

# News You Can Use

Your monthly resource for news and information about behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disabilities in western North Carolina and beyond

## Hendersonville firefighters are region's newest CIT grads

The city of Hendersonville now boasts western North Carolina's first fire department trained in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) tactics to de-escalate behavioral health crisis situations.

"We go on so many calls that involve mental illness or substance abuse," Chief Joseph Vindigni [told the Times-News](#). "It's difficult sometimes to know how to interact with those patients. Having a class like this will enhance our ability to address those situations."

Twenty-one Hendersonville firefighters graduated from training, held Aug. 15-23 at the department. The training was organized by a community partnership that included the mental health nonprofit Thrive, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Four Seasons, Family Preservation Services and Smoky. In addition to Chief Vindigni and Deputy Chief James Miller, graduates were: Tim Cagle, Anthony Bentley, Dustin Nicholson, Aaron Bradley, Jon Ward, Toby Mapes, Jared Morgan, Kevin Waldrup, Thomas Kleppe, Josh Poore, Ben Lanning, Bryan Dunne, Justin Ward, Cameron Womack, Christopher Martin, Michael Pearson, Joseph Swain, Dwayne Maynard and Raymond Deso.

For years, law enforcement officers nationwide have trained in CIT, which teaches participants to better respond to individuals with mental illness, substance use disorder or a developmental disability. Now, the movement is expanding to include all officers and first responders, including EMS, fire and rescue personnel. Smoky facilitated its first training for paramedics in 2015 in McDowell County.

"First responders who participate in this specialized CIT training program are already noting the positive outcomes they have experienced as a result of the training," said Michelle Tyler, Smoky Community Education Specialist Lead. "These include increased confidence to address the needs of individuals experiencing crises and increased ability to divert individuals from the emergency department and effectively refer them to appropriate services, as well as individuals' increased engagement in services and preventative care."

Smoky has helped train more than 850 officers and first responders in CIT, with law enforcement sessions scheduled for Alleghany, Haywood, Swain, Wilkes and Buncombe counties in the next two months alone.

