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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SHERIFF MAKES AUTISM AWARENESS A PRIORITY FOR MEMBERS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

**Freehold:** Sheriff Shaun Golden is committed to having law enforcement remain in the forefront when it comes to autism awareness and is pleased to welcome Fran Hines as a part time autism outreach coordinator for the Monmouth County Sheriff Office. Hines, who comes with a wealth of experience as an autism awareness trainer with the New Jersey Department of Health, and, a parent of an autistic child, held a training session for the recruits from the 90<sup>th</sup> Basic Course for Police Officers on autism awareness, Jan. 26.

“The Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office and our partners in the law enforcement community are dedicated to acknowledging this disorder,” said Sheriff Shaun Golden, a trustee of the Monmouth Ocean Foundation for Children. “Through attentive training, it’s vital that law enforcement officers become equipped with information and understand the problems associated with autism to effectively assist an individual who needs help.”

During the autism awareness class, Hines trained the recruits on how to prepare themselves when dealing with individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). He listed the signs an individual with ASD can display, such as being non-verbal, having no eye contact, exhibiting violent tendencies, fear, and nervousness. Because they behave differently, it’s important for members of law enforcement and the public safety community to be patient and understand the situation. In addition, they need to be aware of individuals who do not take direction or answer questions, and, know how to interact with them.

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## **SHERIFF'S MAKES AUTISM AWARENESS A PRIORITY FOR MEMBERS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

“Law enforcement must have a deep understanding of how to approach a situation and know the risks when dealing with an individual with ASD,” said Fran Hines, Autism Outreach Coordinator. “In addition, it’s crucial that parents contact their local police departments to make them aware their child has ASD.”

Hines also trains the Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office public safety telecommunicators how to prepare themselves when responding to calls involving individuals with ASD. The agency’s public safety telecommunicators were the first group of 9-1-1 operators in the state to receive such training which began in 2011. It equips operators with information on autism to effectively assist a caller and prepare first responders on the emergency.

“The increase of our autistic community has ultimately resulted in an increase of law enforcement and first responder contacts, and that begins with 9-1-1 operators who take the call. That is why it’s vital they are equipped with the right information and questions that need to be asked when dealing with an emergency situation regarding an individual with ASD,” said Hines.

As the agency’s autism outreach coordinator, Hines will be working on the Project Lifesaver Program, an electronic monitoring program for individuals with ASD and Alzheimers. Project Lifesaver is a partnership between the Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office and the Monmouth County Office on Aging. To date, there are 83 individuals with ASD who utilize the Project Lifesaver Program in Monmouth County.

According to recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, it’s estimated that one in 45 children in the United States has been identified with ASD, with New Jersey having the highest rate among states.

“Fran Hines is the perfect individual to train members of law enforcement throughout Monmouth County on this disorder and I’m proud of the commitment the sheriff’s office has made when it comes to leading the way in autism awareness,” said Sheriff Golden. “It’s vital that law enforcement is properly instructed to prevent them from being at a disadvantage when it comes to assisting individuals with ASD.”