

Public Safety Behavioral Health Symposium

The South Carolina Fire Academy partners with On A Mission LLC, SC FAST and South Carolina Fire Insurance Services to present a Public Safety Behavioral Health Symposium. South Carolina fire service, law enforcement, EMS, and dispatchers are encouraged to attend this free one-day program centered around the stressors of the job, how to manage those stresses, and local resources available for assistance. Lunch is provided by South Carolina Fire Insurance Services.

About the Program

Surviving the Job Captain Steve Gillespie will share his story of how he went beyond his PTSD diagnosis to PTG (Post Traumatic Growth) with the help of therapy, medication, and becoming a peer counselor. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a silent injury that is still not discussed as openly as it should be. Steve offers his story with others hoping they realize there is no longer a stigma with being in pain. Gone are the days of "suck it up kid" and "we don't talk about that stuff". Talking helps empty "the box" of stored up trauma and images before it overflows. This is not a scientific study or research but Steve's story and how he "Survived the Job".



Stress Management for the Emergency Responder Dr. David Griffin will share how Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) affect emergency responders all over the world. Quite often emergency responders do not understand why they are feeling a certain way and may not know where to go for help or are afraid to ask due to the stigma and the "suck it up" mentality plaguing emergency services. Research indicates this is unhealthy both physically and mentally not only for suffering emergency responders, but for their family and friends as well. Sadly enough, this has led to an alarming increase in emergency responder suicides. During this workshop, David will discuss the signs, symptoms and differences between PTSD and PTS from clinical research and from his own personal experience and outline stress management techniques. This is a powerful workshop where emergency responders learn from a fellow emergency responder who actually experienced a traumatic event, was diagnosed and able to overcome PTSD.

SC First Responder Assistance and Support Team (SC FAST), a section of the SC Firefighters' Association, provides training to First Responders, EMS, Public Safety and 911 Telecommunications on behavioral health, resilience and how to help each other. Team Director Patti Graham will provide attendees with information and training resources available in South Carolina to enable them to meet the challenges of their everyday personal lives and emergency responses.



Attendance Details

Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021

9a.m. - 5p.m.

South Carolina Fire Academy, Denny Auditorium

Fee: Free, includes lunch

Direct Registration Link: 9020-22-001

<https://fire.llr.sc.gov/Portal/Registration/registration.aspx?crsidnt=73046>

Questions? Contact [Amy Williamson](#)

About the Speakers

Steve Gillespie's career began in 1983 with his first fatal motor vehicle accident as a 17-year old volunteer firefighter. After serving as a police officer for seven years, he began his paid career as a New York City firefighter in 1994. In 2015 after 21 years serving in the FDNY, Steve retired as a Lieutenant from Engine 43, having spent his entire career in the Bronx. Steve spent 13 years as a firefighter assigned to Squad 41 in the Special Operations Command. During those years, he was exposed to significant tragedy including responding to the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the "Black Sunday" fire, the Deutsch Bank fire, and many others involving the multiple injuries and loss of firefighters and civilians alike. According to Steve, "The only thing I ever wanted to be was a New York City fireman. I have lived my dream." In January of 2016, he moved to South Carolina for the opportunity to carry on his passion for training. Steve has over 37 years of experience in volunteer and career departments. He was a Technical Search Specialist for NY-TF1 and assigned to the Operations Section of the FDNY IMT. During his tenure in the FDNY, Steve was a member of the FDNY Candidate Mentorship Program, an instructor at the FDNY Probationary FF School, and FDNY Technical Rescue School, as well as presenting at national conferences such as Firehouse Expo and Fire Department Instructor's Conference. He holds a FO IV certification, an AS in Fire and Occupational Safety and is pursuing a BS in Disaster and Emergency Management. Steve is a peer counselor who openly shares his struggles with PTSD in hopes of helping other first responders. Steve is now a Captain with the North Charleston Fire Department Training Division where he coordinates fire and technical rescue training as well as the coordinator of the Charleston County Joint Recruit School.

Dr. David Griffin is a Battalion Chief and Shift Commander in Charleston, South Carolina. He was the operator of the first due engine on June 18, 2007 when nine of his fellow firefighters perished in the line of duty. He has come through the ranks in the Charleston Fire Department from Firefighter, Assistant Engineer, Engineer, Captain, Battalion Chief, and current Shift Commander. He has a Bachelor of Science in education from The Citadel, a Master of Science in executive fire service leadership, and a Doctorate of Education in organizational leadership and development. He is the author of four books: Best Seller, In Honor of The Charleston 9: A Study of Change Following Tragedy, ACTION: 9 Missions for Personal and Professional Growth, From PTSD to PTG: A Firefighter's (My) Journey After A Multiple Line of Duty Death Incident, and Tattoos and Trauma: The Healing Power of Tattoos for Emergency Responders. David is also an international speaker and instructor, a certified Chief Fire Officer and Chief Training Officer with The Center for Public Safety Excellence, a graduate of The National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, and a graduate of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Executive Education Program entitled, Senior Executives in State and Local Government. David is also the owner of On A Mission at drdavidgriffin.com.

Patti Graham was born to a father who dedicated his life to serving others, with a passion for the fire department and the community. Unfortunately, he was killed in 2008 while serving others. Wanting to carry on the tradition, Patti decided to follow in her father's footsteps. Since her dad's passing, Patti took her firefighter training with the Sumter County Fire Department, serving as a volunteer firefighter and assistant chaplain. Patti is now a volunteer firefighter at Boiling Springs Fire District in Greenville, SC. She serves as the Team Director for the SC First Responder Assistance and Support Team (SCFAST). It warms her heart to hear from others and knows her father is proud to watch her grow and continue his legacy. Patti is married to Steve Graham, Chief of Boiling Springs FD. They have three living children and 10 grandchildren. Their youngest son, Matt, died in September 2020. His death serves as daily motivation for Patti to further the mission of SC FAST.