

## **COMMISSIONER'S CORRESPONDENCE – Highlighting Crisis Intervention Team training, and our efforts to support police officer wellness**

Since 2004, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department has participated in the Crisis Intervention Team initiative, offering weeklong intensive training to hundreds of our police officers. This nationally renowned training provides police officers with additional preparation to assist as they encounter individuals experiencing a crisis.

Whether related to a substance abuse dependency or a mental or behavioral health crisis, police officers who have participated in this training have learned about ways to deescalate volatile situations and reduce the risk of injury to everyone involved. They have also learned about resources available to those experiencing a crisis.

Building on this initiative, our agency also pairs police officers with behavioral health clinicians, who work together when responding to calls for service involving a behavioral health crisis. Together, they are able to deescalate incidents and provide additional resources and referrals.

I appreciate the work our police officers do each day to support our residents who they might encounter when they are experiencing a crisis. While police officers are often the first to respond to these calls, situations like these might not benefit from a traditional law enforcement response, like an arrest. That makes this work so much more impactful in our communities.

Another critical component of this discussion is our work as a department to support our police officers. On a daily basis, our police officers might provide lifesaving first aid to a gunshot victim; perform CPR on an infant or child; or respond to a call involving domestic abuse or a sexual assault. We have also had police officers killed or seriously injured in the line of duty. Calls like these – and so many more – can have an impact on these brave public servants. While every police officer knows the risks associated with this work, that doesn't negate the trauma or cumulative stress that can result over time.

The SLMPD has a dedicated Officer Wellness initiative, including a peer support officer and other members of our agency who work to provide support to our members. The Missouri Crisis Intervention Team has compiled resources specific to police officers and first responders, and the City of St. Louis offers an Employee Assistance Program to all of our staff. Especially following incidents that affect our agency and our police officers, we extend these resources proactively to ensure that each member of our SLMPD family is aware of the support they can receive.

Especially as police officer health and wellness continues to permeate national conversations about the law enforcement profession, I am proud of the work that we do to support each of our police officers and employees.

Finally, in honor of Women's History Month, I wanted to take this opportunity to recognize all of the women who serve – and have served – the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, whether as commissioned officers or professional staff.

Earlier this month, our department paid tribute to the late Floy Mae Helen Scott, who recently passed away. She was our department's first black female police officer, and she served our agency from 1951 to 1957 before going on to have a career in social work and later being ordained. She touched the lives of many in her lifetime, and we continue to honor her service to the City of St. Louis.

