figure prominently—your support makes a tangible difference in each of the stories you'll read. Again, the

92 Indiana Sheriffs thank you. Your support has never been more important than it is right now—working in law enforcement is dangerous and challenging on the best days. Our sheriffs are very appreciative that you stand with them.

Warm regards and wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen P. Luce".

Stephen P. Luce
Executive Director
Indiana Sheriffs' Association



Beside the Badge

Shining the Spotlight on Floyd County Sheriff Steve Bush

Floyd County Sheriff Steve Bush explains, “I didn’t know what I wanted to do exactly, but law enforcement seemed to be a good fit.” Majoring in Criminology and minoring in Psychology, Bush graduated from Indiana State University and

was hired on with the New Albany Police Department, where he’d spend the next 31 years.

“In New Albany, I worked with many Sheriff’s Office employees. I served as a Floyd County Commissioner for 12 years and as President for six of those 12 years. I ran for Sheriff in 2004 and lost by less than 300 votes. So, I took a break from being a commissioner to put all my efforts into campaigning the next time I ran, in 2023.

“The campaign trail had a lot of hiring focus. I came in with bold expectations, wanting to make us ONE Sheriff’s Office. We implemented a new command structure, bringing our deputies, jail staff, and office employees all together as one office. We became fully staffed for the first time ever this August.”

Looking Under the Hood

After getting the right people in place, Sheriff Bush and his staff began looking under the hood. Sheriff Bush meets daily with his staff “to be sure everyone’s on the same page and working towards the same goals. This gives everyone a voice and uses the diversity of everyone’s backgrounds to look at the issues we face in a different light and to come to the best solutions.”

The Floyd County Jail houses 300 inmates. “We’re holding people accountable for their actions, while

at the same time treating them with dignity.” Through the medical contract, they were able to add a Court liaison and a Clinical Therapist. Through grants, they added two more members to the team; one for a Higher Education Program and one for the Transitional Program.

Faith-based programming is a big part of the effort. *Residents Encountering Christ* is a three-day retreat. Sheriff Bush went in and talked to inmates, sharing his faith and encouraging them in theirs. In all, 41 inmates were baptized during this event. Local news media took note of the program’s success.

The goal in introducing all of these opportunities is reducing recidivism by meeting needs and preparing inmates for a healthy transition back into society.

Looking Forward

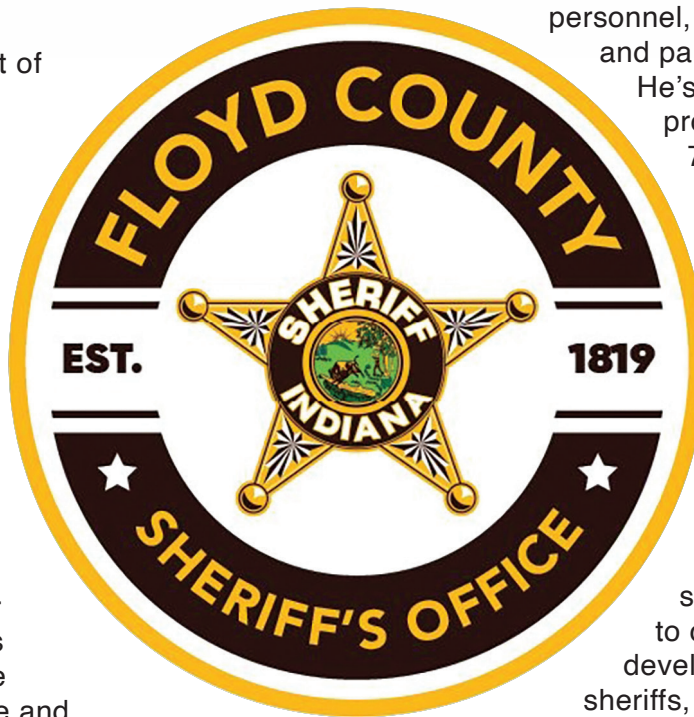
Looking forward, Sheriff Bush hopes to continue building: “Building our programs, building our personnel, and building our relationships and partnerships in the community.”

He’s working on getting the pension program funded—presently at 74%, Sheriff Bush is hoping to get it over 80% funded.

Family and faith are most important to Sheriff Bush. He and his wife of over 30 years, Danna, have two adult children and three grandchildren. He attends Northside Christian Church where he’s been very involved over the years.

“I’m grateful for the ISA,” Bush says. “Staying involved, going to conferences, networking, and developing relationships with other sheriffs, the ISA offers great resources for the work we do as sheriffs.”

The ISA is grateful for you, Sheriff Bush, and your excellent staff, for making a difference for the people you serve in Floyd County and for your contributions to making Indiana a better place for all of us to live and raise our families.





Beside the Badge

Shining the Spotlight on Porter County Sheriff Jeff Balon

Sheriff Jeff Balon is a brand-new sheriff (January 2023), but he brings more than three decades of law enforcement experience, including the last six years as Chief of the Valparaiso Police Department into this new role.

“I wanted to be a police officer since I was about

10 years old,” Balon says. “A family friend was an Indiana State Trooper, and I was enamored by his presence. That’s where it started.”

From Police Chief to Sheriff

Serving with the Valparaiso PD, Balon worked with many sheriff deputies and sheriffs. This made the transition to sheriff a little smoother, he explains, “because I knew what I was getting into, and they already knew me.”

Sheriff Balon took note of the reality that a majority of the people getting arrested either suffer from mental health issues or some form of substance abuse or dependency. This has caused him to look at his responsibility differently. “The situation calls for prevention rather than reaction. I believe it’s our responsibility as law enforcement to offer people avenues for help rather than just dealing with it after they’ve gotten into trouble.”

Valparaiso has the highest homeless population in Indiana. While he served as Chief, Balon hired a police social worker to assist homeless residents with medications and working with social services to meet their needs. The police social worker also works with school social workers in cases involving children who have experienced trauma. Balon has brought the same care and attention to detail into the sheriff’s office.

Two social workers have been added to the Porter County Jail staff. “The police social worker coordinates with and works with the jail social workers when inmates come in, so they have background on their personality and particular struggles.” County Commissioners agreed to appropriate the bulk of the funds to pay for the social workers from the county’s share of the National Opioid Settlement. Balon also got commissioners to give them a wing of the sheriff’s office that was vacant to create a Wellness Division.

Wellness Matters

Recognizing the importance of staff mental health and

wellness and the realities of law enforcement, Balon is also focused on the wellbeing of his own. “In Valpo, I brought in a psychoanalyst to work with our staff. I’ve brought him to Porter County to help and assist our deputies, dispatch, and jail staff.”

He explains, “A social worker will never replace a law enforcement officer responding to a call. Law enforcement responds, secures the scene, making sure everything and everyone is safe, and then the social workers come in to assist. Their role isn’t just on scene, however. The social workers and the psychoanalyst train our deputies and jail staff in identifying mental health and substance needs and when situations may call for their expertise.” Porter County also added a therapy dog to assist with mental health and wellness needs across the board, on the streets in cases involving child victims or traumatic events, and among sheriff’s office and jail staff.

Building Bridges in the Community

Sheriff Balon and his staff are actively engaged in Community Outreach. “It’s imperative in law enforcement to build bridges within the community. No single outreach

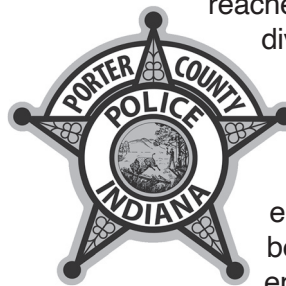
reaches everyone, so you have to stay diversified with the programs to engage people on their level while still keeping the messaging clear and consistent,” Balon explains.

“Departments that have high public engagement have lower crime rates because the citizens trust their law enforcement agencies. Whether *Coffee*

with a Cop or showing up at nearly every community event, from park parties to major festivals, we put an emphasis on being a part of the communities we serve. We’ve put an incentive policy in place to encourage each deputy to go to these events so the public isn’t just seeing the same few people showing up.”

One thing Sheriff Balon prioritizes is sitting down with his staff—every employee—at least once a year, “to talk about what we’re doing right, what we’re doing wrong, and what we can do better. What do they want to do? Where do they want to go within the department? I make it a point to really listen and to implement their feedback wherever I can. I want every member of my team to know they are heard and valued.”

In Porter County, the sheriff’s office staff, jail staff and inmates, and all members of the community are benefitting from Sheriff Balon’s caring approach. The ISA commends Sheriff Balon and his entire team for the excellent job they’re doing.





MENTAL HEALTH awareness

Providing the Right Resources for the Men and Women Who Serve

Indiana Sheriffs' Association Establishes a Partnership with The Stella Center

Understanding that law enforcement officers have the potential to be exposed to varying levels of trauma on every shift, and those experiences compounding over years of working in public safety, we recognize the importance of providing emotional support and care for our sheriffs and deputies.

The Indiana Sheriffs' Association has established a partnership with The Stella Center as a resource for Indiana's sheriffs to use for their employees' mental health and wellbeing. Of the partnership, Executive Director Steve Luce, says, "The Stella Center has a deep background working with defenders and military personnel. They specialize in treating first responders. This relationship will be a great resource for Sheriff's Office employees needing support and care for traumatic experiences and for gaining the tools to

better manage daily stressors."

Providing Opportunities for Health and Wellbeing

Believing that this type of care is imperative to ensuring our law enforcement officers perform to their very best in the communities they serve, the ISA will sponsor scholarships for ISA Sheriff's Office members after determining this program will be beneficial for them through an assessment with The Stella Center.

This partnership and the commitment of scholarship funds to provide this resource are another example of the important role our members play in generously supporting the ISA—we couldn't do what we do without you.

You can learn more about The Stella Center and their treatment modalities by visiting their website, www.stellacenter.com.

Help When It Is Needed Most

Sheriffs and Family Emergency (SAFE) Fund

Thanks to the commitment and generosity of our members, the ISA has been fortunate to assist our families during life-changing incidents that affect the family setting. Recognizing the impact that financial assistance can provide in those very difficult times, the *ISA Sheriffs and Family Emergency (SAFE) Fund* exists to lend assistance and encouragement.

The SAFE Fund enables an ISA representative to

immediately provide a cash gift of up to \$1,000 directly to a family in need when a life-changing event occurs, such as a sickness, an accident, or on-duty incident.

We hope this program will provide families with a sense of support and stability during times of crisis—just a small way of extending our gratitude and love to our law enforcement families.



RIDE WITH THE STAR!

Join thousands of Hoosiers who are helping to ensure our deputies are receiving the most advanced training and demonstrate your support for the Indiana Sheriffs' Association and your local sheriff by ordering your ISA Special Group Recognition (SGR) license plate today!

The ISA Specialty License Plate program is an important tool in the Association's fundraising efforts, with proceeds from every plate sold funding specialized training and services for members of your sheriff's office, initiatives such as ISA's Youth Leadership camps, death benefits for the families of fallen officers, and more.

These plates are available for any passenger vehicle registered in Indiana. When it's time for you to renew your vehicle registration, contact your local DMV and tell them you'd like to ride with the star!

Your ISA Renewal is Coming Soon!



Be on the lookout for your 2024 Indiana Sheriffs' Association Membership Renewal Notices

Very soon you will see your 2024 Indiana Sheriffs' Association Membership renewal notice. By renewing, you are helping to provide support and training services to all 92 Indiana Sheriff's Offices. Many examples of that support are featured within this newsletter! And don't forget that your membership and any additional contribution to ISA can be used for a yearly tax deduction. THANK YOU!



Indiana Sheriffs' Association

Officers

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Sheriff Randy Retter
WAYNE COUNTY

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Sheriff Daniel Mawhorr
ADAMS COUNTY

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Sheriff Thomas Kleinhelter
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Sheriff Richard Myers
MORGAN COUNTY

Sheriff Jerry Asher
HOWARD COUNTY

Sheriff Shane McHenry
DEARBORN COUNTY

Legislative Update

We have completed our summer legislative roundtables. They were another successful group of meetings that allowed Sheriffs to interact with legislators and discuss issues that we plan to work on during the next legislative session.

The association will continue working with the membership to narrow down the topics discussed to create our legislative agenda for 2024.

ISA is also proud to announce Matt Lehman as ISA's 2023 Legislator of the Year! Matt is recognized for standing with Law Enforcement and representing the State of Indiana through the 2023 legislative season with honor. The ISA Legislator of the Year award is an annual award presented to a legislator in Indiana who displays strong character and a high level of integrity while supporting efforts by law enforcement.



Indiana Sheriffs' Association
7124 East County Road 150 South, Ste B
Avon, IN 46123-2000
IndianaSheriffs.org
(317) 356-3633