

## **Resiliency, Investment, Support and Encouragement (R.I.S.E.)**

By Lieutenant Ethan Andrews, Monterey Police Department

The Monterey Police Department recognizes that a career in law enforcement can be one of the most rewarding and simultaneously demanding professions a person can choose. It is well documented that the ramifications of police work, such as cumulative and acute stress, lack of sleep, and physical or psychological trauma, can result in a number of negative repercussions on our officers' professional and personal lives. These repercussions can include a reduction in performance, substance abuse problems, relationship issues, disciplinary issues, and mental health injuries and illnesses.

These significant stressors are compounded by the current expectation that law enforcement should resolve complex societal problems such as gun violence, homelessness, and drug use. In today's environment of heightened police scrutiny, decriminalization of certain crimes, and a seemingly never-ending desire by some in the media and popular culture to portray officers in a negative light, today's law enforcement officer is being asked to do more while navigating a complex and changing environment.

Yet with all these challenges, the Monterey Police Department believes serving as a police officer remains a noble and worthwhile profession. In order to prepare officers to not simply survive their careers, but rather to thrive in them, the department created an officer safety and peer support team called R.I.S.E., or Resiliency, Investment, Support, and Encouragement. The mission of R.I.S.E. is all in the name including teaching officers resiliency through investing in wellness, supporting officers in times of need, and encouraging them throughout their careers.

R.I.S.E. is a structured team of Monterey officers and supervisors who volunteer on the team as an auxiliary duty to their normal assignment. Team members receive training focused on Peer Support Counseling and Critical Incident Stress Management. Each team member signs a confidentiality agreement prohibiting them from discussing personal or sensitive information disclosed to them absent criminal activity, a threat of harm, or harassment. Each team member's cell phone number is listed on a contact card and provided to every member of the department to encourage outreach.

*"R.I.S.E. above challenges."*

R.I.S.E. focuses its efforts on physical, mental, and spiritual health through education and outreach. For example, R.I.S.E. performs education on topics such as physical fitness, nutrition, mental trauma, and other health areas by posting materials, posters and articles to a large display board inside the department. The Monterey Police Department has also incorporated a block on wellness into its FTO orientation where R.I.S.E. meets with new officers. The team explains how R.I.S.E. works, discusses healthy stress mitigation practices, and encourages officers to reach out if they should need assistance.

*"When life knocks you down, R.I.S.E."*

The team also performs proactive outreach to officers who may be experiencing an increased stress load. For example, each R.I.S.E. team member volunteers to check in with probationary officers, officers who miss work due to injury, or officers who appear to be struggling. These contacts are often informal, with team members checking in with officers, opening a dialogue, and offering broad-based support. Responses to this outreach have been positive, with officers reporting decreased feelings of isolation during stressful periods and increased feelings of value to the department.

*“Together we R.I.S.E.”*

Another R.I.S.E. function is coordinating “camaraderie events” designed to bring officers together off duty in a relaxed setting. Previous events have included beach barbeques, hiking trips, and other social activities that are designed to build interpersonal relationships. Hosting these events off duty allows officers to interact and create deeper, more personal bonds that might not be possible while on duty. All of these activities are designed to ensure the department is taking care of its most valuable resource, people, while breaking the stigma surrounding asking for help.

*“R.I.S.E., so that officers may.”*