

As we begin October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it's an especially difficult and challenging time for one of our deputy sheriffs.

On August 23, 2023, Fresno County Sheriff's Deputy Dollene Clapper was diagnosed with Stage 4 Breast Cancer. Dollene is a single mother of three elementary school-aged kids. Currently she's balancing raising her children, working, and undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Deputy Clapper started her career with the Fresno County Sheriff's Office on May 30, 2022, after graduating from the College of the Sequoias Police Academy. Deputy Clapper fought hard to become a deputy sheriff and is now in the biggest fight of her life. Sheriff Zanoni is allowing her to remain working on a modified assignment.

Despite this devastating diagnosis, her attitude is extremely upbeat. Please join us by keeping this family in prayer. If you would like to do more, a fund through PORAC has been set up to help Deputy Clapper and her three children, Sebastian (9), Donovan (8), and Kennedy (6). We have posted a Fund-a-Hero. I selected this platform specifically because each dollar raised goes directly to her. The link is on the FDSA's Facebook page and PORAC's social media platforms. We would appreciate it if you can share the post to spread the word.

We are behind Deputy Clapper all the way and have purchased pink bracelets to let her know she is strong, and we are here to support her! Any of you who would like to wear one in honor of Dollene, let one of us know on the board or call the office to arrange to get one.

Saying goodbye to Assistant Sheriff Richard Souza

On September 12, 2023, Richard Souza was laid to rest at the Arroyo Grande Cemetery. Souza was an Assistant Sheriff under Sheriff Steve Magarian. In addition, he was one of the founding members of the Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association and the first President of the organization. Richard Souza's name is on the original documents for establishing the Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association.

He passed away following a short illness. Souza was preceded in death by his wife just eight weeks prior to his death on September 2, 2023.

Richard Souza started his career with the Sheriff's Department in 1969. He continued rising the ranks and in February of 1987 was promoted to Assistant Sheriff. At the time of his promotion, he was a lieutenant.

I was given many old newspaper articles from Bryan Souza (Richard's son) showing the political dynamic going on during that era at the Sheriff's Department.

In 1999, when Sheriff Pierce was sworn in, he altered the structure of the Sheriff's Department and transformed the ranks to nine captains, who each had different assignments/responsibilities. Richard became a captain as part of Sheriff Pierce's rank structure. He maintained the rank of captain to finish his 33-year career in 2002.

During the luncheon, there were many pictures of Richard's retirement party that was held at the FDSA. This was extremely fitting.

Throughout the years, Richard and I would speak on occasion. Usually, it was when I needed some historical perspective or insight into a particular issue. He never turned down a call and was always so patient and gracious to provide me with whatever information I needed.

Richard Souza was one of those type of people in this world that you are glad to know. His warm personality also shines through in his son, Bryan along with his grandchildren.

It was a pleasure spending the day in Arroyo Grande honoring the man who not only played a part in leading and progressing the Sheriff's Department, but also the leader who founded this organization. He started the process for negotiating salary and benefits for members.

Health Insurance Renewal 2024

I have reported in prior messages, we have completed the 2024 plan year dental renewal. We had been in a four-year rate lock with Delta Dental, offering premium dental services to our members.

Delta wants to keep providing insurance for the FDSA –and they have locked us into a 2-year rate lock that is 9% less than we are currently paying. This is great news for our members. Also, they have offered to roll

this over in two years *if* we meet or exceed benchmarks that are mutually agreed upon.

Overall, as a group, we maintained an experience of 85% for the last four years, which exceeded the 87% they set for us. I contribute a lot of this to In-Network dental providers and communication with our broker when and if there are questions, or when issues may arise.

We are still in negotiations with the major medical carriers. Our plan went out to bid this year and we are waiting to hear back from both Anthem and Blue Shield of California. Both carriers bid our plan for members and retirees. We are close, but not quite there yet to report anything out. The Insurance Trust will review all the plans and make that final vote. This will happen before the next President's Message, so I will be reporting that out once it's approved.

As I conclude this month's message, I wanted to just thank you for supporting your colleagues when they are facing challenges in life. There's a lot more that deputies, dispatchers, etc. face- beyond armed suspects and the stresses of this career. Thank you for reaching out when others have health struggles or face other adverse situations. We can all make this agency and this world better by being there to lift someone up!

Take care everyone!

Eric