



Double duty: Civilian medical professionals serve on county SWAT team

By LISA M. SCHMELZ
FOR WALWORTH COUNTY SUNDAY

ELKHORN — When there's danger and it's more than you can handle, you call the police. But who do the police call when they need help?

In many communities across the nation, and since 1990 in Walworth County, the answer is "SWAT."

As much a verb as an acronym, SWAT teams are law enforcement's last line of defense, where high-stakes barricades and hostage dramas can drag on for hours and armed suspects think nothing of firing shots when asked to come out with their hands up.

"It's unprecedented in Walworth County, the weapons we're facing, the bad guys we're facing."

— Sgt. Tom Hausner
SWAT commander



"When cops are in trouble, they call SWAT ...," said Walworth County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Tom Hausner, who also serves as the commander for the county's SWAT team.

SWAT, which is short for special weapons and tactics, is a concept born in the 1960s during the Los Angeles race riots. In Walworth County, the SWAT team is a joint operation of the Walworth County Sheriff's Office and the Lake Geneva Police Department.

Recently, there's been a marked increase in the demand for SWAT support, said Hausner, citing seven incidents in the last eight months, four of which involved suspects firing back at officers.

"Obviously, with the incidents that have taken place in the last seven months, the need is rapid and growing," he said. "It's unprecedented in Walworth County, the



HAUSNER



At right, Dr. Jon Robinson, medical director for the Walworth County SWAT Team, watches as SWAT tactical emergency medical services officer Chris Cook, kneeling in center, practices casualty care on a "downed officer" during a training session. SWAT officers are taught to form 360-degree protection around an officer needing immediate treatment. Several area medical professionals serve on the team as "volunteers," since they are only paid \$1 or \$2 per year.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WALWORTH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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A critical component of the county's SWAT team is its medical personnel, many of whom have military and law enforcement backgrounds. Currently, 12 of the 42-member county SWAT team serve in a medical capacity. Most are paid a token \$1 annually.

Jon Robinson is a former emergency room physician who joined the county's SWAT team in 1998 as its first medical

staffer. A rise in school and workplace shootings prompted law enforcement to find a role for doctors like Robinson on their SWAT teams. Still, there was apprehension about getting civilians that close to the danger. But if the nation learned anything from the Columbine High School massacre, it was that medical personnel on SWAT teams save lives.

A resident of Elm Grove, where he has an active medical practice, Robinson is just one of a handful of physicians who

also are sworn peace officers.

To ease the concerns of law enforcement leaders, he opted to give up medicine long enough to go through police academy training. Today, Robinson not only practices medicine, but he's also a part-time officer with the Elm Grove Police Department.

In addition, he serves as the medical

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Donation dollars stretch further with help of special matching grant

Editor's note: The Time is Now to Help was founded by a local businessman who knew extreme poverty as a child. With the help of donations from the community, The Time is Now is able to help local residents in need.

Dear readers,

We just received the wonderful news that the Richard Driehaus Charitable Lead Trust has granted The Time Is Now to Help a \$30,000 matching grant. This matching grant will begin immediately. There could not



have been a better time to announce this generous opportunity, due to the overwhelming number of requests for assistance The Time Is Now to Help is receiving.

We are very thankful to be offered this grant and humbled by the amount of assistance it will mean to the many people

struggling in poverty in our area.

Please consider donating at this time, since every dollar you donate will be matched by the Richard Driehaus matching grant. Thank you for caring and sharing.

Dear W.C.,

I am a single mother who is ashamed to say I am having financial problems. In summer, my children no longer receive their free breakfast and lunch at school. Due to our financial posi-

tion, they qualified for free lunch and breakfast at school this year. I'm sorry to admit these were the only two full meals they had to eat all day.

Now that I have to buy food, we are living without gas, since it was disconnected. We bathe in cold water and have no gas with which to cook.

The recession has hit us hard, just like so many others. I have applied for assistance, but they seem to be as overwhelmed as we are. It could take months or years to receive any. I would not

ask for help if I thought there was any other way to help my children. They are the ones suffering the most.

Dear Readers,

There are so many people who are barely getting by. Some are living without utilities. This means no hot water for baths or showers, no gas or electric for cooking, no refrigerators in which to store your meager amount of food, no lights, no air

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SWAT

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director for the Walworth County SWAT team, a position for which he is compensated \$2 annually.

Clearly, his motivation isn't financial. "This is an attempt, I'm board-certified in emergency medicine, to bring emergency medical care into the inner-perimeter," Robinson said. "You want to take care of any emergency medical conditions in that 'golden hour' to decrease loss of life . . .

"We're there for everybody. We're there for the civilians, we're there for the SWAT team and we're there for the bad guys."

Also serving the SWAT team in a medical capacity is Chris Cook of Eagle.

A registered nurse and the emergency services coordinator at Waukesha Memorial Hospital, Cook also is a retired U.S. Army staff sergeant.

But he is no ordinary veteran.

On Sept. 11, 2004, he nearly lost his lower left leg in Iraq after he shot at an approaching car bomber.

A medic with the National Guard's Company B of the 118th Medical Battalion, his gunfire stopped the approaching car bomber from getting closer to its intended target. Though the bomb in the car did explode, his actions were credited with saving the lives of his eight-member medical team — some of whom sustained serious injuries. For his actions, Cook was awarded a Purple Heart and Bronze Star Medal with a "V" device, signifying valorous conduct in the face of the enemy.

Nineteen operations later, Cook continues to run toward danger instead of away from it. He's also a firm believer that battlefield medicine expertise is an asset to a SWAT team.

"I had an association with the Walworth County SWAT team before I was deployed," he said. "They become

brothers and sisters. They become very close to you and very important to you.

"It actually makes you want to go forward, that relationship. It's not just a team. It's a family."

Cook's commitment to protecting those in the line of fire is typical of the medical members of the team.

Steve Loudon of Delavan is a 21-year registered nurse who serves as the trauma coordinator of St. Anthony's Medical Center in Rockford. Before becoming an RN and a Flight For Life nurse, he served for 16 years as a deputy with the Walworth County Sheriff's Office.

Surprisingly, the medical team is busier at training exercises than they are at actual SWAT calls.

"We probably provide more medical care at trainings because our guys train so hard," Loudon said. "It's important that we're there."

Even in a largely rural county, Hausner said he sees an increased need for SWAT.

"The threats we face, the adversaries



PHOTO COURTESY OF WALWORTH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Standing at right, Walworth County SWAT Team tactical emergency medical services officer Chris Cook oversees a training exercise.

we face, have increased incredibly in the 25 years I've been with the sheriff's office," he said.

HELP

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conditioning for senior citizens or the handicapped.

Yes, many fellow Americans are still in need of food. Our neighbors are proud — too proud — to walk around with a sign saying they are hungry or need our assistance. I know firsthand; when I was a child, my own mother was too proud to tell anyone our electricity was off, and she would never ask for help, even when food was scarce.

The Time Is Now to Help is the voice for these neighbors of ours who are suffering in silence, behind closed doors. I have more than 300 requests for assistance from people who desperately need our help. Please

YOU CAN HELP

What: The Time is Now can be contacted by mail or online only.

Mail: P.O. Box 70, Pell Lake, WI 53157.

Online: www.timeisnowtohelp.org.

consider caring and sharing at this special time by donating during our matching grant. Every one of those dollars will be used for food, utility assistance, housing assistance, transportation for work, clothing, household necessities and more.

Remember that 50 percent to 60 percent of students are on the free and reduced meal programs at schools in our area.

When school is out, these same children — children of God — are suffering without enough food or doing without utilities in order to eat.

As our government struggles to recover, we cannot wait. It is up to us, the people of America, to make the difference. Our fellow creations desperately need our help to survive. Please help. Please care and share.

— *Health and happiness, God bless everyone, W.C.*

Make checks payable to: The Time Is Now to Help, P.O. Box 70, Pell Lake, WI 53157. The Time Is Now to Help is a federally recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization licensed in Wisconsin and Illinois. You will receive a tax deductible, itemized thank-you receipt showing exactly what every penny of

your donation provided for the poverty stricken.

In addition, we have been offered a wonderful fundraising opportunity by Gage Lake Geneva Cruise Line. They are offering a cocktail cruise every Thursday evening to benefit The Time Is Now to Help.

The cruise boards at 6:15 p.m. Thursdays and returns at 8 p.m. It features a highlight tour of the lakeshore estates, entertainment and a complimentary boarding beverage.

When calling for reservations, you need to mention the code "TIN" and The Time Is Now will receive \$10 of each ticket sale. Call (262) 248-6206 for reservations.

A very special thank-you to: Paul Ziegler, Badger FFA, teacher Tom Sheeley and students of the Badger High School

automotive class, Delavan Service League, DJ Flitcroft, Martin O'Brien, William and Kimberly Basford, Muriel Lake, Jon Reavis, Lillian Rudolf, Tom and Joyce Roche, Frank Huml Jr., Jack and Nancy Hartung, Albert and Ellen Burnell, Shawn and Donna McLafferty and Don Mehring. A memorial has been given by Dorothy Butek in memory of her parents, Adeline and Richard Baumstark, and her uncle, John Baumstark.

In addition, thank you to W.C. Family Resource Center/Food Pantry volunteers, all of you who support The Time Is Now to Help donation boxes, and the businesses that allow our donation boxes. Anyone who would like a Time Is Now donation box in your business, please call (262) 249-7000.