



CALIFORNIA POLICE CHIEF

Serving as the voice of and resource of choice for California's municipal Police Chiefs

WINTER 2019



TAKING CARE OF THE HUMAN BEHIND THE BADGE

ALSO INSIDE

Innovative First Responder
Therapy

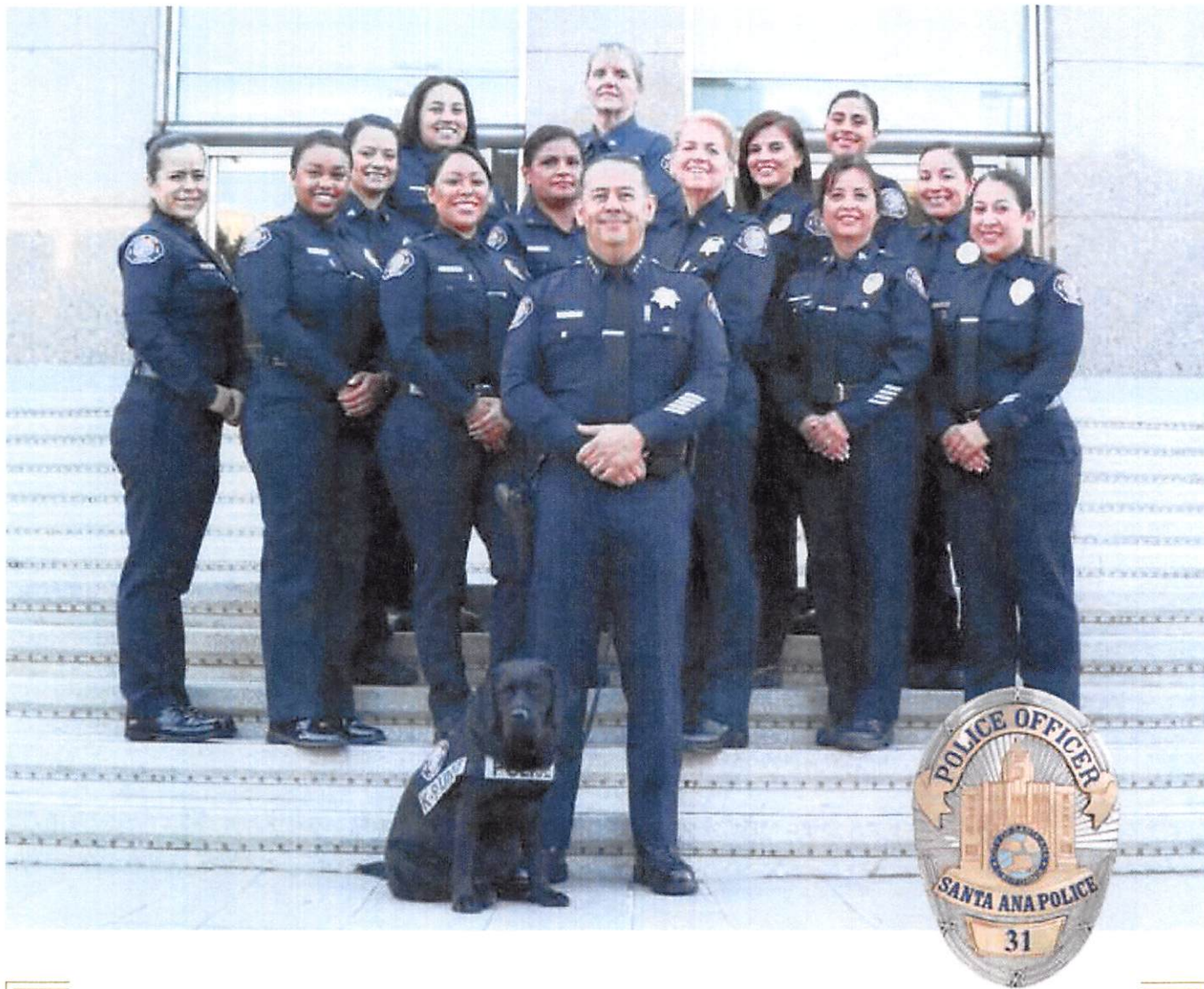
The Importance of Sleep

Wellness—Day Zero to
Retirement and Beyond

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND OFFICER WELLNESS; *Innovative First Responder Therapy*

By Commander Michael Claborn, Santa Ana Police Department





Since 2018, the risk of a police officer dying by suicide has surpassed that of dying in the line of duty. As illustrated by the below chart, the number of suicides this year is almost double the number of line of duty deaths. It is apparent now more than ever that it is time to prioritize health, wellness and suicide awareness.

	2017	2018	2019 (to date)
Suicide	169	167	163
Line of Duty Death	174	164	94



Santa Ana City Council Meeting



National Coffee with a Cop

As an industry, we have tried to think of new and innovative ways to combat the ever-increasing number of suicides by police officers. Employee wellness programs have been implemented by agencies and departments across the country. These programs have diverse goals such as increased morale, improved recruitment and retention of employees, reduced absenteeism, and building camaraderie among coworkers.

The Santa Ana Police Department, under the direction of Chief David Valentin, began research on the use of a therapeutic canine. At the time the research began, there were no full-time therapeutic canines in Orange County. We eventually found a model utilized by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department (Captain Coby Webb), which implemented a black Labrador Retriever (Arthur) at their Coroner's Office. Arthur lives at the 24 hour-a-day

facility and does not have an assigned handler. Since his implementation, employees have reported an increase in morale, reduction of sick time usage, and even a postponed retirement. Arthur was such a success, they recently added a second therapeutic canine (Dally) at their Dispatch Communications Center.

The Santa Ana Police Department has since acquired a black Labrador Retriever by the name of Shadow. She lives within the confines of our four-story police administration building, which includes her own designated office for sleeping and eating. During the day, she typically spends time in the Detective Bureau or Communications Division. However, she has been known to make appearances in roll call briefings, the Watch Commander's office, City Council meetings and the Chief's Office.

Shadow's primary function is employee wellness,



Carne Asada with a Cop

and this initiative has been met with an overwhelming show of support. However, we have found two additional opportunities for Shadow to not only interact with our employees, but the community as well. Those two areas are juvenile victim interviews and Community Engagement events.

Shadow has assisted on multiple interviews of juvenile victims of sex crimes. The feedback received was that she is a tremendous help in lowering the victim's anxiety level and getting them to open up. The Orange County Social Worker assigned to the Santa Ana Police Department feels that Shadow is such an asset that she requested Shadow be made available on all juvenile sexual assault victim interviews conducted in the City of Santa Ana.

Shadow has made numerous community engagement appearances at events such as Coffee with a Cop, the

Community Police Academy, student walk-a-thon and an Orange County Gang Reduction & Intervention Partnership fundraiser. She has stolen the show at all of her appearances and always has a long line of people waiting to interact with her.

Focusing on employee wellness using innovative first responder therapy is a goal that every agency should embrace. The implementation of a Therapeutic Canine Program at the Santa Ana Police Department has shown our employees that they are our top priority and we will stop at nothing to exhaust every avenue to reduce their stress, increase their morale, and improve their overall quality of life. Fully embracing this concept is the cornerstone of the Santa Ana Police Department's servant leadership model and the Chief's motto of ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION. ■