



# Counsel, Retreat and Resources for Law Enforcement Officers

By Linnette Rochelle

**R**yanne Caldwell sat next to her husband, Kevin, in church one Spring Sunday morning in 2017 and sensed his movement. She glanced over to see him writing furiously. It would not have seemed odd except Kevin rarely took notes. Yet here he sat, writing throughout the remainder of the service. Afterward, they climbed into the car, fastened their seatbelts and headed home. Still, Kevin said nothing.

Casting glances at his thoughtful expression, Ryanne finally said, "What happened in church? I didn't get the memo." Kevin glanced at her and said, "I think I got a calling. I think we need to do something to assist law enforcement. Something with mental health, but I'm not sure..." Ideas swam in his head, forming a haze he could not quite see through. Together, they prayed for

God's direction and clarity. As two of South Carolina's law enforcement officers, they have intimate knowledge of officer needs. Should they go back to school to become licensed professional counselors? Neither could see their way clear to that path.

One fall day in 2017, Kevin grabbed paper and pencil as Nahum 1:7 ran through his head. "The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble; he cares for those who trust in him (NIV)." His hands moved to sketch a map of a 10 acre lake with a house on one side, a lodge on the other side, and cabins scattered around the lake. Ideas continued to play through his mind as he prayed for clarity. Kevin called Ryanne on a hot summer day a year later and said, "Write this down. Haven." "What? Haven? What do you mean," she said. "Write it down. That's the name. The Haven," Kevin said.

In January 2020, Ryanne and Kevin finally decided it was time to meet with Pastor Jeff. This would be the first time to discuss The Haven with anyone. With such a major life-altering venture, they needed counsel to determine whether this was truly a calling from God. Pastor Jeff continued to pray with them for direction when Spring 2020 rolled around, bringing with it tragedies and trauma for police officers like never before. Headline after headline of officers being ambushed and officers committing suicide sharpened Kevin's vision.

One Saturday in October 2020, the Caldwells took a family trip to the mountains with Kevin's parents, Marilyn and Roger. Though they had not planned to do so, Kevin shared with Roger in one vehicle while Ryanne shared with Marilyn in the other. When they arrived back at his parents' home, they discussed ideas about the resources they wanted to provide for officers and their families. The following Wednesday, Marilyn called Kevin to inform him that she had found the property. Thursday, Kevin and Ryanne called the owners and shared their story. Upon hearing the Caldwell's story, Danny and April simply said, "We've been praying for the right buyers." Sunday, Kevin and Ryanne made a trip out to see the property.



The Caldwell's were astonished by what they saw. Kevin pulled out his sketch of The Haven he had envisioned on that Fall day in 2017 and flattened it on the table. Danny looked at it and said, "I want to show you something." He went to retrieve an architectural drawing from when they had considered building a bigger home on the property. He laid it out next to Kevin's sketch. It was a match. The oblong lake was just shy of ten acres. A house sat on one side of the lake opposite a larger house, exactly where Kevin had drawn a house and a lodge across from each another. A hushed awe filled the room. Danny and April said, "We want to meet your parents." The following Friday, the Caldwell's returned with his parents, and a few select friends. After meeting the landowners, seeing the property, talking and praying together, they all knew this was it.

Over the course of the next several months, Kevin and Ryanne laid everything on the line to obtain this property. Being a strict budgeter, they made a move of which Dave Ramsey would have never approved. This was an act of faith. They believed God would provide the resources needed to fulfill what he had called them to do. They watched and prayed as God removed roadblock after roadblock to obtain the property. In February 2021, they closed on the property and moved into their new home. Equipped with a 501C3, they formed a board and held their first meeting that March.

In the midst of selling their home, purchasing the property, moving twice, setting up The Haven as a 501C3, caring for their young twins, getting a puppy, and working as investigative law enforcement officers for different state departments, Ryanne had lost her mom and dad within eight months of each other. This brought home to her all the more how vital it is to take care of one's mental health – especially when working such a high pressure job. Kevin described the unique mental health stress officers deal with every day whether on or off the clock. "Even in church, you can't really worship. You're constantly scanning for threats. You can't just turn it off. You're always on," Kevin said.

While other first responders are trained to save lives and military are trained to kill in order to preserve our freedoms, officer training is dichotomous and at odds. They are trained to neutralize the threat, often requiring the use of deadly force. However,

as soon as the threat is neutralized, they are required to engage in saving the life of those they just shot. This creates a major dissonance within our officers which takes a major toll on them apart from a healthy outlet for decompressing. For this purpose, Kevin and Ryanne founded The Haven.

### The Haven

The mission of The Haven is to rescue, restore, and rebuild police officers and their immediate family members. Situated in an undisclosed location (for security purposes) in the Midlands, officers are invited to schedule a time to decompress at The Haven. Kevin and Ryanne are on rotation with a list of vetted officers – retired and active duty, who act as hosts to visiting officers. The host lets the officers through the gate, checks on them from time to time, and is available for peer to peer counseling. The Haven also has a list of on-call ministers and available connectivity to counselors if that is something the officer requests.

The officers and any of their immediate family members are invited to fish in The Haven's bass stocked lake, hike the mile of trails, or go kayaking. At one end of the lake, a bench which belonged to Ryanne's mom sits, facing the water. Ryanne often stops to sit on her way home from work to decompress before facing her home responsibilities. There is also a small cabin with WI-FI available for hanging out. To schedule an appointment, contact Kevin and Ryanne through their website at [www.thehavensc.org](http://www.thehavensc.org) or email [info@thehavensc.org](mailto:info@thehavensc.org) or call 803-399-0480. Appointments are required and the officers are welcome to stay for as long as needed during the day.

### A Work in Progress

The Haven is a quiet place to decompress and meet with a fellow officer for peer to peer counseling, but Kevin and Ryanne's vision exceeds far beyond their current capabilities. They have a running list of resources, programs, and building projects to add as finances allow. More cabins, a lodge, and a chapel are on their list of facilities to be added.

These facilities will allow them to hold various retreats, including couples retreats. They want to bring in experts for suicide prevention training, and mental health professionals for mental health and psychoeducational training. According to Ryanne, officers are taught to practice autonomic response exercises to help them keep their



it to protect us. Now, the community has a tangible way to give back to officers and their families. Donations and corporate sponsorships allow The Haven to give our officers a safe place to decompress which allows them to return to the field rescued, restored, and rebuilt. This will in turn save many lives – both theirs and ours. To donate to or become a sponsor of The Haven, visit the website and click on the donate button for various options and opportunities to give.



If you are an officer, a minister, or a counselor, there are ways for you to volunteer your time to help officers in need. All volunteers must go through a vetting process for the protection and safety of our officers and their family members. Retired or active duty officers may volunteer as hosts and peer-to-peer counselors. Ministers may volunteer to be on call for officers in need – on-site or via phone or video call. Counselors may volunteer to be on a call list, or may request to be added to The Haven's contact list of counselors for paid sessions.

The Haven is a faith-based organization formed to rescue, restore, and rebuild police officers and their families in our communities and throughout the nation. All on-site resources are fully funded by The Haven to ensure the officers can focus on why they are there. If ever there was a time in our nation's history when such a resource is needed by our men and women in blue, that time is now. Visit The Haven website to discover how you can become involved in helping rescue, restore, and rebuild our protectors and their families. ■

fight/flight/freeze responses in check. However, there is limited follow-up training in this area, so this is one item on The Haven's list of psychoeducational seminars. The Caldwells also hope to have a trauma counselor on staff one day.

According to Kevin, some officers decompress through relaxing activities such as fishing while other officers need to keep their hands busy. On his project list are things such as building and maintaining a chicken coop, a garden, a firepit, etc. Eventually, the hope to provide equine therapy

and train service dogs, as well as obtain an RV for a rapid response team. The RV would provide officers at major critical incidents (such as missing person searches) with necessities such as a shower, food, coffee, water, and counselors.

### How to Help

The need is great and the list is long which is why Kevin and Rynne need the help of the community. Our officers deal with more trauma in a day than many civilians deal with in a lifetime, and they do