

DAILY TIMES



TODAY'S WEATHER
High: 66
Low: 58
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PLAYOFFS!

PHILS SO GOOD!



BRINGING THE NOISE

Philadelphia Phillies superstar Bryce Harper is mobbed by teammates in the dugout following his solo blast in the fifth inning against the Rays. AP PHOTO/LAURENCE KESTERSON

PHINALLY! The Phils defeat Tampa Bay to keep the championship dream alive

Can Harper and company finish the job ? SEE BACK PAGE

MENTAL ARMOR

AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.

**STRENGTH,
HOPE, AND
DEDICATION
UNITE TO
PROTECT
DELCO'S
FRONT LINE,**

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HEROES HELPING HEROES: MVP

Recovery founder Brian Corson, left, with the SHIELD team, continuing from left, clinical director Kayla Taylor, registered nurse Jessica Zappone and Leo Doyle, director of S.H.I.E.L.D. KATHLEEN E. CAREY — DAILY TIMES

PSU quarterback shoulders blame for loss, SEE PAGE 21

BACKING UP BACK UP

S.H.I.E.L.D. helped 70-plus first responders in a year

Round-the-clock availability and peer support

By Kathleen E. Carey
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A program designed to assist first responders with optimal mental wellness in Delaware County has seen more than 70 engagements in its first year.

S.H.I.E.L.D. — strength, hope, integrity, empowerment, leadership and dedication — was launched in September 2025 as one of MVP Recovery's array of services. However, this program is specifically targeted to first responders of all capacities and their families.

It has two main components. One is a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week behavioral health service linking first responders and their families to peer support from an active duty first responder through the MVP hotline at 855-MVP(687)-2410.

The other is a weekly support meetings for first responders at the S.H.I.E.L.D. location at 2334 Providence Ave. in Chester. They are drop-in, free gatherings where first responders can come to spend time with one another whether they are in crisis or not.

"He holds it every Friday when the rest of the center isn't open, so it's a private, confidential space," MVP Recovery founder Brian Corson said of Leo Doyle, the Ridley Township police corporal who helped create S.H.I.E.L.D. and



Kayla Taylor, left, and Jessica Zappone with Leo Doyle, S.H.I.E.L.D. founder. **KATHLEEN E. CAREY — DAILY TIMES**

continues to operate it.

Corson said it was important to coordinate the program's weekly meetings with other groups who use the building the rest of the time to make sure there was a safe space for first responders.

"That's a whole additional barrier that regular people like us just can't conceive," he said, adding that they wanted to eliminate the worry a first responder may have of running into someone they had an interaction with on the street.

At the program's core is the 24-hour hotline for behavioral services that gets diverted to Doyle.

"What Leo does is he follows them from that initial call all the way through treatment long-term," Corson said. "Say somebody needs to be put in an in-patient center. Leo helps them and follows them

through that process so they have someone they can talk to, someone they trust. Not only does he do this, but he's also out in the real world on the other side of things."

In its first year, the S.H.I.E.L.D. program has had 71 engagements, with 100% being successfully connected to care and 96% participating in treatment or support services.

The program also served 61 first responders, five veterans, and five family members of first responders. 97% of all SHIELD engagements were Delaware County-based. And, Corson said 94% of SHIELD engagements involve a mental health need.

"It's been really rewarding," Doyle said. "Obviously to have 71 in the last year, to have those, to be able to see the outcomes, all types of first



S.H.I.E.L.D. programming for first responders and their families is held at MVP Recovery's 2334 Providence Ave. location in Chester. **KATHLEEN E. CAREY — DAILY TIMES**

"This is a drop-in support group. If a first responder is having a crisis or they just want to stop, get a cup of coffee and talk to some other first responders and share that lived experience with one another, Leo's here to provide that."

— LEO DOYLE, S.H.I.E.L.D. FOUNDER

responders from Delaware County raise their hand up in a moment of strength when they get the support, a lot of them are back out on the street working, answering calls, and have the support system."

'DROP-IN SUPPORT GROUP'

He said it also continues beyond that initial call and service.

"It's building a support system ... linking that responder with a therapist who understands first responders," Doyle said.

That's why they started the weekly support group for all first responders.

"This is a drop-in support group," Doyle said. "If a first responder is having a crisis or they just want to stop, get a cup of coffee and talk to some other first responders and share that lived experience with one

another, Leo's here to provide that."

Corson said that previously didn't exist for the first responder community.

"What Leo had identified when he brought the program to me was that it didn't exist," Corson said. "There wasn't a drop-in where first responders could just stop in and get support from other first responders."

Doyle talked about the response.

"There's been a whole variety of first responders that have reached out from the communications part of it, to law enforcement, to the EMS/firefighters, corrections, even the Delaware County District Attorney's Office," he said.

He's glad it's there.

"So often, it's nerve wracking.

BACK UP

From Page 3

Imagine you're a police officer," Doyle said. "Who do you go to say, 'Hey, I'm struggling mentally,' because you're carrying a gun and a badge?"

Doyle said having S.H.I.E.L.D. presents an alternative where a first responder can get the help they need.

"It doesn't mean that you're going to be taken off the street or not be able to work," he said. "That is such a part of the stigma that I try to break down and other part of it is confidentiality."

"That's what we preach here at S.H.I.E.L.D.," he added. "You raise your hand up. This isn't going to be in the locker room tomorrow. This is just about you and getting the help and the support that you need."

Corson credited the Ridley corporal with being the face of the program and helping to break down the stigma.

"He has seen people gone down paths they wouldn't necessarily have gone down if they had the support," he said, adding, "Leo is out front and center, letting people know that just because we are in these positions that we're in, it's OK to reach out for help."

'IMPERATIVE' EFFORT

Both agreed that first responders should have access to mental health services just as anyone else, particularly with the demands of their line of work.

"It's imperative for mental health," Corson said. "It's imperative for mental wellness. Traumatic experiences affect people. Who more sees trauma than



Emblems from various first responder units hangs in the S.H.I.E.L.D. office.

KATHLEEN E. CAREY — DAILY TIMES

first responders?"

In addition to Doyle, the S.H.I.E.L.D. team includes Jessica Zappone, a registered nurse who helps with mental health screening, crisis stabilization and medication management; Kayla Taylor, one of the clinical directors who helps with clinical resources and services; and Nicole Chunta, who runs a special trauma-based bridge program.

Both Corson and Doyle also credited the support from the community from the Delaware County District Attorney's Office and the Delaware County FOP Lodge 27 for helping to make it as successful as it is.

"To have the FOP and the district attorney's office both supporting this, it's massive," Doyle said.

Doyle shared an often-shared sentiment for those who first arrive at S.H.I.E.L.D.

"When they get here, so often, they're like, 'Leo that felt really

comfortable' because the therapists here understand the first responder," Doyle said. "Once that trust is built, then really that's when the healing starts."

Then, there's the spillover.

"There's been quite a few times where a few police officers that ... are now in recovery themselves are now talking like that to somebody who's suffering on the street," Doyle said. "I'm a year sober. I'm working a program. It gets better.' It brings that human element back."

Doyle spoke about the success.

"Out of that 71, ... The large majority of that number are first responders that are back out on the street, working, getting promoted in their roles, going to schools and becoming leaders in their own departments," he said.

And it all stems from that first reach-out.

"Someone's on the phone with me for that first time, it's so easy to think that it's a moment of weakness for that officer," Doyle said. "And I always tell them, 'This is the strongest moment of your life or of your first responder career.'"

Plus, it has exponential benefits for the community.

"When you support our first responders, our communities are safer," Corson said. "It's ripple effects because when we can support first responders' mental wellness, that just has ripple effects on our community as a whole."

The S.H.I.E.L.D. program can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling the main MVP hotline at 855-MVP-2410 (687-2410).