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“GETTING THROUGH THE GRIND” 1ST RESPONDER TRAINING IN GREAT FALLS, BILLINGS, GLENDIVE

BIG TIMBER, MONTANA—T-6 Advanced Training and Career Development Group, a nonprofit that helps first responders navigate job and related life stressors, is expanding its programming to Great Falls, Billings, and Glendive this fall.

Its program, “Getting through the Grind,” will be offered in cooperation with each city’s respective police department on the following dates:

- Great Falls, November 4-6
- Billings, November 11-13
- Glendive, December 2-4

The program is being offered free to all first responders and their spouses through a grant from the Gianforte Family Foundation. First responders that T-6 serves include police, fire, EMT, dispatch, and corrections professionals.

According to Jessie Holton, lead instructor and cofounder of T-6, the COVID-19 pandemic and its collateral toll on society have exacerbated stress on first responders. “This stress has, in turn, led to alarming rates of domestic violence, divorce and suicide,” Holton says. A 15-year law enforcement veteran, Holton served the Brevard County (Florida) Sheriff’s Office and Bozeman Police Department.

“In the last four years suicide has become the number one cause of death for law enforcement officers, with suicide rates three times higher than deaths of officers killed in the line of duty,” he continues. LEOs also experience much higher divorce rates than others—around 85 percent for first marriages, according to Holton. “Behind the scenes are the children and spouses who are left with the burden of repairing a fractured home,” he says.

The T-6 curriculum aims to address these disturbing statistics by examining Organizational Stress, Occupational Stress, Societal (External) Stress, and Individual (Internal) Stress, according to Brian Regan. Regan, T-6 cofounder and president and a 15-year veteran of the Brevard County Sheriff’s Office, is coordinating logistics for the three-city training program. “What makes this program unique,” Regan says, “is that it’s designed and taught by first responders who have walked the walk.”

The mission of T-6 is to provide first responders with the necessary training to navigate the stressors of the occupation, to ensure career longevity and a better quality of life. For more information on the organization or upcoming programs for Montana first responders, contact Regan at 321-848-1974 or bregan79@gmail.com.

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