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Fairfield County Officers Recognized for 20 Years of Crisis Intervention Team (C.I.T.) Service

Two Fairfield County law enforcement officers were recognized for 20 years of service as Crisis Intervention Team (C.I.T.) officers this week. Each officer received a certificate of appreciation signed by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, a special commemorative 20-year C.I.T. pin and a letter of gratitude from leadership of the partners that advance and support C.I.T. in Ohio: the Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence (CJ CCoE), the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio (NAMI Ohio) and the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (OhioMHAS).

The officers recognized are: **Officer Mel Leckrone, Lancaster Police Department, and Sergeant Bryan Underwood, Lancaster Police Department.**

“C.I.T. programs are collaborative efforts between law enforcement and mental health systems to help officers direct people with mental illness to treatment instead of unnecessary incarceration. The 40-hour C.I.T. training provides practical techniques for safely de-escalating mental health crises. Officers learn to integrate some different approaches with their police training when responding to a person they believe to have a mental illness,” says Michael S. Woody, a retired Akron Police Department lieutenant and past president of C.I.T. International.

Lt. Woody and Mark Munetz, M.D., Northeast Ohio Medical University professor and chair emeritus of psychiatry, were the lead proponents of bringing C.I.T. to Ohio in 2000. “From just two counties with C.I.T. programs in 2000, we reached an incredible milestone about a year ago. Today all 88 Ohio counties have trained C.I.T. officers. In addition, more than 16,000 professionals have been trained throughout Ohio, of which nearly 12,000 are sworn law enforcement officers,” says Dr. Munetz.

Retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio Evelyn Lundberg Stratton played a key role in spreading C.I.T. throughout Ohio. “We are all so grateful to these officers for volunteering to serve as Ohio’s first C.I.T. officers and for setting examples of dedication and professionalism for the many others who followed. So many individuals with mental illness, their families and friends and their communities rely on C.I.T. officers to ensure safe, compassionate interactions and access to mental health care throughout the recovery process,” says Justice Stratton.

Of the 80 officers who completed one of the three C.I.T. training courses held in Ohio in 2000 — two in Summit and one in Lucas County — 49 (61 percent) remain active with C.I.T. today: 27 across seven jurisdictions in Summit County, 18 in Toledo (Lucas County), two in Hancock County (one each in Findlay P.D. and Hancock County Sheriff’s Office) and two in Lancaster P.D. (Fairfield County).

“Today, C.I.T. in Ohio is truly more than training; it is a community partnership. The CJ CCoE and NAMI Ohio are pleased to partner in providing technical assistance and guidance to promote implementation and expansion of C.I.T. in Ohio, and are grateful to our many partners and supporters,” says Ruth H. Simera, executive director of the NEOMED Coordinating Centers of Excellence, and Terry Russell, executive director of NAMI Ohio. “Lt. Woody, Dr. Munetz and Justice Stratton continue to be passionate C.I.T. champions. Other C.I.T. partners include the Office of Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, the County of Summit Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board, the Office of Criminal Justice Services, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office and many others.”

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