



*My View*

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## OUR FRIENDS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Unless you don't watch TV or read the newspapers, you know that police officers and police departments these days are receiving very negative coverage in the media. I readily admit that there are a "few bad apples" in law enforcement as in any other profession. However, I know, as all TIP members know, that the overwhelming number of police officers across the nation are hard working professionals dedicated to serving their communities.

Much to my delight, I am noticing an increasing number of positive stories about law enforcement in the media this holiday season. These stories show police officers in the holiday spirit helping children, the homeless, veterans and others in need.

While I welcome these stories, I'm afraid the overwhelming coverage of law enforcement will continue to be focused on police shootings and police department corruption. After all, these stories are dramatic. They sell newspapers and increase TV ratings.

The result: the general public develops a distorted negative image of police officers. And that's understandable. Most people get their impressions of the police from the media and when they are pulled over for a traffic citation.

TIP Volunteers are privileged to see an entirely different side of police officers. I don't know another organization whose volunteers have such a "close up" view of officers as they do their jobs in the field. And our encounters with the police occur on a daily basis, not just when something dramatic happens. What we see are officers who care (that's why they call us), and officers filled with kindness and compassion for survivors of tragedy. I'm sure that every TIP Volunteer in the country could furnish me with enough examples of police officer kindness to fill a book.

I believe that with the privilege of seeing the caring side of police officers on a regular basis, comes a responsibility. We need to take on the responsibility of spreading the news about the "good cops" we encounter as well as appreciating officers when we see them being the caring people we know they are.

I know that TIP Volunteers and staff are already doing this, but I want to encourage you to "kick it up a notch." We want to counter the negative narrative about police officers told by the media these days.

Let's start a "Cops Care" campaign. Here are a few ideas...

- On every TIP call when it's possible let's thank the officer who is there for calling us, and let's make it a point to express our appreciation to him/her for little acts of kindness we observe.

- When we witness an officer being kind and caring to a survivor of tragedy, let's send a letter to his/her supervisor.
- Let's profile caring police officers on our Facebook pages.
- Let's continue our Heroes With Heart events and make them even bigger and better.
- Let's spread the word to our family and friends about the caring police officers we encounter. Probably the best way we can do this is not with generalizations about the police but by being specific: *"On a TIP call I was on the other day, I worked with a wonderful police officer who really went out of his way to help the family after a death of a loved one."* Of course we can't talk in specifics about TIP calls, but we can make positive statements based on our TIP experience.
- Let's include the police in our TIP activities...graduations, volunteer appreciation events, holiday activities, and training academies. We want those who attend these events to see, hear and meet police officers who care for their community.
- Let's attend events which honor police officers.
- Let's bring "goodies" to police officers during the holidays.

Of course just doing what we do in TIP is a gift to police officers. Our surveys over the years indicate that 98% of police officers report *"TIP saved me time by allowing me to concentrate on my job or allowed me to return to service."* 92% of officers report that *"The TIP volunteer reduced my stress knowing a resident in crisis was being cared for."* So an essential part of our Cops Care campaign is to simply continue to provide the high performance service we provide day in and day out.

I'm sure that TIP Affiliates and TIP Volunteers are already doing much or what I have suggested above. Bravo! But if we put our minds to it and think in terms of a COPS CARE campaign, I bet we can do even more. I think it's time for the TIP organization to speak out louder than ever about our friends in police departments across the country.

***Happy Holidays!***

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