



# Cowlitz Chaplaincy

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

Volume 7

Issue Number 3

June 2011

## SUMMER 2011

The season for vacations and sunburns is speedily approaching and for many, a resounding "PRAISE THE LORD" can be heard across our county.

Since our last newsletter many things have filled our calendars. Let me name a few. Steve and I have been deeply involved with Alcohol Awareness Program for the high schools called the 15 Minutes Program. The last two years we have been blessed



with very well-behaved young people who help promote the message of not drinking and driving. Our prayer is that this year will add to the success of the last 15 years in our county.



**DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE**

Our fundraiser, known as *The Les Nelson Memorial Chaplaincy Breakfast and Auction Fundraiser* was a fun time and a success. We thank the many people who supported the event and special thanks to the board members, Miriam Prather, Carmen White, Twyla Nelson and Crystal Eiland.

Our speaker, Jim Crowley, ICPC Regional Director, revealed the heart of a chaplain as he addressed the group.



We raised just under 19,000 dollars which is just few hundred dollars less than last year. Again we give thanks to the Lord Jesus for blessing us, especially with the economy the way it is.

### UNINVITED PAIN

I was called out on several deaths and the pain and the tears of our neighbors who experienced grief and loss could fill a bucket. Some of the elderly folks in Longview were called to eternity. Then there were those who, for whatever the reason, chose to end their lives by suicide; some of them through a drug overdose leaving

family members with unsolved questions. There were two horrific auto accidents where lives were lost. There is unbelievable emptiness and loneliness for the families and friends. In each case I am confronted with my own stressors. I share the pain for the loved ones left behind and I, too, feel the sting of each death myself. I am so fortunate that I know Jesus as my Savior and Counselor and I have my lovely wife whom He has blessed me with. Without this support system in place this ministry would be very difficult. This is why prayer is so important, so please keep each of us who served as Chaplains in your prayers each day.

### THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for your continued financial support. 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.

*Chaplain Lyle*

**JOIN US ON JULY 8<sup>TH</sup> AT STORY FIELD TO WATCH THE BLACKBEARS PLAY BASEBALL. THAT NIGHT THE COWLITZ CHAPLAINCY WILL BE RECOGNIZED.**

## WHAT IS THE “EVERY 15 MINUTES” PROGRAM?

Drunk driving continues to be a problem in our community. Recently, I was able to be involved in the “Every 15 Minutes” program with Mark Morris High School. This was my first experience with the two-day program designed to educate high school seniors in Cowlitz County about the dangers of drinking and driving, and the consequences of the decision they make.

The program is funded by donations from community organizations and individuals through the Cowlitz County Sheriff’s office.

It began with twenty-two students that were taken from their classrooms by a ten foot tall grim reaper. As the shadow entered the rooms, this announcement was made: “We regret to inform the class that one of your classmates was killed in a drunk driving collision the previous night.” The students involved were taken from their classrooms for a coroner’s make-over. The students’ faces were painted white with darkened eyes and mouths, and they were dressed in long hooded black robes and given white crosses. Then, the “deceased” students were returned to their classes with instructions not to talk to or text anyone who was “alive.” A vehicle destroyed in a drunken driving collision was displayed in front of the school and was surrounded by white crosses of each “deceased” student pounded into the ground.

Chaplain Lyle and I were tasked with preparing and delivering a death notification to the parents of one of the students. The parent had been warned in advance of this mock scenario and that she would be asked to talk at the assembly the following day. She knew her child was being taken to the Red Lion

Hotel in Kelso for the night. I provided her with her child’s class ring and Washington State identification card, and asked her to verify these belonged to her son. I told the mother that her son was walking from the hotel in Kelso to the Splits bowling alley, when an out-of-control vehicle struck him and several other students. Unfortunately, her son did not survive. The mother’s cheeks became red and she was speechless. Chaplain Lyle started to fill out the coroner’s report with her.

That night, the students practiced a skit for the next day’s assembly and had a chance to write a final good-bye letter to their loved ones. I heard several of the students comment about how sad and hard this was. It was a thoughtful and emotional day.

The second day, all the seniors attended an assembly where photographs of the previous day’s “deaths” were shown. The students performed the skit they had been practicing in which a fellow student was killed during a party’s drunken pizza run.

The mother who received the mock death notification described her shock and fear that maybe something had happened based on how the scenario at the hotel unfolded. She was relieved and grateful to return her son’s belongings to him in person, and gave him a big hug. We all shared her sense of good fortune to still have her son alive.

Then, a sister and mother shared their tearful testimony of the real loss of their brother and son to a drunk driver.

Lastly, a video was shown of vehicle collisions, injured victims, and crying loved ones. It was a very raw illustration of what happens during such a tragic event. The reality of what so many families have faced because of

drunken driving brought tears to my eyes.

It felt good to pause for a day and a half with our students - our future - so that they might one day stop to think and not drive drunk, or not drive with a drunken person, or be able to persuade such a person not to drive. We are building a safer community. It is difficult to measure prevention, but so many students were visibly moved by and commented on the program. There was a palpable new awareness of the terrible consequences associated with driving while under the influence of alcohol.

A special thank-you to the Cowlitz County Sheriff’s Office employees Ryan Plank, Delaney Heston and Darren Ullmann, Chaplain Lyle Prather and his wife, Miriam, Longview Police Officers Dawn Taylor and Ty Mauck and Susan Mourning who participated in the program at Mark Morris High School. Thank you to the Longview School District for allowing this special awareness program to be part of the Monarch senior experience.

If you get a chance, check out the Cowlitz County “Every 15 Minutes” program web site at <http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/sheriffs/programs/efm/default.htm>.



Article submitted by  
Sgt. Debbie Johnson, Longview  
Police Department

Well, it looks as though summer may actually get here this year – they are predicting 80° + for tomorrow! I will be out helping with a community fundraiser for the City of Castle Rock (“**I Topped the Rock**”) again this year. I really do enjoy living in Castle Rock and want to be an active partner in the good things happening there. While not a Chaplaincy ‘activity’ directly, it does give me opportunity to interact with locals, including my CRPD officers who are working the event as well.

Some of the other things taking time and energy the past couple months include the annual “**Every-15 Minute**” program at our local High Schools. This year I worked Castle Rock, RA Long and Kelso High Schools. What a joy it is to spend time with young people who are about to graduate and enter the “adult world” of decision making. This program has been around for about 12 years and strives to impress on students the importance of not drinking and driving. There are literally hundreds of man-hours put in to this program by ourselves and other emergency responders, but it is worth every minute of it. We have a lot of fun with the students, but there are also some pretty serious moments along the way – like the ‘mock’ death notice I make to one of the student’s parents. This is usually where the whole risk of drinking and driving begins to sink in with the participants. As stressful as it may be, I’m glad we include that as part of the program. The joy comes the

next morning when the student and parents are reunited at the assembly program.

Believe it or not, I am also beginning to gear up for this year’s “**Shop with a Cop**” Christmas event. There is always ‘behind the scenes’ activity for a program like this to be successful and we want 2011 to be the best year ever.

We held our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual “**Les Nelson Memorial Fundraiser Breakfast**” in April and had a great response from folks for that. We had our highest attendance ever – nearly 300 people! In spite of tough economic times people were so generous – our auctioneer did a superb job of getting people involved and everyone had a fun time. This year we honored two special people, our Board Treasurer, Cindy Brado and Pastor Jerry Dahlke (North Gate City Church) for his work raising money to pay for the meal costs these past few years. Our Guest Speaker, Chaplain Jim Crowley, from Bend (OR), made clear how vital a chaplaincy ministry is to a community. In addition to his duties as a Chaplain in Central Oregon, Jim is the NW Region



ICPC Executive Director.

Another activity that took time and energy was **National Police Week**. This event has been held the week of May 15<sup>th</sup> since 1962 when Pres. Kennedy declared May 15<sup>th</sup> as

## Peace Officer’s Memorial Day.

The week honors all Law Enforcement personnel, but



especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. In 2010, 183 officers died in the line of duty in our nation. As of today (June 3<sup>rd</sup>) there have been 78 line of duty deaths – the latest being Master Patrolman Jeffrey Taylor who died today from being struck by a bolt of lightning while helping victims of the tornado in Joplin, (MO) on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Please pray for Officer Taylor’s family and the Riverside Police Department.

In the midst of all this activity I have been honored to assist our emergency responders during some horrible tragedies – a train/vehicle crash that killed 3 – a car crash that left one man dead and could have killed/ injured several high school students in the other vehicle – a suicide by hanging of a despondent man leaving his family devastated – a barricaded suspect who forced one of my SWAT officers to use lethal force – a double homicide in a domestic dispute. Add to that several “normal” calls for service and you get the idea of how my life has gone these past couple months.

Bottom line – without your prayers and support I would not be there when the need arises. YOU are the ones who make this ‘**ministry of presence**’ possible. Thank You!!!  
Shalom!

*Chap Steve*