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9/11 RIDE OF HOPE

The Quell Foundation's 9/11 Ride of Hope
Press Kit

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The Quell Foundation to Host 9/11 Ride of Hope

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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9/11 Ride of Hope to Raise Awareness for First Responder Mental Health

North Falmouth, Mass. (8/31/21) – The Quell Foundation will host the 9/11 Ride of Hope as a peloton of 20 cyclists will travel from New York City, N.Y. to Arlington, Va., during the week leading up to the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The 5-day event will kick off from the 9/11 Memorial and Museum on Tuesday, September 7, and conclude in Arlington on Saturday. The group will include active, retired, and surviving family members of first responders, many of whom responded to the horrific events of September 11, 2001.

Cycling 225 miles, this journey seeks to bring greater awareness and understanding to the long-term impact and emotional toll our nation's first responders experience through compounded daily trauma. The Ride of Hope also aims to educate, inspire, and empower first responders to recognize mental health crisis warning signs amongst their own.

Each mile of the journey will pay respect to those who lost their lives and demonstrate The Foundation's commitment to the mental health of our nation's First Responder, Emergency Response, Government Agencies, and Military communities.

"The women and men of our nation's first responder community are more likely to die by suicide than in the line-of-duty. These Americans who have dedicated their life to protecting, and saving ours, are taking their own at unprecedented rates," said Kevin M. Lynch, CEO and President of The Quell Foundation. "The deteriorating mental health of our country's first responders is at a critical point. On this, the twentieth anniversary of these tragic events, it is time we take care of the heroes who are there for us."

Funds from the 9/11 Ride of Hope will support the continued development and implementation of The Foundation's first responder mental health preparedness and training program.

Please visit the [9/11 Ride of Hope website](#) for more information, purchase gear, or donate to the event.

Sponsors for the event include FirstNet, Built with AT&T, Dell Technologies, K2 View, Morgan Stanley, and MOD.

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9/11 Ride of Hope General Info

ABOUT

The 9/11 Ride of Hope is a 5-day cycling journey to honor those suffering from the physical and emotional exposures associated with September 11th, 2001, and its aftermath. Each mile of the journey between the World Trade Center in N.Y. and the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., will pay respect to those who lost their lives and demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our First Responder, Emergency Response, Government Agencies, and Military communities. The event will culminate with the national premiere of The Quell Foundation's documentary Lift the Mask - First Responders Sound the Alarm on Friday and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Pentagon on the anniversary of 9/11.

THE CAUSE

To educate, inspire, and empower first responders to recognize mental health crisis warning signs amongst their own. Americans in public service are more likely to die by suicide than performing their line-of-duty life-saving roles. In 2019, at least 114 Firefighters died by suicide, compared to the 52 that died in the field. In the same year, 228 Police Officers took their life while 132 died in the field. The reality facing our country's first responders is at a critical point.

EVENT GOALS

- To educate and create greater awareness and understanding of the emotional toll our nation's first responders experience through their day-to-day lives and the long-term impact on their well-being.
- With the premiere screening of Lift the Mask - First Responders Sound the Alarm, on the eve of the 20th anniversary of September 11th, The Foundation will launch our campaign to normalize the conversation around mental health within the first responder community, training them to recognize mental health crisis warning signs among their own
- Secure philanthropic support to fund the continued development and implementation of The Foundation's first responder mental health preparedness and training program.

First Responder / Mental Health Statistics

- In a study, the prevalence of probable PTSD in police officers following the 9/11 attack was 12.9 percent and of depression was 24.7 percent ([Bowler et al., 2016](#)).
- "In 2019, 238 officers died by suicide" ([source](#)).
- "In 2021, 81 officers and 54 military veterans have died by suicide" ([source](#)).
- "In 2019 119 firefighters and 20 paramedics died by suicide" ([source](#)).
- "Firefighters are 9% more likely to have a cancer diagnosis and 14% more likely to die of cancer than the general population." ([source](#))
- "[One study](#) revealed 15.5% of firefighters had attempted suicide at least once during their career."
- In 2017, more firefighters and police officers died by suicide than in the line of duty according to a [report by the Ruderman Family Foundation](#). The report estimated that at least 103 firefighters and 140 police officers died by suicide, while 93 firefighters and 129 police officers died in the line of duty.
- "Depression and PTSD are up to 5 times more common in first responders." ([source](#))
- "A study revealed that 27.2% of EMT and paramedics survey respondents reported suicidal ideation in the past year - "A rate seven times higher than the general population." ([source](#))
- The consequences of depression, substance abuse and PTSD are severe; in a survey of more than one thousand fire fighters from across the country, 46.8% reported thinking about or imagining suicide at least one time during their career ([Stanley, Hom, Hagan, & Joiner, 2015](#)).
- 69 percent of EMS professionals have never had enough time to recover between traumatic events ([Bentley et al., 2013](#)). As a result, "EMS providers are at a high risk for burnout, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicide." ([source](#))
- Based on findings from a study of suicidality in EMS personnel — a lifetime prevalence rate of 28 percent for feeling life is not worth living, 10.4 percent for serious suicidal ideation, and 3.1 percent for a past suicide attempt ([Stanley, Hom, & Joiner, 2016](#)).
- It is estimated that 30 percent of first responders develop behavioral health conditions including, but not limited to, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as compared with 20 percent in the general population ([Abbot et al., 2015](#)).
- Over 5,000 first responders from Virginia Beach to Arlington County admitted to having recent thoughts of suicide. By comparison, the national estimated rate of suicidal thoughts in the United States is three percent ([survey](#)).

Storylines / Cyclist Preview

GENERAL STORYLINES

20th Anniversary of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks: It's difficult to fathom that teens now entering college — or serving in the armed forces — were not yet born on that unforgettable Tuesday morning. Nearly 3,000 people died in Manhattan, at the Pentagon and in a Pennsylvania field on September 11, 2001, in what remains the deadliest act of terrorism in history. Four first responders who answered the call for help that day are a part of the 9/11 Ride of Hope peloton.

Suicide Prevention Week: National Suicide Prevention Week is an annual week-long campaign in the United States to inform and engage health professionals and the general public about suicide prevention and warning signs of suicide. (DATES: Sunday, September 5 - Saturday, September 11)

Suicide in First Responder Community: Americans in public service are more likely to die by suicide than performing their line-of-duty life-saving roles. In 2019, at least 114 Firefighters died by suicide, compared to the 52 that died in the field. In the same year, 228 Police Officers took their lives while 132 died in the field. We have lost 22 as of February 15th, 2021.

CYCLIST PREVIEW

First Responders:

Jonathan Dade (Georgetown TX): Joined the Navy on 9/12/01...Comes from a family of service members...Now a chaplain who provides service for first responders.

Bob Gray (Dallas, TX) : Race Director, 9/11 Ride of Hope, Ret. Battalion Chief, Arlington County Fire Dept. First Responder to the Pentagon, 9/11/01.

Lynette Shaw (Palm Springs, FL) : First responder in NYC on 9/11, first responder featured in the documentary.

Robert Verhelst (Madison, WI) : Fireman involved in search and rescue on 9/11...United States Air Force Veteran...Has experience with the mental health of loved ones as well as himself...Motivational speaker...Guinness World Record, Most Ironman 70.3 triathlons in one year...World Record for Most Ironman triathlons in Full Firefighter Gear...World Record for Most Half Ironman Triathlons in Full Firefighter Gear.

Veterans:

George William Casey Jr. (Arlington, VA) Retired four-star general who served as the 36th Chief of Staff of the United States Army from April 10, 2007, to April 10, 2011. He served as Commanding General, Multi-National Force – Iraq from June 2004 to February 8, 2007, and was in the army for his entire adult working life.

Jonathan Ciccone (Merrimac, MA) : Retired Navy Explosive Ordnance Officer with two Post-9/11 Mobilizations/Deployments.

David Fine (Fort Worth, TX): Former FMF Navy Corpsman and EMT. Worked in NYC on 9/11.

Kevin M Lynch (Falmouth, MA): Founder, President, CEO of The Quell Foundation, Former FMF Navy Corpsman.

Mental Health Advocates:

Simon Borucki (Riviera Beach, FL) : An ER doctor "*Even though I did not treat anyone directly affected by 911, as an ER physician I felt the impact of such a tragic event on my colleagues who were in New York.*"

Jim Bugel (McLean, VA)

Ché Clark (Virginia Beach, VA) : Had many family and friends who worked in NYC on 9/11...Is currently in a new job working alongside first responders...Had experience with his mother undergoing mental health challenges.

Christin Deacon (Moorestown, NJ) : Was attending school in D.C. on 9/11...Comes from a family of service members.

Kate Lemke (Tucson, AZ.): Lost her boyfriend, Advanced EMT in the Grand Canyon, to suicide in 2019...Professional cyclist.

Oza and Milan Klanjsek (Denver, CO)

Townley Peters (Riviera Beach, FL): A part of Quell's leadership team, a psychologist and a New Yorker. Her father used to work in the towers and she had many friends who were first responders on 9/11.

John Stanley (Philadelphia, PA): Executive producer of the *Lif the Mask* documentary series

Erich Twachtman (Higganum, CT)

Lift the Mask - First Responders Sound the Alarm

On September 10, 2021, the team will arrive in Washington, D.C., where The Quell Foundation will host an invitation-only gathering to a national preview of Lift the Mask - First Responder's Sound the Alarm. The film provides insight into the lives and the experiences of the first responder community, their families, and the lives they touch through their day-to-day activities.

View the trailer for the documentary here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmbxYdibIWM>

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

Through vivid storytelling, The Quell Foundation creates a documentary that provides insight into the lives and the experiences of the first responder community, their families, and the lives they touch through their day-to-day activities. Through detailed interviews with subjects and examination of their current lives, the documentary will capture the struggles as well as the joys and achievements of those affected with a mental health challenge. With the screenings of this film, The Foundation seeks to bring awareness to the vicarious trauma common within these chosen professions. We aim to inspire empathy and understanding that will normalize the conversation and remove the stigma. The film will openly address the realities of first responder mental health challenges and the need to remove barriers to effective and timely treatment.

OUR GOAL

The documentary will highlight our nation's first responder's mental health that will serve as a crucial educational and awareness tool in aiding The Quell Foundation to achieve its mission. We strive to normalize the conversation within our first responder's communities, train them to recognize mental health crisis warning signs amongst their own and create awareness of the direct correlation between sustained occupational exposure to trauma and the alarming rates of suicide within this population of public servants. The intended audience for this film includes our nation's first responder community and their families, training academies, state and local government agencies, medical personnel, and corporate entities.

FILM SUBJECTS

- **Lynette Shaw**, retired police sergeant from New Jersey, once regarded as the top bounty hunter in the country.
- **Chris Fields**, a retired firefighter from Oklahoma City, became the focal point of attention and scrutiny after being featured in an iconic photo carrying the body of a lifeless child out of OKC bombing wreckage.
- **Chris Van Ness**, the first member of the Massachusetts police department to retire and receive full disability after a particularly dark and haunting career.
- **Josette Clinton**, a 911 operator from South Carolina highlights this group's often overlooked vulnerabilities and experiences when it comes to mental health.
- **Michelle Fayed**, a mother, paramedic, and firefighter, Michelle shares her journey in managing her own mental health alongside that of her now ex-husband, a veteran.

- **Bob Gray**, first on the scene of the Pentagon on 9/11 as Battalion Chief of the Arlington County Fire Dept., Bob has spent his career making mental health a priority. Bob, alongside Lynette, will spearhead The Foundation's first responder training program.
- Similar to Bob, **Joe Coffey** actively travels the country speaking on behalf of first responder mental health after a career in law enforcement in the greater Boston area.
- **Dr. Abbi Morris**: Psychologist based in Maryland who specializes in the mental health care and treatment of first responders, especially firefighters and Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing.
- **Ron Perkins**: a law enforcement chaplain in Florida...has extensive experience and education in workplace chaplaincy, Critical Incident Stress Management and crisis negotiation.
- **Becky Chersnick**: Psychologist in Florida who specializes in mental health care and treatment of first responders, particularly their families and children.

Screening Information

Event Details

Preview of *Lift the Mask - First Responders Sound the Alarm*

Screening: 6:00–7:30 p.m.

Cocktails & Hors d'oeuvres: 7:30–9:00 p.m.

When

September 10, 2021

Where

Hyatt Centric Arlington

1325 Wilson Boulevard,

Arlington, VA, 22314

Link to trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmbxYdibIWM&t=2s>

Premiere Access

Press credentials for this event are limited. If you are interested in attending this screening, interviewing the director or subjects, or learning more about The Quell Foundation's training program. Please contact Sarah Marshall (smarshall@thequellfoundation.org)

Available for Interviews

- Kevin M Lynch, The Quell Foundation CEO and Executive Producer
- Bob Gray, film subject
- Lynette Shaw, film subject
- Chris Fields, film subject

Credential Submission

Interviews

Interviews with cyclists can be arranged in the evenings and during rest stops by phone, zoom, or in-person. Please send all media requests directly to The Quell Foundation through Sarah Marshall.

Ride Along Access

Get as close to the ride as possible! Press interested in embedding with a SAG vehicle for a portion of the ride must submit their request at least a week in advance.

Social Media

The official Twitter account of The Quell Foundation is @quellfoundation. The official hashtag for the event is #RideofHope.

The Quell Foundation will provide updates and short commentary via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Fans and media are encouraged to tweet messages using the official hashtag. Photos, commentaries and short updates will be provided here.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheQuellFoundation>

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-quell-foundation>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/quellfoundation>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/quellfoundation/>

On-Site Press Contact:

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About The Quell Foundation

The Quell Foundation, Inc.

North Falmouth, MA - The Quell Foundation strives to reduce the number of suicides, overdoses, and the incarceration of people living with a mental health illness. We work to accomplish this by encouraging people to share their stories, increasing access to mental health services, providing a pipeline of future mental health care professionals, and training first responders to recognize mental health crisis warning signs amongst their own.

Visit www.TheQuellFoundation.org to learn more about the Masquerade Ball, the *"Lift the Mask - Portraits of Life with Mental Illness"* documentary, or for general information about the Foundation. The Quell Foundation, Inc. is a National 501(c)(3) not-for-profit foundation - Tax ID 47-5127883

The Quell Foundation Announces First Responder Training and Preparedness Program

FirstNet[®], Built with AT&T Proudly Underwrites Mental Health Preparedness Programming

The Quell Foundation, which strives to reduce the number of suicides, overdoses, and the incarceration of people living with a mental health illness, today announces that FirstNet[®], Built with AT&T will underwrite the Foundation's first responder mental health preparedness and training program.

"The women and men of our nation's first responder community are more likely to die by suicide than in the line-of-duty," says **Kevin M. Lynch, CEO, and President of The Quell Foundation**.

"These Americans who have dedicated their life to protecting, and saving ours, are taking their own lives at unprecedented rates. We are honored FirstNet is supporting the development of Quell's First Responder Training and Preparedness Program, the Foundation's training curriculum for first responders to recognize mental health warning signs amongst their own."

FirstNet is also underwriting The Foundation's upcoming documentary "[Lift the Mask - First Responders Sound the Alarm](#)," produced by The Quell Foundation and MOD Worldwide. The film provides insight into the lives and the experiences of the first responder community, their families, and the lives they touch through their day-to-day activities.

"First responders put their lives on the line every day to protect our communities, and we take their health and wellness seriously," said **Jason Porter, president, Public Sector and FirstNet, AT&T**.

"Quell's mental health preparedness and training program is one way we're helping first responders feel better equipped to manage the stresses of their jobs. We're proud to sponsor efforts that support the wellness of public safety."

FirstNet, Built with AT&T is a public- private partnership with the [First Responder Network Authority](#) (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government. It is designed to improve communications among first responders and members of the public safety community, allowing first responders to communicate and collaborate with one another during everyday situations, big events or emergencies.

Chief Robert Gray and Sgt. Lynette Butler Shaw will spearhead The Foundation's first responder programming with a combined 50 years of experience in the first responder fields. Bob spent 30 years with Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD), serving as a firefighter, paramedic, Captain, and Battalion Chief. Lynette spent 25 years in law enforcement as a Police Sergeant with the William Paterson University Police Department after serving 13 years as a National Fugitive Investigator with the International Fidelity Insurance Company.

This programming will be available in 2022. If your organization is interested in hosting a documentary screening and/or training session, please contact Emily Abbott at EAbbott@thequellfoundation.org.

For more on The Quell Foundation, please visit: <https://thequellfoundation.org>

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