

THE LOWDOWN

Sheriff Charles S. Blackwood

These are difficult times. We are in a global pandemic, a time of social unrest, and in the middle of a contentious election season. Social media is an amazing vehicle for sharing information and connecting with others, but it has its downsides. People often post in anger or haste, and others read the posts and make assumptions or judgement without applying the most charitable interpretation to those posts. A person with a different opinion or favored political candidate is often viewed as a mortal enemy instead of just as a person with a different opinion or favored political candidate. I feel it is important to take a moment to recognize that social media can easily color a person's perspective in a way that is not necessarily accurate.

During a time when so many find themselves divided, it is important to remember we have people in our community who care about others, who have a heart, and who are willing to put others before themselves. There are those among us who realize we are more alike than we are different and understand that any one of us can make a positive contribution.

In my more than 40 years of law enforcement experience, I have been on some pretty intense calls. From pulling a badly burned victim from an oil fire at a stone quarry, to preventing family members from reentering a mangled vehicle as they tried to retrieve a deceased family member, to holding the hand of the wife of a high school classmate as I told her that her husband had passed – this job is often not pleasant. But I have not done this job alone, and I am not only speaking about the assistance of the men and women who also serve in law enforcement or other branches of emergency services. I've done it with the assistance of countless unsung heroes, many of whom had no training and wore no badge. I'm speaking about the many unnamed people who made the decision to step forward and help someone in an emergency situation because they felt it was the right thing to do.

Over the past several weeks, several members of my staff have shared "Good Samaritans" encounters with me. In one instance, there was a rollover accident on the interstate, and the car was on fire. My deputy told me when he arrived at the scene, there were half a dozen people actively trying to rescue and render aid to the occupants of the vehicle. These witnesses weren't standing back looking or recording video - they actively placed themselves in danger to assist a person who needed help.

Another deputy told me about arriving at a chest pains call to find a total stranger providing CPR. In both cases, the deputy seemed to have some degree of surprise that “regular people” were willing to get involved on behalf of someone they did not know.

I want to recognize such efforts. These people stepped forward to do the work, rather than just driving by only to go home and complain on social media about being stuck in traffic. My deputies and I deeply appreciate the people who are willing to assist us with emergency situations; even though amidst the chaos of a crisis we might not get the chance to express our thanks. We want people to know it matters. Not only is it essential to the resolution of the emergency, it also boosts our morale to work alongside community members – no matter how briefly. It is hard to quantify the value of the “we are all in this together feeling” it gives us.

We have also had that feeling many times over the last several months as individuals and groups within our community wrapped their collective arms around us and made us feel like we matter and that our service is valued. People have approached us on the street to say thank you. Businesses and individuals have sent lunch to the office. We’ve received phone calls, cards, and positive Facebook messages. This support has extended to the entire system of emergency services, including police, fire, EMS, telecommunicators, and those serving in medical facilities.

Thank you for letting me use this edition of *The Lowdown* to express my thanks to the many brave, kind, and generous souls in our community. You help us remember that we are nowhere near as divided as one might think by reading social media. We are connected and responsible for each other, and we appreciate your help.