

# News You Can Use

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

## CEO Spotlight with Smoky CEO Brian Ingraham



Communication, ideally, is a two-way street. At Smoky, we want to know what our communities need from us, what's working and what isn't.

We understand one of the most important needs is improved assistance to individuals in crisis. There are a range of ways we offer that help, such as providing access

to walk-in crisis intervention services, helping dispatch mobile crisis services and staffing a 24/7 crisis line. Often, however, other professionals and community partners are in positions that require them to also provide help to people in crisis. We work to share skills and knowledge with these professionals in ways they can use in real life to make their own jobs safer and be able to be more helpful to the person in crisis.

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) does just that. Recently, our CIT graduates are telling us the training is making a real difference on the ground in western North Carolina.

I'll share their words directly. Consider this feedback from an officer who attended a recent Caldwell County training: "I did not want to be in this training. I was told to go. I had this dreadful feeling this class was just going to be another outside agency telling me (as law enforcement) how terrible we handle calls and interact with people. How we need to change everything we have been trained for."

He continued, "I was in for an awakening. The very first class on the very first day told me it was not the case. I was surprised how we were included and not the problem. The training just continued to get better."

The officer saw that instructors were passionate about their jobs, adding, "I love dealing with and helping the public. My passion has always been with helping people. ... Thank you for including us and not pointing fingers." That, the officer said, "is true commitment."

I love this quote because it speaks to the core of CIT – community partnership. Progress is made step by step, through collaboration among individuals who each bring their own skill set and knowledge to the table.

McDowell County EMS Director William Kehler told us how his team has seen a steady rise in behavioral health emergencies over the past several years. "By conducting CIT training, our employees are now better equipped with the knowledge to provide a higher level of care for behavioral health patients," he said following CIT training. Kehler's department now has 27 CIT certified paramedics, with at least one on each ambulance, 24 hours a day.

At the Haywood County Sheriff's Office, Chief Deputy Jeffrey Haynes called CIT "instrumental in daily operations." Haynes, very thoughtfully, recognized a third partner in the endeavor – the person in crisis, and how that person would like to be treated. "CIT provides our personnel with confidence in volatile situations while maintaining respect and dignity for those we serve," Haynes said.

A big thanks to all our CIT participants, partners and trainers who are saving lives and giving hope every day in our communities.