

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



I want to ask all of you for help. Today, our noble profession is experiencing an unprecedented rate of suicides. We are losing more officers to their own hand than to accidents or suspects. We can, and must, do better to help one another.

We all know the stresses of the job and the demands that it places on us all, and on our families. Most of us

who are drawn to this job are problem solvers and struggle when we don't have the answers. I am hoping that by now you have heard many times over that it is OK to ask for help. We do it on calls for service — why can't we do it at home or for ourselves?

I hope that your agencies are beginning to talk openly about this challenge. If not, please be a leader and start the discussion. There are many resources out there to help you, either individually or as an agency. I certainly don't have *the* answer to this ongoing tragedy, but I do know that we can improve if we put the same effort into helping ourselves as we do for our communities. Make the time to ask your co-workers if they are doing OK. And keep asking them regularly. Let them know that you are there for them. And when you are asked if you are OK, please be honest and ask for their help if you need it.

Many years ago, when I was still in the police academy, I remember an instructor offering this sound advice: "We are in a profession in which by doing your job you may lose your life. Don't give it away!" At the time the focus was on sound officer safety skills, yet the advice is as valuable and applicable today as ever. You are all too valuable to us; please take care of yourselves and one another.

Take care and God speed,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thor Eells".

Thor Eells
Executive Director

Orlando 2019

The NTOA's 36th Annual Tactical Operations Conference and Trade Show in Orlando, Florida, was a huge success, with more than 1,000 attendees from 45 states, six countries and 356 agencies. It was a privilege to welcome this group of committed professionals to our conference and inspiring to witness the camaraderie between the participants. Our students came to work hard and learn, striving to grow in their profession.

The trade show was outstanding this year, providing cutting-edge technologies, products and solutions to attendees. Our sponsors, along with over 230 exhibitors, made the exhibit hall a dynamic place to connect with other students and vendors.

As with previous conferences, none of this would have been possible without the support of local agencies. We thank our co-hosts, the Orlando Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Office and the Florida SWAT Association, for their contributions to and support in making this conference such a success.

Finally, an enormous thank you to our staff and instructors who have worked tirelessly for many months on every aspect of the conference. I am proud to be part of this amazing group.

Please take the time to read our conference article beginning on page 18 of this issue. For those of you who were able to attend this year's conference, I hope to see you again next year in Kansas City. If you were unable to make it this year, please get the dates on your calendar for 2020. I am confident that it is going to be one of the best ever!