

What I See

Military and First Responders Appreciation Luncheon The Commons - Bozeman, Montana July 6, 2019

BY Chaplain Kathi Gregoire

I am a chaplain with the Gallatin Sheriff's Office. I serve those who protect and serve Gallatin County in law enforcement, their families, other members of the office, and the broader first responder community. I assist community members in crisis. Usually the crisis is an unexpected death of a family member: car crash, overdose, suicide, heart attack, etc. and I accompany the coroner to do the death notification.

I have the privilege to serve those that serve. In the middle of the night, at the trailhead, on the freeway, in the living room, during the daylight, under the rotors, in the wet, the cold, the snow and in the blistering hot, in the 911 Center, at the structure fire, and the detention center. This is what I see.

I see men and woman of honor working at noble tasks. I see them do masterful work in difficult conditions sometimes with heavy hearts.

I see men and women of honor caring for their community. Leaning on their training to carry them through. Putting their needs and wants on the back burner while they make sure you and I are okay.

I see them speak clearly when average humans would be blubbering. I see them think lightning quick and with spot on accuracy when average humans would have frozen. I see them wish and pray with all their might for a better outcome, and if that hoped for outcome doesn't come, I see them function as consummate professionals and work their noble task with steadfastness and purpose. I see them converse with calm compassion to sooth your hurting soul when the average human would have lost control. I see them speak with respect and patience when the average human would have lost their temper. I see them talk to you and explain what is in that IV, and whisk your loved one away to definitive care. I have watched them stop traffic so a helicopter can come and give your loved one their best chance at survival. I have watched crews work while on the move to get your loved one what they needed. I have listened to dispatchers answer your crying screams and while calming you, getting information from you, dispatching law, medical, and fire with steady voice, all the while monitoring at least 8 computer screens.

I have watched men and woman of honor miss holidays with family. Be called in when they had something special planned with their spouse. I have watched parents in uniform read to their children before heading out to protect and serve. I have seen the shimmer of a tear when a situation hits close to home. I have heard the frustration, the

anger, the emotion, all based in love for their fellow humans. The anger would not be there if they did not care about the innocent, the hurting, the weak, the injured, the disenfranchised. I have seen the firefighters sweating buckets while trying to rejuvenate their bodies with rest and water before returning to spell another crew while they attempt to save your house. I have watched them try to save your pets, find your purse, get your shoes and coats so that your night wouldn't be any worse. I see them hand your child a bear and a blanket. I see them comfort your children, play with your children, in general distract your children so your children don't see what children should never have to see. I see them purposefully place themselves so that they take the visual brunt, so your children won't see it. I see them smile and love your child. I have watched them engineer a make-shift bed so your infant could sleep a little while longer while you did some of the most difficult things a spouse would ever have to do.

I see men and woman of honor shifting gears from a fatal car crash to your noise complaint and still give you all the respect as if your complaint was the most important thing in the world. I have seen men and woman of honor, strangers to you, lovingly and respectfully scrape what remains of your loved one off the pavement, off the metal, from the glass, out of the carpet so that you can have some solace. I see men and woman of honor serving the innocent, pursuing the criminal, bandaging the injured, speaking to the distressed.

Those of you in the military, law enforcement, dispatch, corrections, the fire service, ambulance crews; the honorable men and women I have been speaking about: There will be times when your work seems endless and overwhelming. At times it may seem you have an unbearable task and that your effort seems futile. This. Is. A. Lie. The work you do is honorable. The work you do is needed. You are needed. Your work honors those brave souls that have gone before you in your vocation. Some have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Most have paved the way for you to serve with excellence. Do not allow discouragement to get you down. What you do matters. How you do it matters. But most of all, YOU MATTER. Serve with vigor and excellence.

I know many people go to the theatre to watch superhero movies. I get to watch the real thing every day. I get to serve superheroes. We all can and should show our appreciation to our superheroes. They are our neighbors, our friends, our family. Our superheroes serve our community and bring order out of chaos, peace out of distress, healing out of injury, compassion out of violence. They deserve our respect and appreciation.

This is what I see. Thank you.