

Undergirding Our Servants: 'Somebody Cares Was Our Martha and Mary'

As police officers around the nation face ever-increasing amounts of stress from the current cultural climate, Somebody Cares continues to assist and support them through the work of its chapters and affiliates.

Earlier this month, Somebody Cares Houston/America and its partners from Somebody Cares San Antonio/Holy Smoke USA, Ally Force Ministries in Minneapolis, and Burnt Offering BBQ in Houston cooked for and served 500 law enforcement officers during a reception following the funeral of Deputy Constable, Corporal Charles Galloway from Harris County Constable's Precinct 5, who was shot and killed during a traffic stop.

"We were honored to serve, in a small way, by preparing meals for the family and officers," said Doug Stringer, SCA founder and president.

Stringer has been involved in police/community relations in the city since the early 1990s, when Somebody Cares Houston created the Youth Guidance Consultants curriculum. In August 2021, as part of his ongoing efforts throughout the years to stay connected with and equipped to serve local law enforcement agencies, Stringer completed the Constable, Chaplain, and Pastor Alliance Academy (CCHAPA) at Precinct 5, which serves 1.5 million people in the Greater Houston area.

"Words cannot express properly the plethora of emotion today at the Celebration of Life for Cpl. Galloway," Stringer says. "Law enforcement from throughout Harris County, Texas, and the U.S. came to join the family and to show their respects. Local, state, and national officials also came to show their respects. I watched fellow officers getting choked up and

trying to hold back tears. It was moving to see, yet also heartbreaking.”

Throughout the week, Stringer also had the opportunity to minister to officers through listening and prayer. “It’s what I call the ministry of presence,” he explained. “We show we care by making ourselves available.”

SCA partners practice the ministry of presence consistently in places like Baltimore, where Director Matt Stevens has been involved in the training of 150 volunteer chaplains for the Baltimore Police Department; or in times of crisis, such as the shooting at Santa Fe High School near Houston, where SCA-affiliated chaplains Edward Smith and Vickie Guillory joined Doug and others to pray with students and community members who were reeling from the tragedy.

In 2019, Somebody Cares America helped donate two swift water rescue boats to the Kirbyville (Texas) Police Department and in 2020, Doug and Lisa Stringer and Matt Stevens traveled to Minneapolis, where they joined Mike Lynch from partner Ally Force—who is also a chaplain with the Minneapolis Police Department—to meet with the police chief and others while in the Twin Cities to discuss practical and ongoing ways to serve them as they serve their community.

In early December, Stringer was joined by SC San Antonio and Burnt Offerings in the Texas border towns of Roma and McAllen to feed hot meals to 2,500 law enforcement officers and community members. He also hosted a roundtable with local pastors and leaders to address the continuing crisis throughout the Rio Grande Valley region.

“It’s a very precarious situation for law enforcement officers—from border patrol to local police officers to state troopers,” Stringer says. “It’s not an easy place to be, in the middle of all political tension, feeling unappreciated, and still trying to do their job in a very difficult

situation.”

Never is the need to show appreciation greater than during times of mourning a fallen officer.

“Our hearts grieve as we look at these individuals who are husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, everyday citizens who put on a uniform to go serve the community,” Stringer says.

Speaking on behalf of Precinct 5 Constable Ted Heap, Chief Deputy Brian Harris said, “Somebody Cares America was Martha and Mary to our department. They met our physical needs by nourishing our bodies and our spiritual needs by comforting our emotions.”

This same sentiment was echoed by many of the officers, as well. “With all that was going on and all that was on our plate, for you and your team to take on the meal for the repass was huge. We can’t say how much it made us feel that the community cared for us,” many of them said.

Throughout the law enforcement community, a universal expression of appreciation occurs when an officer shakes a hand and places a medallion in it as a sign of mutual respect. During the reception for Corporal Galloway, Stringer and others from the SCA team received coins from multiple officers.

“One of the coins that really impacted me includes the quote, ‘Evil is powerless when the good are unafraid,’” Stringer says. “It reminds me of the many times in the book of Joshua when God tells us to ‘fear not.’” {eo}

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