

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

DAVID BEREZ

For more than three decades, David Berez has dedicated his life to building safer communities and serving others. After starting his public service at age 14 as a volunteer EMT, he interned with the New York City Medical Examiner's Officer following graduation from college, and then became a Police Officer. During his law enforcement career with the East Windsor Police Department in New Jersey, he has served the public in many capacities, including: Primary Officer-In-Charge, Field Training Officer, the elite Pro-Active Squad, Bike Patrol Officer, D.A.R.E. Instructor, Evidence Technician, Drug Recognition Expert (DRE), and multiple detachments to the Investigative Services for Special Assignments. David is a court recognized Expert Witness in multiple jurisdictions for his knowledge and expertise in drug related DUI cases.

David served in a number of special detachments, the most notable include rescue efforts at the Ground Zero World Trade Center Site following the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, the New Jersey Drug Recognition Expert Association, the Mercer County Rapid Response Partnership (Regional Active Shooter Response), the Violent Crimes Task Force, and as a School Resource Officer.

Highly-decorated during his time in law enforcement, David's dedication earned him his department's Grand Cordon Medal, multiple Honorable Service Medals, Unit Citations, and Life Saving Medals. He also received multiple Service Medals from MADD for his tenacity for removing intoxicated drivers from our roadways.

David has been a member of the Police Unity Tour since 2011 following the Line of Duty death of a close friend, who was a Maryland State Trooper. For his work and leadership with the Police Unity Tour, David was awarded the Superintendent of the Maryland State Police Commendation for contribution to the citizens of Maryland and the Maryland State Police in 2020.

David holds a B.A. in Social Sciences from Hofstra University with a concentration in Criminal Justice and is a graduate of the Ocean County Police Academy, Class #72. He was trained as a Drug Recognition Expert in 2007 and served in that capacity until 2019, upon his retirement from active duty. David is also a trained Emergency Manager and currently serves as the OEM Coordinator in Hopewell, New Jersey.

David is also a certified Resiliency Program Officer and Master Resiliency Trainer who works with others to live a life of purpose, and supports LEOs and veterans who are suffering with their own mental health and career transitions. He is a facilitator for Resilient Minds on the Front Lines® and State of Georgia's Resiliency Program, in addition to being a consultant for the State of New Jersey's Resiliency Program. David is a lead facilitator, mentor and Storyteller with *The Power of Our Story* and has been a featured guest on many podcasts and other digital media. Most recently, David has been appointed to the Law Enforcement

Advisory Council of Citizens Behind the Badge. David is also an internationally published writer on topics of Law Enforcement, mental health and current events. David is a married father of three who enjoys cycling, hiking, skiing, kayaking and most of all, family time.

KENNETH BLANK

First Sergeant Blank is an Area Commander in the Area 48 Office of the Virginia State Police in Fairfax County. He was born and raised in Red Wing, Minnesota where he graduated from Red Wing Central High School and entered the United States Marine Corps. He served as a military police man and for four years as part of the security force for the Presidential Helicopter Squadron. He was honorably discharged in 1993 at the rank of Sergeant. He was hired by the Virginia State Police in 1996 and was assigned to Fauquier County for his first duty post. He transferred to Culpeper County in 2001 and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2005, and worked as a first line supervisor in Area 11, Prince William County until he was promoted to his current position, December 10, 2017.

As a Trooper, First Sergeant Blank was recognized many times for his enforcement efforts. Some of his awards include the Superintendent's Award for Excellence, Superintendent's Trophy, the Community Leadership Award, and the Outstanding Safety Achievement Award. He has been a DCJS instructor since 1999, a Defensive Tactics Instructor since 2004 and teaches frequently at the State Police Academy. First Sergeant Blank graduated from the University of Virginia, National Criminal Justice Command College in 2008 as class co-president. First Sergeant Blank also teaches Critical Incident Stress Management and Suicide Prevention to many other agencies.

He became an ICISF Certified Instructor in 2016 and has taught Assisting Individual in Crisis 10 times and Group Crisis Intervention 10 times. In 2010, he became a BJA Suicide Awareness and Prevention Instructor, and has taught that course more than 40 times.

MAGGIE DEBOARD

Chief Maggie A. DeBoard was appointed Chief of Police for the Herndon Police Department in March 2012. She began her career in law enforcement in 1986 with the Fairfax County Police Department, where she served for more than 25 years before retiring as a deputy chief.

Chief DeBoard holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from George Mason University and a Masters of Arts in Security Studies (Homeland Security and Defense), from the Naval Postgraduate School. She is also a graduate of the FBI's National Academy. Chief DeBoard has extensive experience in community policing, patrol and special operations, training, leadership development, and officer safety.

In a volunteer capacity, Chief DeBoard also serves as president of the Fairfax, Virginia based Police Unity Tour – Chapter IV, a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty, and raising funds for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund in Washington, D.C.

MEG HAWKINS

Meg is the proud wife of a combat veteran who lives with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She is currently a police officer with 19 years of law enforcement experience. In January 2017, she almost lost her husband, Eric, to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and suicide. That experience and struggle rocked their worlds and change their life's mission. They now share their stories to help others know that "it's ok to not be ok" and seeking help is not a weakness but a strength.

In 2018, Meg, along with her husband Eric Provow, founded the nonprofit organization Making Everything Good (M.E.G.) to assist and support the needs of individuals, families, and organizations associated with public safety, military, veterans, and their local community.

CHARLES LOWE

Charles Lowe was born in Saint Louis, Missouri in 1976. He received the Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice with an emphasis in Law Enforcement from Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph in 1998, and Masters of Arts degree in Business and Organizational Security Management from Webster University, Saint Louis in 2006.

In September of 1998, he joined the Saint Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD) as a recruit in training, and in February of 1999 became a Probationary Police Officer. In February of 2000, he completed training and was promoted to Police Officer. Since June of 2007, he has been with the SLMPD as a Sergeant of Police, where he has served numerous assignments throughout the Department.

In July of 2015, while working an off-duty security post he was ambushed while in full uniform as he sat in his personal vehicle. Just minutes before the shooting started he put his ballistic vest back on where he was subsequently shot in the right side of his chest. The ballistic vest took one round despite being shot at numerous times through his front windshield. After being shot and looking for resources for himself and family, he quickly realized they were very limited. So with the help of his wife they started and founded Project HURT, a non-profit for wounded and injured officers, committed to peer support, awareness, education, and connecting resources to officers/first responders struggling with dealing or coping with the everyday trauma of the profession.

He is currently an active member of the Fraternal Order of Police, National Tactical Officers Association, Saint Louis Leadership Association, and previous board member of the Saint Louis Police Officers Association, and Ethical Society of Police. POST certified instructor, Stress Coach trainee, member of the SLMPD Post-Traumatic Stress Team, hostage negotiator, and Trauma Informed Team Care Member.

Charles has been married to his beautiful wife, Kelli Lowe for 20 years, and they have a son, Charles Lowe Jr., who is eight years old. Kelli has been by her husband's side as an advocate for first responders families his whole career. Additionally Kelli is currently President of the National Police Wives Association where she advocates nationally for officers and first responder issues.

MARIO MILLETT

Mario Millett is a Black man and law enforcement officer who has been serving the law enforcement community for 25 years. As both an officer and a member of the Black community, Mario's dual identity uniquely positions him to see through the eyes of both a civilian and law enforcement. He seeks to bring this perspective to his organization's efforts to tackle the challenges of policing in today's complex society.

As a young man, Mario experienced first-hand instances of abuse of power by local law enforcement. On several occasions he found himself on the receiving end of police interactions that left him feeling powerless, and at times, humiliated. These interactions - whether the result of "fitting the description of ...", a 'Stop & Frisk' policy, or an overzealous law enforcement officer or a lawful stop – left him with one thought: "Was I stopped due to the color of my skin?" Like so many others in communities of color, Mario felt this was the case – and it was through conversations with friends, and ultimately his mother, that Mario decided empowerment and action was his best path forward.

This guidance led Mario to become a law enforcement officer. Today, he works to protect and heal communities plagued by gangs and crime. He has held and comforted mothers who have lost children and children who have lost mothers. He has traveled abroad in pursuit of justice while providing guidance to local youth that had lost their way. He has had the opportunity to train and instruct law enforcement officers from all over the world and he continues to educate himself on issues involving his community and law enforcement. More importantly, he has been able to serve and protect his community without ever forgetting that feeling of powerlessness and humiliation he felt during his very first police interactions. He became the change he wanted to see.

MICHAEL PELLEGRINO

Michael Pellegrino is a graduate of Notre Dame High School in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, and he attended Mercer County Community College where he studied Fire Science. He also attended Caldwell College and finished at the Martin School of Business in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Michael graduated from the Trenton Police Academy and started his law enforcement career in August of 1994 at the age of 19. He was assigned to the Patrol Division upon completion of the Police Academy. He also served as a Traffic Officer, the Department's School Resource Officer at all the Elementary Schools. He was certified to teach D.A.R.E. and GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) to the school students of Ewing.

Michael also served as a School Resource Officer at Fisher Middle School and Ewing High School where he continued to

strengthen the bonds between the police department and the young community members. Michael served as a Detective in the Youth and Family Services Bureau where some of his duties included overseeing Megan's Law and the Domestic Violence Response Team. Michael was also assigned to the Mercer County Special Investigation Unit, this Unit was trained in narcotics and gun investigations.

Among his many accolades, Michael received the Ewing Police Medal of Honor, National Law Enforcement Police Officer of the Month, New Jersey State PBA Unit Citation Award, Carnegie Medal of Honor Award and the Knights of Columbus Exceptional Service Award. Michael was also the Mercer County 200 Honoree for rescuing a trapped elderly couple and their special needs son from a motor vehicle accident.

Michael retired from Ewing Police Department after 25 years of service. He founded *Resilient Minds On The Front Lines Inc.* in March 2020. It is a non-profit 501c3. *Resilient Minds On The Front Lines* started as a webcast series to give people Hope, Positivity, A Resiliency Tool, and Resources. Now Resilient Minds is a training platform for Resiliency, Chaplaincy, Leadership, Financial Resiliency, and Handle with Care/ACES.

He resides with his wife, Diana, and their fur babies Bella and Wookie.

ERIC PROVOW

Eric is a retired combat veteran with 20 years of military service split between the Marine Corps and Air Force. As a Marine, he was assigned to Reconnaissance and Force Reconnaissance units. In the Air Force, Eric was a Combat Controller assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command. He then went onto serve with the premier units within the Joint Special Operations Command. During his military career Eric was deployed on numerous contingency operations and did three combat tours to Afghanistan and Iraq. During his second tour to Afghanistan in 2002 Eric was involved in a firefight that left mental scars and left him suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In 2017, Eric's struggle with PTSD became too much for him and he became suicidal. With the support of his wife, he began the long road to getting help for the first time. Eric began going through multiple treatment modalities and attending veterans' programs. After all of this he was still having struggles and in 2018 he was selected to attend the trauma program, *This Able*

Veteran. It was there that he was paired with his service dog Denny.

A year after Eric's suicide attempt, Eric and his wife Meg began speaking out about the stigma associated mental health and asking for help among veterans and first responders. They have participated in numerous videos and interviews and actively speak to organizations about their experiences and show others that it's "ok to not be ok" and ask for help. Eric Provow is currently a Firefighter/Paramedic in northern Virginia with 15 years of experience. He is also a member of his department's Technical Rescue Team.

In 2018, Eric, along with his wife Meg, founded the nonprofit organization Making Everything Good (M.E.G.) to assist and support the needs of individuals, families, and organizations associated with public safety, military, veterans, and their local community.

SIOBHAN SEYMOUR

Siobhan Seymour is a retired detective from the Fort Collins Police Department in Colorado where she served for 16 years, 11 as a Crimes Against Persons Detective. She has great experience in working with individuals who have experienced trauma, and has her own personal history of overcoming the diagnoses of PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

In an effort to heal herself organically, Siobhan has done extensive research on wellbeing and discovered simple things such as gratitude, connection, diet, movement, and breath work have profound effects on our mental and physical well-being. Siobhan is now a certified wellness coach with a focus on trauma and stress management, and has obtained over twenty additional certifications including stress management, and most recently, certification as a Trauma Specialist. She is currently seeking her masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and provides speeches, training and workshops to first responders on the importance of self-care and resilience. She hosts a minimum of two Wellness Retreats annually, each on the sandy shores of Isla Colon in Panama where she educates and empowers attendees to learn about their body and mind's unique abilities to heal themselves.