VIRGINIA SHERIFFS' INSTITUTE
VSI

NEWSLETTER
SUMMER EDITION 2020

2020 VA GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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2020-2021

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We Want to Hear from You ...

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2020 VA GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

NEW LAWS TAKE EFFECT — HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute monitors all legislation that impacts the office of the sheriff. Below are a few key pieces of legislation regarding public safety:

- **HB 65** creates a program for local, regional, or statewide notification of a missing child with autism.
- **HB 874** prohibits motorists from using cell phones and other handheld devices while driving and would penalize drivers $125 for the first offense and $250 for any subsequent one. Exceptions are made for emergency vehicles, drivers reporting an emergency, and those who are parked. (Effective January 1, 2021.)
- **HB 972/SB 2** decriminalizes small amounts of marijuana.
- **HB 257/SB 729** allows principals to decide whether to report low-level criminal activity to law enforcement.
- **SB 63/HB 885** raises the speed limit threshold for reckless driving on interstate highways.
- **HB 256** provides that a student at any elementary or secondary school is not guilty of disorderly conduct in a public place if the disorderly conduct occurred on school property, on a school bus, or at any activity conducted or sponsored by any school.
- **HB 1211/SB 34** grants "driver privilege cards" to non-Virginia residents.

SHERIFFS' RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Virginia's deputy sheriffs have been out protecting the public, transporting the mentally ill, participating in the judicial process, and running jails. And because of their vital role in public safety, they expose themselves to a much higher likelihood of contracting this virus.

While many other workers in our state were able to stay at home during the peak of the outbreak, deputy sheriffs had to leave the comfort of their homes and perform this vital service to protect all. Several deputy sheriffs tested positive, including deputy sheriffs that perform patrol and jail duties.

In an effort to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus, a number of new protocols were implemented to protect the public and inmates in custody from the virus. Specifically, jails closed visitation, limited the transport of inmates, and implemented sanitizing and other procedures based on recommendations with their local health departments. Jails also stocked up on medical supplies.

During this ongoing crisis, sheriffs, deputies, and all first responders will continue to work diligently responding to calls and never hesitate to put themselves

in harm's way to perform essential duties and ensure public safety in the City of Salem and across Virginia.

And we would like to thank you for the sacrifices you've made and the critical role you continue to play in keeping you, your family, and your community safe by adhering to social distancing measures that are included in the President's Guidelines for Opening Up America Again.

STAY SAFE IN THE SUMMER HEAT

This summer, we continue to face a new normal, given the ongoing public health and economic crisis created by the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, you may choose to stay closer to home or limit your summertime activities to smaller groups.

However you choose to spend your summer, I'd like to pass along some safety tips offered by the National Safety Council to help keep you and your family safe. Whether you're working or playing outside in the summer, anybody not accustomed to the heat is at risk for a heat-related illness. Take steps to protect yourself:

- Wear appropriate clothing, including sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat
- Take frequent water breaks
- Replace salt and minerals
- Apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15
- Never leave kids or pets unattended in a vehicle
- Stay cool indoors or take a cool shower to cool off

Outdoor grilling is popular during the summer, but it comes with its own set of hazards. Follow these safe grilling tips:

- Check the gas tank hose for leaks
- Place your grill well away from your home, overhanging branches, or other structure
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area
- Keep your grill clean, removing grease and fat buildup
- Never leave your grill unattended
- If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid
- When finished grilling let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container and keep the container inside.

COVID-19-RELATED SCAMS

Fraudsters have ramped up their efforts to steal your personal information and your money during the coronavirus pandemic. A number of scams have emerged, including federal stimulus related scams, cyber scams, telephone and text messaging scams, counterfeit product offers, bogus door-to-door tests and virus-related products, and phony charity donation requests.

Be aware of the following schemes:

- scammers offering to sell fake cures, vaccines, and advice on unproven treatments for COVID-19;
- scammers creating fake shops, websites, social media accounts, and email addresses claiming to sell medical supplies currently in high demand, such as surgical masks;
- scammers contacting people by phone and email, pretending to be doctors and hospitals that have treated a friend or relative for COVID-19, and demanding payment for that treatment;
- and scammers soliciting donations for individuals, groups, and areas affected by COVID-19.

Some Americans have also reported attempts to defraud them of their coronavirus stimulus relief payments. Please remember the government will never ask you for things like bank information under the guise of depositing money, nor will it ask you to pay any money up front to receive a stimulus check.

As you continue to make your way through this crisis, please remain vigilant and use common sense when presented with offers online, over the phone or in person. Bottom line, if an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Also do your research if you are considering donating to a charity to ensure it is a legitimate organization.

VSA ANNOUNCES NEW "DISPATCHER OF THE YEAR AWARD"

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association is pleased to announce a new award, **"Dispatcher of the Year Award,"** to recognize the critical work of all our dispatchers. The work of dispatchers requires patience, active listening, sound decision making skills, and the ability to remain calm during a crisis, all while taking quick, necessary, and often lifesaving action.

We are pleased to announce that Marcella Keene of the Tazewell County Sheriff's Office has been selected as the 2020 "Dispatcher of the Year Award." Marcella has shown unusual initiative, exceptional dedication, and courage in the performance of her duties to include: extraordinary judgment, bravery, lifesaving and rescue.

Personal Message from Sheriff April Staton

On behalf of all of us at the City of Salem Sheriff's Office, I hope you and your family are eager to enjoy warmer weather and time outdoors this summer. I know the past few months have been extraordinarily difficult for our citizens. In fact, I can't remember an issue that impacted our community more deeply than the coronavirus pandemic.

Yet, the resilience and patience you've demonstrated is a true testament to the fortitude of Virginians like you. And I couldn't be more grateful for the strong sense of community you've demonstrated during this difficult time, and the steps you've taken to help protect the most vulnerable in our community. Your uplifting messages of support have not gone unnoticed and are truly appreciated.

While this past spring has been anything but normal in the Commonwealth of Virginia, I imagine you are looking forward to spending time with family and friends while taking advantage of activities that our great state has to offer. Remember, Virginia summer heat can be scorching so please take steps to keep cool and stay hydrated, wear sunscreen, and seek shade during the midday hours when ultraviolet rays are at their greatest. Be sure to wear a life jacket if you go boating. Of course, no matter where you travel this summer, it's always a good idea to keep a well-stocked first aid kit in your car, since accidents can happen anywhere.

Rest assured; we will continue to take proper precautions to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus while we serve our community at the highest level. Please stay safe, and I urge you to contact my office if you have any questions about the subjects we discuss in this issue of the VSI newsletter, or if you have any other concerns about crime prevention or public safety efforts in our community.

It is my privilege to serve as your sheriff, and I deeply appreciate your continued support!

Sincerely,

Sheriff April Staton
2 East Calhoun St.
Salem, VA 24153
(540) 375-3040

2020 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

Sheriff Lenny Millholland from Frederick County presents a scholarship award to Erin Dooley

With the help of residents like you from the City of Salem, VSI secures the critical funding needed to continue providing desperately needed scholarships to Virginia citizens pursuing Criminal Justice degrees — a great source of pride for us all and a vital step in ensuring our safety. VSI is the only organization in Virginia helping the state's law enforcement students with Criminal Justice scholarships.

One of our most recent scholarship award recipients is Christian Strom, of Roanoke County, Virginia. Christian is planning on attending Old Dominion University where he will be pursuing a course of study in Criminal Justice.

We're very pleased to announce that 68 scholarships were awarded to deserving students across the Commonwealth pursuing a career of service to community in law enforcement, thanks to the generosity of citizen supporters like you. Full-time students are awarded $1,000 scholarships; part-time students are awarded $500 scholarships. That's an impressive $67,000 in total scholarships awarded. Your support is the reason we've had such tremendous success of our scholarship program year after year!

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute solicits articles and comments from associate members of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles and comments should be directed to: John W. Jones, Executive Director, Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, 901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1301, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or phone (804) 225-7152.