



# Bluecoats of Barnstable Newsletter

Fall 2019

## Board Member Spotlight

### Sam Baxter

I started getting up early and going to work with my dad (Barney Baxter) when I was 8 years of age. It was 1980 and Baxter's Boathouse Club was on its 13th season. I started by sweeping the parking lot picking up cigarette butts and garbage. Then it was on into the restaurant to see if there was any loose forgotten change on the floor. It was always exciting to find a quarter or a couple dimes so I could go to Christys later on and buy a Snickers Bar. I would clean the tables and take out the trash from the Fish N Chips side.

In the same year the Page family had moved to Hyannis Port to be year rounders and their son Chris and I met in 3rd grade. They were the only family within biking distance of Studley Road in Hyannis, where I grew up. I would bike to their house because Carole was always cooking something and Mr. Page was always doing something exciting like building a 58 foot sailboat in his woodshop.

As time continued my older brother Ben was not as interested in working at the family business as I was. He became a summer special for the Barnstable Police department in 1985. He decided he enjoyed what he was doing and entered the police academy in 1987 to become a full time Barnstable Police Officer. I continued to work at Baxter's during the summers throughout High School and when I realized college was not for me I decided to go full-time at Baxter's.

In 1994 I was promoted to manager and with little experience elsewhere in the world I decided it was time to update the systems in the office and the building. I spent the next few winters under the building (when the tide permitted) fixing the old beams and replacing the decking around the entire building. Built entirely over the water the building is exposed to harsh conditions all the time so its like a ship that goes nowhere and is in need of constant repair.

In 1998 Ben was promoted to Sergeant. Unfortunately in 2000 our Dad Barney became ill and passed away from brain cancer. I continued to run the business and it continued to get busier just like the Barnstable Police Department.



*Sam and his family*

In 2009 I was approached by my friend Mr. Page and the Board of Directors to get involved with the Bluecoats Board and for so many reasons, I was more than glad to become a part of such a great organization to support the Barnstable Police Department.

# Remarks from the Chief

## *Bluecoats 15th Annual Meeting*



Friends,

Thank you for inviting me to the 15th annual Bluecoats of Barnstable dinner. It is always a pleasure to be among so many strong supporters of the wonderful men and women I work with everyday. Being here and seeing all of you gathered in one place, with one mission is truly impressive. Thank you for all that you do for the men and women of the Barnstable Police Department and our community.

I would also like to thank Sergeant Michael Riley, Sergeant Robert Bitinas, Officer Jon Pass, Officer Armando Feliciano, Officer Michael Puntonio, Officer Corey Frederickson, Officer Adam Ruggieri, and Officer Spencer Jackson of our SWAT team for coming in and giving you an inside look at some of their equipment and telling you about some of the situations that they have been called upon to deal with over the years.

While some of the anecdotes were funny and the officers spoke with such enthusiasm, you could clearly hear the emotion behind each story. I have no doubt those highly trained and professional officers left a lasting impression with the membership just as your enthusiastic and generous support did upon them!

Over this past year, we said goodbye to some long serving and devoted officers as they left us for their well earned retirement. Thank you to Sergeant Ben Baxter, Sergeant Sean Sweeney, Detective Reid Hall, Officer Mark Delaney, Officer Steve Estey, Officer Jack Corbett, and Records Clerk Carolyn Ahearn. You have all been valuable members of our family and your daily presence will be missed. Thank you for all that you have done.

We have also recently promoted two sergeants to the rank of lieutenant and five patrol officers to the rank of sergeant. Congratulations to Lieutenant Gretchen Allen, Lieutenant Jennifer Ellis, Sergeant Nathan St. Onge, Sergeant Meaghan Cunningham, Sergeant Matthew Blondin, Sergeant Kevin Fullam, and Sergeant Joseph Green. I am sure that all will serve with honor and bravery.

I must take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for the hard work and devotion of our civilian support staff and community volunteers that help our agency run. They are the ones that are behind the scenes making sure administrative work gets done, our visitors are taken care of, the reports and evidence gathered by our officers is properly handled and processed, and our vehicles are safe to operate. Thank you to our volunteers, records staff, mechanics, administrative staff, and detective's assistant. Without you, our work would be so much harder.

This year I was hoping to stand before you and report nothing but good things; however, fate and life had other plans. As police officers we are trained to confront the bad guy, to rise to the occasion, to defend the defenseless and speak for the weakest among us. We expect that our training will help us overcome any obstacle and that we, with the steadfast support of the Bluecoats, are properly equipped and protected so we can go home to our loved ones and work another day.

Unfortunately, this year we learned that no matter how well equipped and trained we are, tragedy can still strike. This July we unexpectedly lost Sergeant Jason Sturgis. Jason had been with us 19 years and at 42 years old had a wonderful wife, Sarah, and three beautiful children, Paige, Charlotte, and Keith.

Jason was doing everything right. He was well liked by everyone he worked with and dealt with in the community. He was funny, kind, and smart. He was hard working and a founding member of our Community Impact Unit. When he got promoted he cared for the people he worked with and did everything he could to make their lives better.



## Remarks from the Chief *Continued*

Jason wasn't taken from us by some criminal hiding from police in an attic with malice in his heart and a gun in his hand. He was ambushed by an unseen and silent killer that has claimed many members of our profession, a heart attack. Years of responding to other people's emergencies, battling stress, working hours that would find normal people fast asleep, and braving terrible storms from which the rest seek shelter has a price. That price cost us Jason.

Suddenly, Jason's family and friends found themselves without the protection of a man that had always stepped forward to help others and had sworn an oath to put community before self. Just when it seemed that life could not be any more unfair, the Bluecoats stepped forward and quietly fulfilled your promise and mission.

Because of the selfless and silent service of the Bluecoats of Barnstable, Jason's family will be supported and cared for. From all of us at the Barnstable Police Department, thank you.

Had that been all you did last year, you could rightfully be proud; however, you managed to do much more. Last year you gave the Barnstable Police Department \$52,953 that we used to provide each officer in the Barnstable Police Department with a personal medical kit that can be carried on their belt and used to save their own life, or the life of a fellow officer. With that gift we were also able to equip each patrol car with high quality ballistic vests and helmets that can be used to protect officers responding to active shooter type events.

With that one donation you were able to significantly improve the safety and working environment for every Barnstable Police Officer and give them the self care and safety equipment that each officer needs and deserves. On behalf of our officers and their families, thank you.

If you add that \$52,953 to your generous gifts from the previous 14 years it would show that you have exceeded \$387,000 in donations to the men and women of the Barnstable Police Department. That is truly amazing!

After years of going to the types of calls that our officers see and dealing with the difficult situations we ask them to confront, it is easy to find yourself asking if anyone cares. Well, after years of asking myself that very same question, I have heard the answer...

**The Bluecoats of Barnstable Care.  
Thank you.**



Chief  
Matthew Sonnabend



### Membership Corner

**317 Current Members**

**17 – Lifetime**

**78 – Founding**

**222 – Regular**

**Membership Levels are as Follows:**

**Regular: \$200 Per-Year (\$100 Additional for Spouse)**

**Founding: \$1000 Initial Year - \$200 Subsequent Years**

**Lifetime: \$25,000 One Time Payment or Five Annual \$5,000 Installments**

***Sponsor a new member today by contacting any member of the Board of Directors or sending an E-Mail to [Bluecoats@comcast.net](mailto:Bluecoats@comcast.net).***





# Cape Cod SWAT

article by Sgt. Michael Riley

The officers of Barnstable Police Department who are members of the Special Weapons And Tactics Team were honored to be the guests at this year's Bluecoats dinner. We parked our Bearcat armored rescue vehicle at the front entrance and were delighted to interact with the arriving members and explain and demonstrate the workings of some of our equipment and the Bearcat itself.

Just a little about the team and its organization, purpose and history. It was started in 1998 with 24 officers as the Barnstable-Yarmouth Special Response Team, and in 2005 expanded into the Cape Cod Regional Law Enforcement Council SWAT Team (Cape Cod SWAT), covering from Sandwich to Provincetown. There are now 32 SWAT officers, 5 Tactical Paramedics, one Team Doctor, 8 Crisis Negotiators, and one attached tactical police K-9. SWAT is a collateral duty as members have full time duties at their departments, and respond when needed to SWAT activations anytime they are called. We have been called out in the middle of the night many times, even Christmas Eve and Super Bowl Sunday (yes, the Pats were playing!).



*Spencer Jackson, Corey Frederickson, Michael Puntonio, Armando Feliciano, Adam Ruggieri, Jon Pass, Sgt. Michael Riley, Sgt. Robert Bitinas*

To become a SWAT member, officers have to have three years experience as police officers, be recommended by their Chief, complete an application including a 500 word essay, pass a background investigation, a PT test and a pistol qualification. If they complete all that, they get an opportunity for an interview in front of the Team's leaders and have to pass the muster of the existing team members.

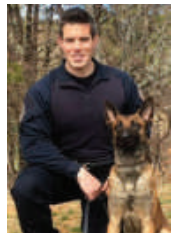
Since its beginning, the Team has responded about 280 times, including high risk warrants, barricaded subjects, hostage rescue and the Boston Marathon Bombing and subsequent manhunt in Watertown.

Because this was such a special group, the team members felt comfortable relaying some of their most memorable experiences at the dinner.

Officer Armando Feliciano talked about his response to the April 19, 2013 shoot out in Watertown with the two suspects in the Marathon Bombing, and how when he and his partner arrived in the Bearcat there were unexploded IED's littering Laurel Street and the chaos that was prevalent until the search got organized and the rest of our team responded.

Sgt. Rob Bitinas and Officer Mike Puntonio relayed the events of May 22, 2015, when the team was called to the basement of a house in Hyannis at 1:30 in the morning for a man who had taken his girlfriend's two small boys hostage at knife point. They talked about some of the difficulties they faced and what they were considering as the negotiations went downhill, and how when they made entry to the small room they were able to overpower the suspect and rescue the two boys.

Officer Corey Frederickson responded to the fatal shooting of Yarmouth K-9 Sgt. Sean Gannon in Marstons Mills on April 12, 2018, and he talked about his experiences as he responded from the station and took up a perimeter position in the front of the house, and then watched as the suspect was taken into custody and the team searched the house. Sean was a member of our team and April 12 was the hardest day any of us had ever experienced as police officers, but we emerged from that experience a stronger team and rededicated ourselves to our mission in his memory.



The presentation ended on a lighter note with Officer Jon Pass corralling two Bluecoats into participating in a Tactical fashion show that got great laughs from the audience.

As always, great thanks to the Bluecoats for all they do to support the men and woman of the Barnstable Police department, and for allowing us to share some of our experiences and thoughts with them.