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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**By Authority of: Chief Dennis McDaniel**

## **Johnston Police Hosts Training to Help Those Who Serve**

**JOHNSTON, Iowa** – The Johnston Police Department is hosting two Peer Support Foundation (PSF) training courses to help those who serve across Iowa. It is specifically designed for law enforcement, firefighters and EMS personnel and focuses on assisting individuals in crisis and group crisis intervention.

“There is no doubt that first responders deal with unique stressors in their work life that affects them both personally and professionally,” said Peer Support Foundation Founder & Executive Director and Des Moines Police Sergeant, Jeremy Sprague. “These every day stressors have a significant impact on the first responders, their families, friends and the agencies they work for. We are lucky in Des Moines to have a peer support team, but every first responder in the state of Iowa needs to have access to peer support. To help ensure first responders throughout the state have a long healthy career, the PSF was established in April 2017. We are excited about this opportunity and look forward to helping those who protect our communities every day and these two training courses is the first step in the process.”

Thirteen years ago, Sergeant Jeremy Sprague was involved in a shooting while on duty. Through this experience, he quickly learned the psychosocial impacts on himself, family and co-workers. His personal experience also allowed him to recognize other emergency service personnel that were suffering from post-traumatic stress following critical incidents. Being able to recognize the signs is an important factor in saving those who put their lives first to ensure the safety of others.

The PSF consists of five board members serving Iowa communities in Law Enforcement:

- Executive Director Jeremy Sprague, Des Moines Police Sergeant
- Assistant Director Paul Ascheman PhD., Clinical Psychologist
- Treasurer Jessica Jensen, Johnston Police Sergeant
- Rich Dejoode, Des Moines Police Detective

- Leanna Ellis, Story County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant

"Being able to provide peer support to members that may be suffering from stress either on the job or in everyday life is important to this foundation and the team I lead at the Johnston Police Department," said Peer Support Foundation Treasurer and Johnston Police Sergeant, Jessica Jensen. "The peer support teams provide a confidential, safe and supportive environment for first responders and their families. The incidents we see and deal with day after day, begin to weigh heavily on first responders, if they are not properly dealt with. Having served in law enforcement for 10 years and fire and EMS for seven years before that, I have seen firsthand the mental and emotional toll it can take on officers. But as professionals we need to take care of ourselves just like we take care of everyone else within our communities."

Implementing peer support teams across Iowa is a top initiative for the foundation this upcoming year. The risk of being in the industry has certainly changed over the last decade, so it is important now more than ever that public safety responders take care of their own to ensure a long and healthy career.

The founder has three personal goals for the Peer Support Foundation; prevent first responder suicide, prevent family discord and help first responders thrive in retirement. Founder Sprague said, "What we don't want is a crisis experienced at work to create a crisis at home. Enough first responders are killed in the line of duty, so why add to that number because of suicide? No children of first responders should grow up without a mother or father. All first responders should have the support to not only survive to retirement, but to thrive once they get there. We want first responders to know there is help for those who are suffering in silence."

For more information about the foundation, visit [Peer Support Foundation](#) or call 515-978-1078.

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