Record-setting deputy

Howard Mullen has volunteered with Meigs County for 66 years

At 91, Howard Mullen owns an official Meigs County deputy’s uniform, a 1947 Ford kitted out like an old-time police car and the record as Ohio’s longest-certified law officer.

But since he started in 1953, he has always served the sheriff’s office on a part-time, volunteer basis.

“It’s somewhat of a hobby related to safety-type work,” said the Pomeroy resident, who also has a long history of volunteering with the local fire and emergency medical departments.

“His life has really revolved around public service and helping people,” said Sheriff Keith Wood, who has known Mullen since the 1970s. “And our door will always be open for him.”

When most people were using weekends to relax or catch up on household chores, Mullen would head to the sheriff’s office.

“I would often come down, almost every Saturday, and ride five,
Opioid addiction is a crisis that is getting pounded by the opioid crisis, as many readers of this newsletter know firsthand.

And the deadly problem is expected to worsen.

Nationwide, fatal opioid overdoses are predicted to rise to 82,000 by 2025, according to a study published recently in the Journal of the American Medical Association. That’s 72% more than the 47,600 people who died of such overdoses in 2017.

More lives are expected to be lost in the decade from 2016 through 2025 than the combined populations of Cleveland and Cincinnati — a staggering forecast when, already, resources are strained and the light can seem endless and thankless for Ohio’s first responders.

Without the hard work of our police and EMTs, the state’s opioid-related deaths would be significantly higher and the damage to children, families and communities far worse. But even if the first responders could dedicate 100% of their time to battling opioids, they couldn’t solve this crisis alone.

That’s because they get involved after addiction has sunk its claws into people, twisting the normal functioning of their brains. Science tells us that the addiction is a disease. By this point, all sorts of damage has been done.

The solution must encompass a holistic approach — one involving law enforcement, treatment, education and prevention. That last component calls for a thorough exploration of what we can do to stop more people from falling victim to opioid addiction.

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As part of the 12- to 18-month study, cheek-swab DNA samples will be collected from 1,500 ER patients and then screened for 120 genes thought to be linked to opioid addiction.

If successful, the study could help doctors choose the right pain therapy based on a patient’s unique DNA. Patients believed to be susceptible would be prescribed other pain treatments; those who aren’t could be prescribed opioid medication with more confidence.

In other words: Let’s try to eliminate the issue before it becomes a problem.

The research project will be led by my office’s new director of scientific research, Jon Sprague.

Sprague, head of the Ohio Attorney General’s Center for the Future of Forensic Science at Bowling Green, also will lead the second initiative: a task force charged with finding innovative prevention techniques and strategies.

Sprague has invited experts in medicine and pharmacy practices, human relations, behavioral economics, data analysis, epidemiology and medical anthropology to join the Scientific Committee on Opioid Prevention & Education, or SCOPE.

Sprague and his team will seek to identify the circumstantial, environmental, social, behavioral and psychological factors that incline some people to substance use disorder.

We want to know why it is that two people can take the same drug in the same dosage and only one becomes addicted. ‘We want to know how to blunt opioids’ harmful effects.’

Our hope is that, ultimately, breakthroughs in these areas will reduce the number of people who succumb to opioid dependence — and, correspondingly, the number who reach the crisis point and need help from first responders.

These breakthroughs also might offer better ways to treat those already in the grip of this plague.

As we work for new solutions, I thank all those who fight on the front lines of this battle — first responders, treatment and recovery experts, social services workers and children services staff.

You are saying no to death — and yes to hope.

Yours,

Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General

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Brain injury hidden risk for domestic violence victims

Serious effects undermine survivors’ ability to heal, Ohio-focused research finds

In 2017, Time magazine wrote about a study that found 110 of 111 deceased NFL players had a brain disorder caused by repeated head trauma.

The trauma was named as the main culprit in problems the football players had experienced with memory, bad moods, organizing simple and complicated ideas and tasks, as well as suicidal behavior.

The news was important but not surprising. Ohio, after all, had put a law on the books four years earlier outlining how concussions in young athletes should be treated because of their potentially serious effects.

Now Ohio advocates for domestic violence survivors are connecting the dots for a population whose most common injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, involve the head, neck and face.

Rachel Ramirez, training director at the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, said the brain injury connection has been overlooked for far too long.

“What do we think when domestic violence survivors don’t show up for appointments, when we’re talking and we know they’re just not getting it?” she said. “What do we think when they’re not figuring out their lives? We might think they don’t care about their safety, they’re uncooperative, they’re lazy, you know?

“We have all of these different assumptions we make, and brain injury — which can cause every one of these behaviors — is not on the list at all.”

Funded by a federal grant obtained in 2016, ODVN has been researching the extent of the abuse survivors — and the law enforcement, domestic violence advocacy, and medical communities present to them, to find their way to the healing they need.

“Those are all very complicated brain functions,” Ramirez said. “We take it for granted. But for survivors, you have this person who is not able to do something they used to be able to do and who has no idea why. These people think they’re going crazy — and, of course, they do because they’ve been told by their abusers that they are crazy.”

One survivor Ramirez knows, a woman named Paula who worked as an emergency medical technician in the Toledo area, experienced exactly that.

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Paula’s brain injuries went undiscovered until she was in a car accident and underwent an MRI.

“All accidents are normal, Ramirez said. “We’re getting an MRI. But you have people coming to your office with head injuries. We need to recognize that survivors of domestic violence have brain injuries.”

People who’ve dealt with such injuries have experienced short- and long-term impairment to memory and reasoning, sensitivity to light and noise, tremors and seizures, nightmares and flashbacks, and difficulty controlling emotions.

For domestic violence survivors, such problems might result in an inability to recall what happened to them, to find their way to the courthouse or remember an appointment, or to plan what they would need to do to escape a dangerous situation.

“Fifty percent had experienced hits to the head or strangulation. And strangulation, 83% of so many times that they couldn’t even remember what they used to be able to do and who has no idea why. These people think they’re going crazy — and, of course, they do because they’ve been told by their abusers that they are crazy.”

For more details, contact Ramirez at rachelr@odvn.org. www.odvn.org.

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A checklist for officer-involved shootings

By Mark Kollar | For Police One

The critical first minutes after an officer-involved shooting are chaotic, commonly characterized by confusion, conflicting information and sensory overload.

The competence and leadership of first-line or mid-level supervisors are put to the test with the arrival of the police scene. Consider the presence of biological fluids and other hazards — the safety of all involved is paramount.

1. APPROACH CAUTIOUSLY

As you arrive, know that the potential threats that led to the incident may still exist. Exercise caution to ensure no additional injuries occur.

Be mindful of evidence, unsecured weapons and the possibility that additional suspects may be in the area or fleeing. Consider the presence of biological fluids and other hazards — the safety of all involved is paramount.

2. TAKE CONTROL

Take a deep breath and begin directing the activity. Remove unnecessary personnel, mitigate dangers and delegate tasks. Though you may need help from the involved officers to stabilize the situation, all attempts should be made to relieve them of scene responsibilities so they can focus on their physical and mental well-being.

3. RENDER MEDICAL AID

The preservation of life takes priority over the collection of evidence in the critical first minutes. Remember, brief mental notes if alterations to the scene are necessary.

4. SECURE THE SCENE

Exercise caution to ensure no additional injuries occur. Be mindful of evidence, unsecured weapons and the possibility that additional suspects may be in the area or fleeing. Consider the presence of biological fluids and other hazards — the safety of all involved is paramount.

5. IDENTIFY, SEPARATE WITNESSES

All witnesses to the incident, including officers, should be identified and separated to avoid contamination of their memories. However, separate does not necessarily mean isolation. Direct medical personnel to follow that path. If you have a fence with a 6- or 12-volt line stretched across it, the police officers going from double-action to single-action.

6. MAKE NECESSARY NOTIFICATIONS

The seriousness of the incident or injury dictates the notifications required. Calls for additional personnel or resources (investigative, crime scene staff, scene security and traffic/control) are common, as well as notifications to command staff and the public information officer. In the event of a fatality, contacting the decedent's next kin, the coroner and the prosecutor may be warranted. Cautionary brief arriving investigators to avoid sharing statements made by the involved officers under potentially compelled circumstances.

7. COMPLY WITH POLICIES

In short, know your department's policies and follow their mandates.

8. CONSIDER LEGAL ISSUES

Just because law enforcement was called to the scene and a shooting resulted does not necessarily give the right to conduct further searches once any life-threatening exigencies have subsided. Consult with your local legal counsel to ensure any evidence collected is done so in a constitutional manner.

9. DOCUMENT THE SCENE

Timely and accurate documentation of the scene and your actions are critical for the investigations that will follow. Small details, such as whether the lights were on or off, can become vitally important. Use checklists to ensure every pertinent fact has been recorded and keep notes of your observations throughout, including alterations to the scene, persons present and statements made. Have photos taken as soon as practical and throughout the response.

10. CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT

There is always room for improvement. Conduct an honest self-assessment to identify areas where you or policies can improve. Solicit constructive criticism from officers.

Mark Kollar is a special agent supervisor for BCI’s Major Crime Division and Northeast Special Investigations Unit. Police One provides news and resources for law enforcement.

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six, seven or hours what have you, and ... I spent most of my time being out with a deputy.”

Three days, when he isn’t spending time in Florida, he visits three or four days a month to keep Meigs County deputies company or help direct traffic, protect crime scenes or do front office tasks. He drives his Ford in parades or to schools for safety demonstrations.

In back of his syder, he had his share of wild moments with deputies.

“I almost got shot in a drug raid years ago,” Mullen said.

On that dark and rainy night, he and deputies were advancing across a field, not knowing that a fence with a 6- or 12-volt line stretched across their path. Mullen made a slight noise as he walked into it and felt a surprising jump.

His reaction startled the deputies, who immediately aimed their guns at him.

“I heard click, click, click,” he said. “Not that was back in the old days when we didn’t use semiautomatics. It was the sound of the officers going from double-action to single-action.”

“So I said: ‘Hold it, boys! This is me.’”

That raid ended up being canceled, Mullen said, because out-of-county officers took a wrong turn and went into those suspects’ property, accidentally alarming them.

Mullen’s title nowadays is special deputy, Sheriff’s Office, a position he began helping the Meigs County Sheriff’s Office was “grandfathered in,” a process that required all of the sheriff’s deputies had submitted letters to headquarters.

Mullen’s current from OTPOA — which was established back in the 1960s and began helping the Meigs County Sheriff’s Office — was “grandfathered in,” a process that required all of the sheriffs held worked for to submit letters attaining the position.

Today, he is up-to-date on all of his continuing education requirements. “He still goes out to the range to shoot to qualify with us,” Wood said.

Mullen’s main value to the office, the sheriff said, is inspiring the deputies and connecting them with the history of the department.

“He definitely has a history of stories to tell,” Wood said.

A case in point was the time Mullen was crouched behind a back door of a cruiser, aiming his gun at a car with two criminals from Athens County who had driven south.

The sheriff at the time (not Wood) stepped out from the front door of the cruiser, right in front of Mullen’s gun.

Mullen didn’t pull the trigger — and he declined to identify the sheriff involved.

“It embraces him to have someone tell about it,” said Mullen, a native of Pomeroy, where his father was the postmaster.

As long as Mullen has lived in the town, the Meigs County Sheriff’s Office has been in the same red-brick building, which sits a block off the Ohio River. Some of the early sheriffs he worked for lived on the second floor with their families, he said, and a landslide off the bank behind the station once caused a boulder topper an Ohio State Highway Patrol cruiser.

Mullen also remembers that Meigs County purchased a motor pool truck the year he got out of the Army. (He served stateside after World War II, until 1948.) Before that, sheriff’s offices would use local mechanics or turn in semi on special lights on their buildings when deputies needed to call in.

“We laugh about that nowadays because everything has become so technical,” Mullen said.

“The equipment has completely changed, and the officers really have to have a lot of understanding about many subjects.”

Mullen himself is knowledgeable about a subject or two, having worked as a bank examiner for the state of Ohio and then in the private banking industry before he retired from full-time work.

One of the reasons Mullen, who never married or had children, has stayed involved with the sheriff’s office is working with people he respects so much.

“I think most officers feel that they are doing something worthwhile,” he said. “They’re not just people up — they’re helping people. I think there’s a lot of satisfaction in that.”

That said, he was never tempted to make police work his full-time job.

“The police officers, especially in the poorer sections of the state, like we are here,” he explained, “until you work your way up high, the salaries don’t appear to be extra inviting.”

Mullen considers that a shame.

“I would emphasize that, for the most part, any law enforcement officer you come in contact with is a rather highly trained person. It’s not like the old days where you really didn’t have to have a couple of 30’s and a grandfather with people who know what they’re doing.”

For his part, the sheriff doesn’t just enjoy Mullen’s company; he considers him a valuable resource.

“I try to get young people interested in the job,” Wood said. “A lot of these kids who’ve come in here and seen Howard — I think he’s a person they can relate to. Maybe it’s: I can’t make that kind of money, but I can still have the best job in the world.”

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**KEY EVENTS 2019**

**Coming up**

**Body armor funding available**

The Attorney General’s Ohio Law Enforcement Body Armor Program has been extended.

Since its start in August 2018, the program has sent grants exceeding $1.7 million to local law enforcement agencies, reimbursing them for 75% of the cost of the life-saving body armor. Originally set to close to new applications by June, the program will instead continue with the same application process in OHLEG. That’s thanks to the Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation, which pledged new funding.

**Save the date**

The Ohio Attorney General’s 2019 Law Enforcement Conference will take place Oct. 8-9 at the Hyatt Regency Columbus. To register online, visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/LEConference.

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**Two Days in May**

Some visual highlights from the annual conference on crime victim assistance, held at the Greater Columbus Convention Center on May 20-21:

*Left:* Jeffery Samuel Jr. was excited to win first place in the poster contest.

*Below:* Detective Bertina King hugs a family member after winning a Special Achievement Award.

*Above:* Attorney General Dave Yost congratulates all of the award winners.

*Right:* The Ohio National Guard’s Karisa Myers talks about preventing sexual assault.

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**ON THE JOB | CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE**

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