



Connecting Law Enforcement and Behavioral Health

By Southeast Health Group

Southeast Health Group established a new position for a Law Enforcement Liaison late last year, filled by former La Junta Police Department's Deputy Chief, Mike Engebrecht. Mike has experience as a fire fighter and an EMT, and served as a police officer for 10 years. "The transition from police work to civilian work has been a real lifestyle change," said Engebrecht. "I used to carry a handgun and cuffs, but now I am armed with information and resources on how to help people experiencing a behavioral health crisis."

In his new role, Mike is focused on increasing communication between law enforcement and behavioral health, and making services available to as many people as possible. He visits all

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law enforcement agencies in the six counties at least once a month, and provides information on training for Crisis Intervention Training, de-escalation, vicarious trauma, and Mental Health First Aid. As a certified Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) coach, he has a significant influence on new officer training through Otero Junior College's Law Enforcement Academy.

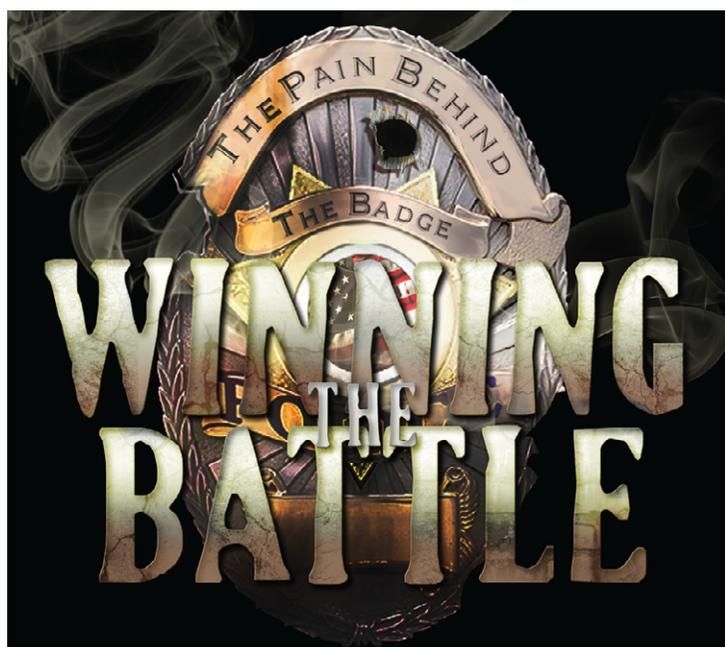
"It's really important for people to understand the power of

de-escalation techniques," said Engebrecht. "People who work in behavioral health are really skilled at listening and talking to people. As a police officer, we use those same skills when we come upon a scene, to try to lower the intensity of the situation and understand what is going on. There are a lot of parallels between the work of law enforcement and behavioral health where crisis intervention is concerned."

Southeast Health Group is opening a new regional assessment center next month. The facility at 721 Barnes Avenue in La Junta will serve as both an assessment and treatment center.

"I will be handling a lot of the outreach and referrals, and making sure law enforcement knows there are beds available for withdrawal management and people who are suicidal," said Engebrecht. "It will be a real asset to law enforcement to have a centralized location where they can take people who need services."

Engebrecht is also working to help the law enforcement community heal from recent tragedies. "Law enforcement officers and their families live with a certain amount of trauma based on the dangerousness of the job. They also experience vicarious trauma from witnessing on-



scene accidents and other life-threatening events. It's not easy," said Engebrecht.

A free, all-day training called "Winning the Battle" will be provided at Otero Junior College student center June 5th and 6th. The training is a very effective tool used to help first responders and their spouses deal with tragedies commonly referred to as 'Critical Incidents'. It is even more effective in helping deal with the everyday stressors associated with their chosen careers that can result in PTSD, depression, cumulative stress, domestic violence, failed relationships, alcoholism, substance use disorders and even suicide. Spouses are encouraged to attend.

For more information on Southeast Health Group's services and training resources, contact Mike Engebrecht at 1-800-511-5446, or find us on the web at www.southeasthealthgroup.org.