

The Badge



Georgia Department of Public Safety Quarterly Newsletter

2010 National Law Enforcement Exploring Conference in Atlanta



SUMMER 2010

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A Message from the Deputy Commissioner



Lt. Colonel
Fred Snellings

Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* begins, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." It has been said that adversity is what introduces you to yourself.

When written in Chinese the word "Crisis" is composed of two characters. One represents danger; the other represents opportunity. Beware of the danger but seize the opportunity. These turbulent times offer remarkable opportunities to those who are prepared for them. You have to be willing to move beyond the walls of inertia and tradition. Nobody procrastinates their way to the top, so never underestimate opportunity's ability to disguise itself. Success in life is the ability to play a bad hand well. These are uncertain times for you and the citizens you serve.

I feel incredibly blessed and honored to have this job...it's been the job of a lifetime. One of the most frequent questions asked of me is, "How do you cope with hearing about problems every day?" The simple answer is that I cope because I love my job. I get to make small, and sometimes large, differences in employees' work lives, and that's very fulfilling.

Interestingly, though, while the problems people bring to me are diverse, the lack of motivation and inspiration are often a common underlying theme. I think of the ability to inspire in terms of the arts. For example, in musical composition, we can either create harmony or discord depending on how artful we are in selecting and arranging the notes on the scale. So, too, we can draw on some basic techniques to inspire an infinite number of harmonious outcomes in the Department of Public Safety.

You don't just work. You work to make a difference. If you're not inspired at the DPS then something's wrong, I think. Don't you? We can all take a leadership role in making people feel they have something to offer. We can help co-workers understand how they fit into the master plan for this organization and give them a chance to make a difference. Once inspired, they will roll up their sleeves and dig in. If we want to be known for those exemplars of performance that stand the test of time, let inspiration and motivation be at the heart of what makes those achievements live on.

I would like to convey my gratitude and admiration to everyone for the manner in which you have reacted in response to the economic crisis and the resulting furloughs. We may feel lost in a maze of challenges during these tough economic times, but with bold, new thinking we can find our way to a brighter future.

Post 6 - Gainesville Dedication

On June 24, GSP Post 6 in Gainesville had a dedication for its new facility along with Colonel Hitchens, troopers, retirees, Board of Public Safety members, and Hall County Board of Commissioners. The family of Trooper Mike Fortson was presented with a resolution and a letter from Governor Sonny Perdue (below).



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CART Exercise Successful

A drill to test the effectiveness of Georgia's Child Abduction Response Team (CART) was held in Rockdale County on July 29. Using a mock abduction of a teenager scenario, the exercise was part of Georgia's effort to attain national accreditation. The exercise drew excellent comments from on-site evaluators from Fox Valley Technical College who will determine if Georgia will become the fourth state team in the nation to earn the prestigious certification. During the Thursday exercise, troopers performed road checks in the area of the crime scene while Aviation searched from overhead. Additionally, the exercise consisted of neighborhood canvassing by the GBI, ground searches by the Department of Natural Resources, canine searches by the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency, sex offender tracking by DOC and the Board of Pardons and Paroles, and investigative support by the Department of Human Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice. The event also served as an opportunity to test communications between local and state agencies. All went well; so well that SFC Frank Pfirman (Post 46, Monroe) located the "suspects" before the exercise scenario had a chance to fully play out. Evaluators told team members during the debriefing they saw nothing that would bar Georgia from being accredited. A huge thank you to all who participated in the exercise.



Captain Soffie Thigpen of the Georgia State Patrol briefs the media during the CART exercise outside the Command Post.

Prepare, Plan, and Stay Informed



The Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) recommends that everyone creates an emergency plan that includes a detailed checklist with items that are specific to you and your family's needs, as well as a communications plan to help you reconnect

after an emergency. Some of the recommended items include the following:

- One gallon of water per person per day, for at least 3 days
- A 3-day supply of non-perishable food and can opener
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert, and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit and a whistle to signal for help
- Face mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Local maps
- Prescription medications and glasses
- Important family documents (insurance policies, identification and bank records) in a waterproof, portable container
- Cash or traveler's checks and change

Ready Georgia, a project of GEMA, is a statewide campaign designed to educate and empower Georgians to prepare for and respond to natural disasters, pandemic outbreaks, potential terrorist attacks and other large-scale emergencies. For more information, please visit the website at www.ready.ga.gov.

DPS Employee Receives Award for Talk Show



Jacqueline Bunn, Deputy Director of the DPS Legal Services Unit, recently received an award for her work on the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorney's "Legally Speaking" television show. This show provides useful information and education on a broad range of legal topics to the community. Jacqueline has served as the show's host and scriptwriter since 2004. Four to six segments are taped each year.

The Public Service Award was presented at a summit held by the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations in San Francisco, California on August 6.

DPS Hosts National Law Enforcement Exploring Conference



The National Law Enforcement Exploring Conference took place July 19-24, at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. The Department of Public Safety hosted the event and Colonel Bill Hitchens served as the conference chairman.

This conference is conducted every other year and is attended by thousands of Law Enforcement Explorers and their adult leaders from throughout the country. They participate in a week comprised of team and individual competitions, seminars, demonstrations, exhibits, recreation and fun.

"The conference is an opportunity to open doors to those interested in law enforcement," Colonel Hitchens said. "It gives participants a perspective of what all is involved versus just applying for a job," he adds.

DPS personnel represented the department and participated in the team competition and the Career Fair. Troopers, MCCD and Capitol Police officers answered questions regarding their roles in law enforcement from thousands of Explorers during the fair. Olivia Bridgeman (group photo, second from left) has been an Explorer with the El Paso Co. Sheriff's Office for the past five years. She views a career in law enforcement as a way to help out the community and serve as a role model. She enjoys helping others and became interested in law enforcement because her uncle serves as a military police officer. "It is perceived that women can't do as good a job as men, but women can do the job just as well," says Bridgeman.

The Specialized Collision Reconstruction Team (SCRT) was responsible for conducting the Traffic Crash Investigation Competition, which was the largest and most complex of all of the competition venues at the conference.

There were eight sessions each day. At the beginning of each session, four Explorer teams would be assigned to one of the four scenes, briefed about the scenario and given basic information. They would then be released to conduct their investigation of the crash. The scenario was a one-vehicle vs. pedestrian, fatality crash. SCRT set up four identical crash scenes, each with a patrol car, crash vehicle, skid marks, roadway evidence, and all of the tools necessary to investigate the crash.

A judge assigned to each scene graded the team on their performance, according to a "checklist" that specified various point values for certain tasks that they should perform, such as traffic control, measuring and documenting the scene, locating and interviewing the driver and witness, determining speed, reaching the proper conclusions, and making the correct charges, if warranted.

The entire process was limited to a maximum of 55 minutes, including a de-briefing afterwards. SCRT members served as the judges. The Explorer teams were assisted by SCRT/MCCD officers, and Troop J personnel served as the drivers and witnesses.

Hakeem Kamara (1st photo to left, far right) joined the Bowie Police Department's Explorer program a little over three months ago after two friends already in the program pressured him into joining. He is involved in ROTC and enjoys protecting people. "I feel it will make me a better citizen." After completing the traffic crash investigation competition Kamara states, "Law enforcement does a lot more than people think they do. They do a lot for the country and to protect the citizens."

"This was an eye-opening experience to see young people that were very well-mannered, cooperative, and interested in careers in law enforcement," adds Colonel Hitchens. "They conducted themselves like true professionals."



Hurricane Preparedness



Pre-season hurricane predictions are of little value, other than to call attention to the threat of severe tropical weather and to hopefully encourage preparedness.

The Colorado State weather gazers are calling for 15 named storms, including eight hurricanes, four of which could be Category 3 or higher. AccuWeather says to look for as many as 18 named storms, including five hurricanes. The active season is June 1 through November 30.

The most important thing that you can do is to be informed and prepared. Disaster prevention includes both being prepared, as well as reducing damages.

Disaster prevention includes modifying your home to strengthen it against storms so that you can be as safe as possible. It also includes having the supplies on hand to weather the storm. The suggestions provided here are only guides. You should use common sense in your disaster prevention.

- **DEVELOP A FAMILY PLAN** - Your family's plan should be based on your vulnerability to the Hurricane Hazards. You should keep a written plan and share your plan with other friends or family.
- **CREATE A DISASTER SUPPLY KIT** - There are certain items you need to have regardless of where you ride out a hurricane. The disaster supply kit is a useful tool when you evacuate as well as making you as safe as possible in your home.
- **SECURE YOUR HOME** - There are things that you can do to make your home more secure and able to withstand stronger storms.
- **ONLINE VULNERABILITY INFO** - There are web sites that can give you information about your communities vulnerability to specific hazards. These include hurricanes, as well as other weather related hazards.

DPS A Double Winner for IACP Awards



The Department of Public Safety was a double winner for the International Association of Chiefs of Police's (IACP) 2010 National Law Enforcement Challenge (NLEC). This year the Georgia State Patrol received second place in the "State Police/Highway Patrol" category for agencies with 501 to 1,000 sworn employees.

The Motor Carrier Compliance Division received third place in the "Special Law Enforcement" category. The awards will be presented at the Highway Safety Awards Breakfast at the IACP Annual Conference in October. The Georgia Governor's Challenge Awards will also take place in October where the Georgia State Patrol and the Motor Carrier Compliance Division will be recognized. In addition, first, second, and third place will be given to three of the Georgia State Patrol Troops for their law enforcement efforts during 2009.

Georgia's New Texting Law



The new texting while driving law prohibits drivers from using a wireless telecommunications device while operating a motor vehicle on the public road or highway. The fine for violation is set by statute at \$150 and one point on the driver's record. A law was also passed that makes it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to text while driving or use a cellular telephone. The fine for violation is also one point on the driver's record and a \$150 fine. The fine is doubled if the teenager was using a cell phone or texting at the time of a crash. For more information refer to Georgia Code 40-6-241.

Update: Seat Belts & Pickup Trucks

Georgia law now requires adults in pickup trucks to wear seat belts. Georgia has had a primary seat belt law since 1996, but the law exempted adults in pickups until legislation was passed and signed into law earlier this year. For more information, refer to Georgia Code 40-8-76.1.

make your truck
tougher



Safety belts reduce fatalities in truck crashes by 50%
buckle up in your truck

