



Cowlitz Chaplaincy

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*A non-profit organization serving Emergency Service Responders
and Citizens since 1983*

Volume 5

Issue Number 5

October 2009

Leadership Change

On September 30, 2009 Sheriff Bill Mahoney retired and will be missed as the Sheriff of Cowlitz County. His leadership has been one of success and I have been proud to be working for his Office during his years of service. With warm hearts we say farewell, Bill, and may your retirement bring excitement and fulfillment. May God richly bless you and your family in the coming days and years ahead.



The New sheriff is well known to the Sheriff's Office and County at

Large. Our New Sheriff is Sheriff Mark Nelson the son of Retired



Sheriff Les Nelson. We all welcome him in his new leadership position and we support him in his future journey as our Sheriff. Our prayers are for his success and that God will bless his leadership.

DISASTER JUST BELOW THE SURFACE

This summer has been a very costly summer for 9 families in our county. We who work in or with emergency services found ourselves with emotions of sorrow and despair as we searched or tried to comfort the survivors of 9 who drowned. Our summer months were supposed to be filled with fun in the sun, with laughter and picnics and the like.

Six of those who drowned were people who should have made better choices. Although that might be a bit harsh, let me try to explain. It seems the more familiar we become with our environments the less observant we become to caution and we become more at ease to take risks.

Our county is blessed with a great variety of recreational choices for us to enjoy and each comes with areas where we need to administer sound caution and wise choices. Because drowning are at the forefront of our minds let me expound upon the danger that lurks just below the surface of our water ways of Cowlitz County and can be observed anywhere.

Most all of our rivers and high lakes get there water from glaciers. Glaciers are made of ICE and that is cold! The Columbia River can range from 30 degree surface to highs around 70 degrees in a very hot summer. That is, if the river has been warmed over a prolonged period of time. This year on September 12th the temperature was 68 degrees by Willow Grove.

Our body temperature if normal is about 98.6 degrees. As you can see the water is colder then we are. The real danger during summertime with hypothermia is when water temperatures are between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

Most drownings in our rivers around here are caused by hypothermia and the water currents. Common problems with water currents in our local waters are swift water and sometimes turbulent speed with under tows. Both hypothermia and swiftly moving water play a major role in the deaths that occur.

What is the concern about hypothermia? Hypothermia is when our bodies lose heat faster then we can produce it. To protect our core, that is where our heart and other vital organs are, our body starts the shut down and we lose strength in our arms, legs and

our thinking process and very soon we do not have the ability to protect ourselves from the lurking danger that awaits us.



More In-Depth Information

What is hypothermia?

Hypothermia occurs when the body gets cold and loses heat faster than the body can make it. A normal rectal body temperature ranges from 97.5° F (36.4° C) to 99.6° F (37.6° C) and for most people is 98.6° F (37° C) .

Sometimes a normal, healthy adult has a low body temperature, such as 96° F (36° C) . If the person with the low body temperature is not ill, does not have any other problems, and is not an infant or an older adult, then evaluation usually is not needed.

What can cause hypothermia?

Hypothermia can occur when you are exposed to cold air, water, wind, or rain.

Your body temperature can drop to a low level at temperatures of 50° F (10° C) or higher in wet and windy weather, or if you are in 60° F (16° C) to 70° F (21° C) water. If you have mild hypothermia, home treatment may be enough to bring your body temperature back up to normal.

What are the symptoms?

(Cont'd on page two.....)

YOUR PRAYERS AND MONEY COUNT

Early symptoms include:

- Shivering.
- Cold, pale, or blue-gray skin.
- Lack of interest or concern (apathy).
- Poor judgment.
- Mild unsteadiness in balance or walking.
- Slurred speech.
- Numb hands and fingers and difficulty performing tasks.

Late symptoms include:

- The trunk of the body is cold to the touch.
- Muscles become stiff.
- Slow pulse.
- Breathing that is shallow and slower.
- Weakness or sleepiness.
- Confusion.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Shivering, which may stop if body temperature drops below 90° F (32° C).

What can happen from hypothermia?

Hypothermia is an emergency condition and can quickly lead to unconsciousness and death if heat loss continues. It is very important to know the symptoms of hypothermia and get treatment quickly. If someone begins to shiver violently, stumble, or can't respond to questions suspect hypothermia and warm him or her quickly.

Each of the drowning could have been prevented with the use of a life jacket.

Along with the many drowning we have had a number of other serious tragedies occur between June and September. These calls have kept Steve and me along with our emergency personnel very busy dealing with all the emotions that you can imagine encompasses us. Your faithfulness with your prayers and financial support do two major things for us. First, they encourage us with strength and God's interaction by anointing us with wisdom so we can bring help and solutions to those who find themselves in an unplanned crisis. Second, your finances make sure we can respond to those calls. We are so grateful to each one of you, knowing that you are making a sacrifice during these trying economic times. I know God will reward you for your faithfulness.

WE HAVE THE WINNERS!

Our BEEF Drawing has three winners the Grand prize won a 1/2 of Beef and the second and third winners received gift certification for dinners, one at Parker's Steak House and one at Applebees.

We at the chaplaincy want to thank all of you who participated in purchasing drawing tickets.

Chaplain Lyle Prather



BEEF DRAWING WINNERS

FIRST PLACE WINNER: Jim Keller; Woodland Police Dept.

SECOND PLACE WINNER: Kelly Dobbins; Blake's Auto

THIRD PLACE WINNER: Darren Ullmann; Cowitz County Sheriff's Department

Just Some Thoughts...

As a chaplain I have been called out to all sorts of scenes and situations over the past few years. Truth is, I seldom know exactly what I am getting into until I arrive on scene and even then there are 'surprises' that jump up at you. You just never know what to expect.

There is one call I prayed I

The call no chaplain wants to go on...

would never get – that of one of my own officers/firefighters “down”. Many of my peers in Chaplaincy ministry have been called to such a scene and I have heard them speak about the trauma it caused them. Again, I prayed that it would not happen “on my watch.”

Unfortunately in life we don't always get our prayers answered the way we want to, do we? One of my worst fears became reality on September 6, 2009. While this was not a “Line of Duty Death” it came as close as it can without being one. The death I am speaking of was that of Kevin Thomas Merry, affectionately referred to as “*The Colonel*.”

The “*Colonel*” had been forced to resign from the Longview Police Department a couple years ago due to complications from Multiple Sclerosis. I don't know anyone who fought harder against a disease than Kevin did. He hated MS and battled bravely against its attacks like the true warrior soldier he was. Did I mention that, in addition to being a Police Officer, Kevin was a retired US Army Lt. Colonel having been a Cobra helicopter pilot? Like I said,

Kevin was a warrior (def: “a person who has shown great vigor, courage, or aggressiveness”). By the way, Kevin won the battle against MS – it did NOT take his life – a heart attack did.

In addition to being one of my officers and a fellow veteran – he was one of my very best friends. He was the “*Colonel*” and I was “*Padre*”. Our journey into friendship began in February 2002 when he ‘drew the short straw’ at a LPD shift briefing and got stuck with the new Chaplain for a ride-a-long. There are a lot of things I remember about that first ‘ride’ but what stands out most is Kevin’s abiding respect for a “man of the cloth.”

Little did I know the measure of the lessons I would learn from this man we called “*Colonel*”.

There is no one in my life experience who's had to endure as many ‘trials and tribulations’ as Kevin had. To give you an idea let me list just a few of his trials (besides the MS). His family lost their dream home (the infamous “Aldercrest Slide” in Kelso), bringing on enormous financial difficulties. His mother died during that same period of time. His youngest daughter came down with a serious, life-threatening illness a few years later – his other daughter was brutally assaulted while at college. He was forced out of the Army reserves before he was ready and then out of law enforcement way before he was ready to retire (due to the MS). A year or so ago, his marriage crumbled apart creating an ache in his heart like none I have ever seen in a man. Yet through it all, the “*Colonel*” kept his faith in God. In fact, his faith in God grew stronger and stronger.

The testimony of that faith and strength of character shined brightly at his memorial service where he was honored by family, friends and peers. It was my privilege to officiate at that service. Some of my guys asked if

I was going to be able to do that and I said, “*I have to do it.*” That day was one of the hardest of my life, but



The Colonel & Padre`

to not do it would be like leaving a man behind in battle. The “*Colonel*” would never do that to his “*Padre*” and I wasn't about to do it to my friend either.

I am a better Chaplain because of the “*Colonel*” and all that we experienced on the journey. Please keep his family in your prayers. Thank you. Shalom!

Chap Steve

{If you're wondering, is Kevin the same guy who spoke at our last Chaplaincy Breakfast and wrote an article for our newsletter a couple months ago – the answer is “YES”.}



KEVIN T. MERRY
10-10-58 – 9-6-09