

Police train for calls involving mentally ill

By Sam Bari

When Jamestown Police Chief Thomas Tighe received a letter from Elizabeth V. Earls, president and CEO of the Rhode Island Council of Community Mental Health Organizations, Inc., he read it and responded immediately.

Earls sent letters to 35 police departments around the state offering free training for police officers

to help them properly respond to emergency situations involving the mentally ill. The letters were signed by seven member organizations of the 11-member trade association.

Chief Tighe asked Earls if he could invite neighboring police departments to join the Jamestown officers at the workshop that was recently held at the town library.

His efforts resulted in representatives from Newport, Middletown, and North Kingstown police departments coming to the island to attend the four-hour class last Thursday.

Susan Early, training director for the trade association for the past 15 years, hosted the program "Recognizing and Responding to Individuals with Mental Illness,"

a PowerPoint presentation developed 10 years ago by certified trauma responder Richard Crino, R.N. in conjunction with the Coventry Police Department.

"More than 25 percent of calls to police involve people with mental illness," Crino said. "Yet many officers are not adequately trained to handle those calls." He said the program was designed to give officers a basic understanding of the symptoms and behavioral patterns of people suffering from mental illnesses like schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder, and other personality disorders.

"We teach them that people experiencing psychosis do not see the world as we do. Their reality is different. However, they are not criminals," Crino said. "We teach techniques to help police officers de-escalate situations without using lethal or any unnecessary force. There are many methods that can resolve sometimes tense situations peacefully," he added.

Earls said she offered the training

program because two incidents had occurred where two people with mental illness recently died at the hands of Rhode Island police in the space of two weeks.

She said in her letter to the police chiefs that she did not in any way wish to cast blame on the police officers involved. The two tragic incidents demonstrate the critical and urgent need for uniform and comprehensive training of all police in Rhode Island to ensure proper response to situations where persons with mental illness, cognitive impairments or developmental disabilities are involved, Earls said.

After the workshop, Chief Tighe said that he felt everyone who attended learned valuable information that will assist them in handling situations involving the mentally ill. He said Crino clearly explained the signs, symptoms, and behavioral patterns of those suffering from mental illness so they could be recognized and dealt with accordingly.

URI Master Gardener to Present Healthy Lawn Care Practices, Tonight @ Town Hall



Be on the Cutting Edge with a Green, Environmentally Friendly Lawn!

There is still plenty of room available for tonight's free presentation from Marion Gold, of the URI Master Gardener Program and WJAR 10's Plant Pro Segment, on healthy lawn care practices. The workshop will take place in the Town Council Chambers of Jamestown Town Hall at 7pm, and all residents are welcome to attend.

Topics To Include:

- Stormwater Pollution Overview
- Methods for improving soil conditions
- Environmentally friendly landscaping practices
- Types of low mowing, low irrigation grasses
- Questions to ask your lawn service provider

FREE PRESENTATION!
Tonight! May 22, 2008
7:00—8:30pm
Jamestown Town Hall
Town Council Chambers

for more information, contact Justin Jobin at Jamestown Town Hall (401) 423-7193
jjjobin@jamestownri.net, or www.jamestownri.net

Summer-themed show coming to town gallery

The CIAA will begin a new art exhibit at the Town Hall Gallery on June 5. The drop off date for "Here Comes Summer - All Media" will be on May 29.

The show will open June 5, with a reception including cash bar and catering by Trattoria Simpatico. The show runs until July 24.

Members may enter up to two pieces for the show, provided they are ready to hang, do not exceed 48-inches in dimension, and are appropriate for Town Hall. For more information, call Wendy Crooks at 423-0993 or Don Miller at 423-0612.

Seventh Annual

Ali's Run

Sunday, June 1, 2008 1:00 pm

Fort Getty Park - Jamestown, RI ♥ 5K USATF - Certified Race ♥ 5K Walk



Music, food, awards, prizes and activities for the whole family
A one-half-mile Fun Run for children under 10 will take place at noon
Complimentary lunch for all runners

Log on to alisrun.com for more information and registration