



## THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

### Newsletter article April, 2019

I don't often talk about my agency in my articles. Most of you are cops too, and you don't read this article to hear how we do things at the Colorado State Patrol. This month, however, I would like to share a story from work. I recently heard from a member of my agency and I feel his message could resonate with law enforcement officers across the country.

Once a year, the Colorado State Patrol stands for inspection in front of our chief. We polish ourselves up and break out a new razor, so we can go through the time-honored tradition of pass and review. Seems a little old fashioned, but it truly brings a unique sense of pride to our members. After inspection, the day is spent receiving sort of a 'state of the agency' address from our chief.

This year I listened to Chief Matt Packard discuss what we do. He covered a wide variety of topics relevant to internal and external customers, and everything from officer safety to budget issues, but the bottom line was that if we took absolutely nothing else away from the day, we remember this: "I work for the Colorado State Patrol, and my job is to save lives." Chief Packard was emphasizing that our job is to always reduce the number of lives lost on Colorado roadways through the various methods of intervention we have available to us from enforcement and education, to the more acute life saving measures of rendering aid to those critically injured at the scene of a crash.

Chief Packard told us the only acceptable number of fatalities is zero, and I realized we will never accomplish that. I imagined 700 inspection ready troopers standing in front of the Hoover Dam, with a crack in it. How are we going to stop this? We didn't put the crack there... why are we responsible when it goes?

Then I thought of all the police officers we lose each year in the line of duty, and even to suicide. Why are we losing our own? Where are the finely polished men and women who are supposed to protect us from our mistakes, our lapses in judgement, and our lack of proper training? They don't exist, and neither does such a person for the motoring public of Colorado.

Lt. Colonel Dave Grossman has coined the phrase and analogy of the sheep and sheepdog. Most of us are familiar with this, so allow me to expand on the

concept. One sheepdog could never protect the flock if the sheep kept defying the dog. It is incumbent on the sheep to do as they are supposed to, and incumbent on the dog to serve as a constant reminder to them to stay in a group.

Colorado's drivers need to follow the rules, and it is our job to make sure they are always mindful and conscious of the dangers and hazards if they do not. If the drivers adhere to that every time they drive, our goal of zero fatalities would be absolutely realistic. This means their brains are a major factor in the equation so we must have influence there. We do this through enforcement and presence on the roadways, but for long term impact (and to reach those who are smart enough not to violate a traffic law right in front of us) we must do this through education.

How is this relevant to officer survival?

Your agency can train you. Your state capitols can pass legislation to protect you. Your chiefs can equip you with the best possible equipment to save your life. You can even read my newsletter. But if you do not play an active role and choose to be conscious about everything you do during your ten-hour shift, we will never be able to ensure your life is safe. Everyone else will do what they can for you but ultimately it is on you to take advantage of the lessons of those gone before you, and the resources available through your community and agency to protect your own life.

The Blue Family Tree has a goal of zero line of duty deaths. Sounds impossible right? It is if you are relying on us to physically save your life at every turn; however, it is completely within reach when each of us participates in our own survival. Spread the word. Be a constant reminder to your partners. There can't be too many.

The Colorado State Patrol can achieve zero fatalities on the roadways, and The Blue Family Tree can achieve zero police fatalities across the country, when we engage our audience, and make our mission as important to them as it is to us.

I am a member of The Blue Family Tree, and my job is to save police lives.

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Authors note: In the final hours of editing this article on March 13th, 2019, I learned that earlier today, we lost Colorado State Patrol Corporal Daniel Groves. Nothing in this article, or any other, should ever suggest that our officers are at fault in any way for their demise. There will forever be unforeseen and unavoidable

circumstances. We all sign up knowing this to be true. Our goal here is to hold our losses to only those circumstances beyond reasonable control, and save lives wherever we can.

It is with a heavy heart that I say, God bless the Groves family and God bless my agency, the Colorado State Patrol.