

First Responders Resilience, Inc.

By Cindy Butner and First Responders Resilience, Inc.

Susan Farren is the founder and executive director of First Responders Resiliency, Inc. (FRRI), and she wants you to know one thing, "Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) is not a disorder. Schizophrenia is a disorder. It's a lifelong issue for which you have to take medication. PTS is a compilation of symptoms of exposure to trauma and stress, and you can recover from those symptoms," she says emphatically. FRRI's goal is Putting PTSD Out of Business™.



Susan, a retired paramedic, came to grips with the physical, emotional, and mental impact that her career had taken after being diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2016. When her doctor told her that he had treated quite a few first responders with organ cancers, she began a year-and-a-half-long Odyssey; and found a raft of even more symptoms like heart attacks, strokes, substance abuse, divorce, and

suicide that disproportionately plague first responders.

"For a long time, I kept thinking someone's going to do something. Someone's going to do something. I'm sure someone's going to do something. Finally, I realized, maybe it's time that I do something," Susan says. So, in 2017, she sold the house her children grew up in and started the organization. "I'm just now able to rejoice in the letters we get from people who have attended the conference," she says.



A rugged-looking Fire Captain for Cal Fire participated in an FRRI conference. With 20 years on the job, Gene Parks' voice cracks and quivers as he expresses what the program means to him, "Just...uh, it's a tough job. I just want to say how grateful I am for this conference to come around for the newer generation of first responders. It's a great job, but there's stuff I never expected when I got into it."

The team of professionals at FRRI includes doctors, paramedics, meditation experts and more. They take a proactive approach to arm first responders with knowledge and tools to get well and stay well. Susan explains, "Through science and research we know what is happening to their nervous system, brain and body when they're constantly exposed to trauma. Our programs not only help first responders achieve a healthy professional life but more important a healthy personal life. We've even created a conference for the families of first responders.

These days everyone is experiencing recurring stress. So, why a program that's only for first responders? These are the facts:

- The average life expectancy rate of first responders is 15 years less than civilians
- First responders are 40% more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty
- It is estimated that only 35% of first responder suicides are reported
- The divorce rate in first responder families is 70%
- 100% of first responders are vulnerable to traumatic stress.

Unless you've walked in their boots, it's difficult to relate to first responders. They rarely want to talk to someone who isn't familiar with what they do for a living. FRRI offers them

programs created by first responders for first responders. Though based here – many of their conferences are held at Bishop's Ranch – demand is growing. In just three years' time, they've trained 3300 first responders who work in Santa Rosa, Healdsburg to Hawaii, Canada and beyond.

FRRI's plans include the acquisition of local land with a building on it that they can repurpose to create a Resiliency Center with assistance available to first responders 7 days a week. This model site is one they intend to replicate across the nation.

FRRI Conference attendees
at The Bishop's Ranch

ABOUT FIRST RESPONDERS RESILIENCY, INC.

Mission Statement

First Responders Resiliency, Inc. is a program developed to decrease stress and enhance resiliency in first responders. We are a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization created For First responders, by First Responders, and we are dedicated to the psychological and physical wellbeing of those who are serving, or have served, in the industry.

FRRI furthers its mission by:

- Providing First responders with the necessary skills to improve resiliency
- Developing programs to aid First responders in their physical, emotional, and relational well-being
- Training First Responders how to implement these techniques on the job and in everyday life
- Early resiliency education for First Responder candidates
- Encouraging those who have retired, or have served, to become mentors or peers

For more information about First Responders Resiliency, Inc. go to: www.resiliency1st.org.



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