



BLUECOATS OF BARNSTABLE

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER
2021

Our History

With over 300 members, 13 years of incorporation, and nearly half a million dollars donated to improve the safety and well-being of officers in Barnstable, it is a good time to reflect on how the organization was founded. The first official meeting of the Bluecoats of Barnstable took place on February 3, 2005. In attendance were Chris Page, Rita Jones, David Hirsch, Hid Welch, and Hector Bueno. The group had met through a common interest in 2004 with their participation in the Citizens Police Academy of Barnstable. The course made an impact. Upon its completion, Chris gathered those around him with an idea, to help those individuals and their families who were putting their lives at risk for the well-being of the community.

Following that first meeting the organization quickly took shape. Chris Page was elected President, Hid Welch as Vice President, David Hirsch as Treasurer, and Rita Jones as Clerk. The group began by building from the ideas and principles of the Bluecoats of Cleveland and to who Chris was introduced to at a young age. Bluecoats of Cleveland generously offered its charter to the group, giving the team a working document and allowed them to trim the language to fit the size and scale of Cape Cod. The detailed paperwork and formal incorporation of the nonprofit fell on Hid's shoulders, fondly remembered as the director of "governmental affairs." Bluecoats of Barnstable was incorporated under the laws of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a 501(c)(3) corporation on February 19, 2008.

As is the case with many new organizations, the recruitment of impactful community members was high on the to do list.

The "incorporating" members started by reaching out to their local contacts, friends, and family with a high degree of internal enthusiasm. Unsurprisingly, they were met with immediate success. Fifty founding members, each contributing \$1,000, were initially inducted to get things moving. Those early members focused on recruiting highly committed individuals and their families. This policy remains a core value that embodies the hand-selected organization we are today. Further proof of the quality of membership and leadership persists today, with two of the original incorporators still active on the Board as Directors: Rita and David.

Our Annual Meeting, held each fall, is another cornerstone of the organization. The Annual Meeting is an event to solidify current members, to thank those members that renew year after year, and to meet the officers that are directly impacted by the Bluecoats of Barnstable. Started in September of 2005 at The Hyannis Port Club it has flourished for 15 years. As membership increased so did the size of the venue and the impact the group had on our local police department. For the last several years we have had the privilege of hosting the evening event at the Oyster Harbors Club where the attendance has averaged over 195 participants. While the 2020 meeting was cancelled, in keeping with pandemic protocols, we are hoping that the 2021 meeting will once again be in person to enthusiastically support our outstanding Barnstable Police Department.

Paul Heslinga

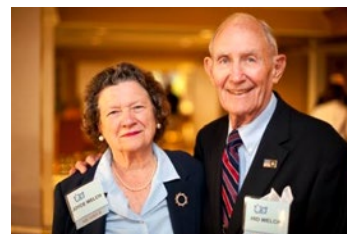
Editor



CHRIS & CAROLE PAGE



BOB & RITA JONES



JOYCE & HID WELCH



REE & DAVID HIRSCH

DEAR FRIENDS,

I sincerely hope that you and your families are all doing well during these chaotic times. Like many of you, I was hoping that we would have had the challenges of COVID-19 behind us and rapidly becoming a distant memory by now. Alas, here we are over one year later talking of yet another surge and still seemingly trying to find some sense of what we used to call normalcy.

While COVID looms large in this past year for many, it was not the only challenge we faced here at the Barnstable Police Department.

Certainly for us the elephant in the room is police reform. At over 100 pages, the legislation touches multiple facets of our job, creates new state-level oversight committees, mandates certification, and changes the way we will hire and train officers into the future.

The new law contains language setting forth clearly defined changes to our profession, but perhaps the biggest impacts from the bill are not from the words contained within its borders. For many officers working today the unspoken language of the bill is stress and uncertainty. It is a challenging and unpopular time to be in law enforcement, or to be one of our supporters.

It is with these things on my mind that I write to you today. With all of the pressure being placed on our officers today it is imperative that we work to sustain their mental and physical well-being. No matter what the new reform and defund movements may change, one thing is for sure, the 911 calls will still keep coming and the Barnstable Police Department will answer those calls. The question is, at what cost?

That is why the Barnstable Police Department began its Peer Support Program. To provide the care and support our officers and dispatchers need and deserve. Over the years the program has evolved into a proactive system that schedules every officer and dispatcher to meet with mental health professionals one-on-one every year. This innovative program is one of a very few like it in the state and it works. Through this program and our engaged Peer Support volunteers we have been changing the culture and providing a model for others to follow.

I am proud of the people that I work with each and every day. Throughout this past year, through a pandemic, through civil unrest, through calls for reform and defunding, our officers kept coming to work. While others may have had the opportunity to work remotely, our officers and dispatchers came to work and kept answering and responding to calls for service and calls for help from their community.



MATTHEW SONNABEND
CHIEF OF POLICE

While some people may have been wondering where the police stand and why they are even needed anymore, our officers responded to a house fire and entered a burning building to rescue the unconscious elderly resident. When some questioned whether it is necessary for police to even respond to mental health calls, our officers calmly dealt with a man that came to our station wanting the police to shoot him and got him safely to the hospital for treatment. While others may say it isn't their job,

our officers are out in the community each and every day providing services and building relationships that truly make a difference.

The officers and staff of the Barnstable Police Department work hard every day to serve our community and they deserve all of the support we can give them, but I am not telling you anything that you didn't know already.

The Bluecoats of Barnstable have been a tremendous friend and supporter of the Barnstable Police Department. Over the life of the organization you have donated in excess of \$430,000 to our officers. Your commitment has been unwavering and you have always had our back, and your support is more vital than ever.

At a time when it has become unpopular to support the police, your voice and actions remain steady. Thank you for the calls asking if we need anything and the offers of support. Whenever we have needed assistance you have been but a phone call or an email away. You have been there at meetings, on Zoom and in person, and at charitable events you have served alongside us.

The Bluecoats of Barnstable is a unique and amazing organization full of wonderful and generous people providing much needed support to our officers while asking little in return. For all of your efforts and on behalf of the entire police department, I thank you.

I have no doubt that the officers of the Barnstable Police Department will rise to the challenge and face the future of law enforcement here in the Commonwealth with pride and professionalism. We will continue our mission to serve our community and with the Bluecoats of Barnstable in our corner, we cannot fail.

Sincerely,

Matthew Sonnabend

Matthew Sonnabend
Chief of Police



IMAGE COURTESY OF HYANNISNEWS.COM

The Peer Support Team

Over twenty-five years ago, the Barnstable Police Department Patrol Officers Union established a Peer Support Team to assist Department employees and their families who find themselves in need of stress management assistance. This was nearly unheard of at the time in policing, despite being common practice in fire services. Even today, with mental health awareness in the forefront, police peer support teams remain uncommon.

The members of the BPD Peer Support Team are specially trained in group and individual crisis intervention, where they are taught to recognize and understand stress reactions during and after critical incidents. A critical incident is any event that has the emotional power to overwhelm an individual's usual ability to cope. Most Team members are also trained in suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, trauma to addictions, grief following trauma, and the like. When the Team was started, the Department did not yet have civilian dispatchers, so it was composed solely of sworn officers. Now with a full complement of dispatchers at the Department, the Team has added two civilian dispatcher members as well.

Participation as a Peer Support Team member is voluntary, and members are not compensated for their time. The Team is formally activated when a critical incident takes place, but more often members find themselves in one-on-one support roles, speaking with officers informally on a daily basis. Team members are available 24 hours a day to assist their fellow officers and dispatchers.

Among other things, a career in law enforcement often leads to increased rates of alcohol abuse, depression, anxiety, and divorce. Due to the demands of the job, Department members may find themselves in need of critical care. In these situations, the Peer Support Team assists in getting officers to facilities that can provide the treatment they need, such as McLean Hospital or On-Site Academy, leaders in treatment for first responders.

Thankfully, in the realm of peer support and critical incident stress management, the Barnstable Police Department was ahead of its time, and continues to be. With the help of the Peer Support Team and the support of Police Administration, we are now one of two departments in the state to have annual mandatory wellness checks through On-Site Academy on all sworn officers as well as civilian dispatchers. We still have a lot of work to do, but with a well-established Team and a supportive Department, we are always moving forward.



KENNEL RENDERING

K9 Kennel Coming this Fall!

This year the Bluecoats of Barnstable partnered with the Rotary Club of Hyannis to provide the Barnstable Police Department with an onsite kennel for our hard-working K-9 officers. This facility will offer a climate controlled environment for the canines to recharge while their handlers are at the station working through training and administrative responsibilities. Currently, these K-9s are kept in the patrol car with every attention paid to their comfort. However these vehicle systems can fail and the number one cause of death for these K-9 officers is heat stroke. The kennel also serves a secondary purpose as a boarding facility for the dogs while their handlers are traveling and are unable to accommodate them. These K-9 officers are an essential component of our police force and will greatly benefit from the dedicated space.



OFFICER FULLAM & K-9 YVONNE

The Incredible Power of Your Referral

It is hard to believe the Bluecoats of Barnstable have now been in existence for 16 years.

Over this period, we have donated over \$430,000 in support of the dedicated women and men of the Barnstable Police Department. Throughout these years, the Bluecoats have stood shoulder to shoulder with these unsung heroes ready to respond in a moment's notice. One of the most recent examples was our ability to swiftly respond to an emergency request from the Chief for special military-grade protective masks at the very beginning of what we now know to have been an invisible enemy, a worldwide pandemic.

The only reason that the Bluecoats of Barnstable had the strength and ability to respond in such an effective manner was you. Yes. It is you as a loyal and dedicated member that has given the Bluecoats of Barnstable the heart, the soul, the strength and the financial stability to carry out our

mission at every call to duty for the last 15 years.

Recent events have proven how critical it is that we continue to grow and strengthen our core membership. As a current member you fully understand our history and, more importantly, value the continuance of our mission for generations to come.

Financial support is not the only way you can help insure the long-term goals of the Bluecoats of Barnstable. Please keep in mind, as a member, one of the most impactful things you can do is exercise your incredible power to personally refer future candidates for membership to the Bluecoats of Barnstable. Thank you for your kind consideration and loyal dedication.

Best regards,

Cliff Carroll

Membership Chair

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bluecoats@comcast.net

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Ree Hirsch

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Christopher Page

MEMBERSHIP CORNER

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

REGULAR:

\$200 Per Year
(\$100 Additional for Spouse)

FOUNDING:

\$1,000 Initial Year
\$200 Subsequent Years

LIFETIME:

\$25,000 One-Time Payment or
\$5,000 Five Annual Installments

Sponsor a new member today by contacting any member of the Board of Directors or sending an E-Mail to Bluecoats@comcast.net.



\$434,151

Bluecoats donations to the Barnstable Police since 2005. Thank you Bluecoats members for your continued support of our mission.



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bluecoats@comcast.net



OYSTER HARBORS CLUB

**Annual Meeting Scheduled for September 29, 2021
AT THE OYSTER HARBORS CLUB**