

MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



THE HIDDEN VALUE OF TIP'S PARTNERSHIPS

Recently, I attended a TIP event where the speaker, the Chief of a major Fire Department said: *"We recently hired a company to take care of our personnel after difficult calls. We made that decision because we've been seeing TIP volunteers care for residents, and we realized we need help at times too."* In other words, this Fire Chief was saying that TIP not only helps residents in his City, but that TIP was a major influence in his department's embrace of a debriefing program for their personnel.

There have been a few times in my TIP career when a public safety official or healthcare professional remarked that TIP had a positive influence on their organizations. Usually what these leaders were saying is that because TIP volunteers regularly worked side by side with their personnel that the volunteers' care and compassion *"rubbed off"* and resulted in their organizations being more caring towards those who are emotionally traumatized.

To be honest, while I appreciated these sentiments I never gave much thought to them. Until now. The Fire Chief who gave TIP credit for inspiring a positive change in his organization made a direct concrete connection between TIP's work and their adoption of a debriefing program.

Can we conclude that TIP's regular demonstration of compassion and caring positively influences public safety and health care organizations? Do these organizations become more caring and compassionate themselves as a result of regularly working with TIP volunteers? I think so. I believe that the almost daily interaction with caring TIP volunteers affects how personnel in public safety organizations and hospitals treat those they encounter who are emotionally traumatized, even when there is not a TIP volunteer present.

Of course, we are not the only factor which influences how an organization cares for survivors of tragedy. We are just one factor, but an important one.

If it's true that working side by side with TIP volunteers positively influences emergency and healthcare personnel and their organizations, does this *"rubbing off"* affect work in the other

direction? Does working regularly with emergency responders, nurses and doctors positively affect TIP volunteers and our organization? Yes! we wouldn't be the organization we are today without the positive influence of the emergency response system.

Working with police officers, firefighters, nurses and doctors has positively affected our organization in at least two ways...

1. It has increased our understanding of what emergency responders do every day and the challenges they face. One can't be in TIP for any length of time without experiencing a deepening appreciation and respect for emergency responders and healthcare professionals. Working with emergency responders day in and day out changes how everyone in TIP views police officers and other emergency responders. And I know we bring these positive attitudes with us into the community at large.

2. TIP is not only a group of compassionate and caring volunteers. We are the *"swat team"* of nonprofit organizations. We respond quickly 24/7 to all kinds of stressful situations. We are this effective swat team because of rubbing shoulders regularly with first responders. We have learned and continue to learn from their professionalism, their high standards, their concern for safety, their attention to detail, their focus on training and their willingness to *"take it all on."*

We started out years ago with compassion and the knowledge to help survivors of tragedy. But it has been only because of our regular interaction with emergency responders that we have learned to become emergency responders ourselves.

In short, when two different cultures come together (the public safety *"tough"* culture and the TIP *"soft"* culture) good things happen to both. The public safety culture becomes a little *"softer"* and the TIP culture a little bit *"tougher."*