

D. Duane Dixon Educational Conference Roanoke, Virginia Wednesday, September 24, 2025

AGENDA

7:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30-9:30	Neurodiversity in the Ranks: ADHD, Mental Health and the Modern Firefighter - <i>Beth Flaherty</i>
9:45-10:45	So You Started a Peer TeamNow What: Effective Peer Team Implementation - Beth Flaherty & Stephanie White
11:00-12:00	Childless Mother, Motherless Child: Equipping Leaders to Support Their People After Loss - Lynn Lewis & Brendan Stackpole
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Mental Health and Workers' Compensation - Brad Goodwin
2:15-3:15	Lowering the Guard: How Hypervigilance Keeps Your Brain and Body Always in Fight Mode - <i>Beth Flaherty & Stephanie White</i>
3:30-4:30	Breaking the Silence: My Story, Our Fight Corey Parker





NEURODIVERSITY IN THE RANKS: ADHD, MENTALORT TEAM HEALTH, AND THE MODERN FIREFIGHTER

Beth Flaherty, VPFF Peer Team Clinician

Session Description:

This class examines the intersection of ADHD, mental health, and performance in the fire service. We'll explore how ADHD traits such as rapid problem-solving, adaptability, and hyperfocus can shine during emergency operations, while also addressing the hidden mental health challenges that come with them, such as burnout, anxiety, and sleep disruption. Participants will learn strategies for managing stress, building resilience, and creating supportive work environments that allow neurodiverse firefighters to thrive both on and off the fireground.





SO YOU STARTED A PEER TEAM... NOW WHAT?

PEER SUPPORT TEAM

Beth Flaherty, VPFF Peer Team Clinician & Stephanie White VPFF Peer ORT.
Team Coordinator

Session Description:

Peer support teams have the potential to be a lifesaving bridge between informal camaraderie and formal mental health resources—but only if firefighters feel genuinely accessible and trusted. This session brings together peer team leaders with firsthand experience in building approachable, effective support networks. Through real-world insights and actionable guidance, you'll learn how to cultivate a peer team that:

- Becomes approachable by all, breaking down stigma and encouraging colleagues to reach out in their own time.
- Earns trust through visibility, training, and cultural alignment within the firehouse.
- Moves beyond mere existence to actual effectiveness, with strategies for sustained engagement, credibility, and incident follow-through.

Walk away equipped to transform a peer team from a structural checkbox into a vital, respected lifeline for mental health and resilience.



Objective: To equip leaders to better support their people after a loss.

Session Description:

When grief enters the workplace or community, leaders are often unsure of what to say or do. In this practical conversation, a mother grieving the loss of her only son and a son grieving the death of his mother share their lived experiences of profound loss. Through their dual perspectives, they offer insight into how grief could impact those you lead and how your presence, policies, and empathy can make all the difference. This session will leave you better equipped to support your people with compassion, sensitivity, and strength when they need it most. Taught by Lynn Lewis - the mother of a Virginia firefighter who passed away in 2019, and Brendan Stackpole - a retired firefighter and host of the podcast "The Things We All Carry".

Wednesday 1:00 - 2:00

MENTAL HEALTH AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Brad Goodwin, Workers' Compensation Attorney

Session Description:

This class will provide an overview of Virginia workers' compensation law as it relates to mental health banefits. We'll discuss the conditions that are considered compensable, eligibility requirements for filing a claim, and the types of mental health services available through workers' comp. Whether you're a first responder, employer, or someone supporting claimants, gain vital information to navigate this important area of workers' compensation law.

Wednesday 2:15- 3:15

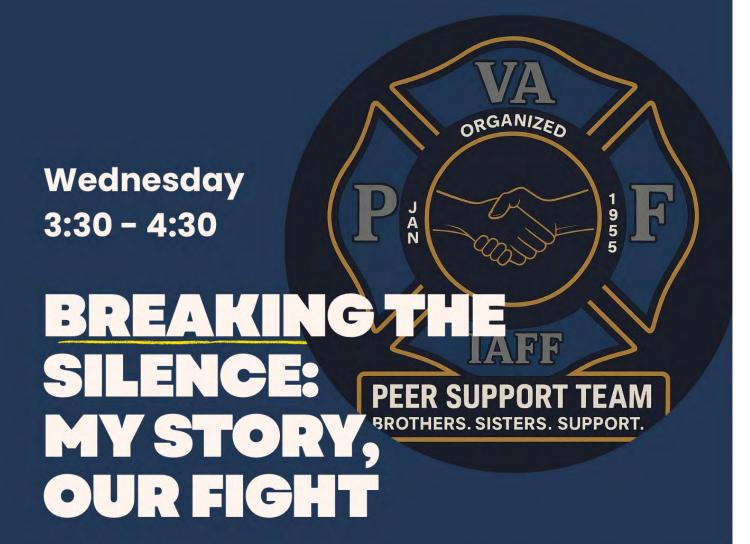


HYPERVIGILANCE KEEPS YOUR BRAIN AND BODY ORT TEAM ALWAYS IN FIGHT MODE **THE STATE OF THE STATE

Beth Flaherty, VPFF Peer Team Clinician & Stephanie White VPFF Peer Team Coordinator

Session Description:

In the fire service, hypervigilance is our necessary edge. It also means we're always scanning for danger, wired to respond. But what happens when that state of high-alert doesn't end with the shift? This session explores how sustained hypervigilance bleeds into personal life, eroding trust, intimacy, and emotional connection at home. We'll unpack the ways relational dynamics such as o perceived distance or overreactions born from fatigue are shaped by the constant "on-duty" brain.



Corey Parker is a retired Deputy Fire Chief with over 35 years in public safety — and a firsthand understanding of the toll the job can take. He spent his career building systems, leading teams, and managing critical incidents— all the while quietly facing a personal struggle with mental health. After facing his own battles, Corey became a leading voice for mental wellness and resiliency in fire, EMS, and public safety telecommunications (911). He now consults nationally with the Center for Public Safety Management and serves on the board of The Foundation for First Responder Wellness and Resiliency.

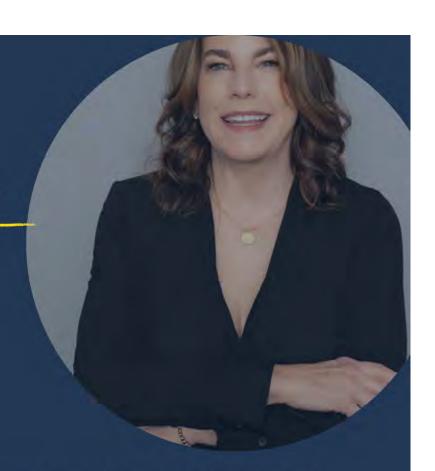
Corey brings a rare mix of leadership experience, personal vulnerability, and straight talk to the conversation about mental health in public safety. His session isn't just another talk — it's a challenge to break the silence, rethink the culture, and lead differently. Corey speaks not just from experience, but from the heart — and invites others to do the same.



Stephanie White is a firefighter, paramedic, and writer with more than 20 years of experience serving in low sleep firehouses. She has dedicated much of her career to supporting firefighter mental health and reproductive wellness, working to create practical resources and meaningful policy change. Stephanie serves as the managing editor of Firefighter Nation and is tasked with creating the wellness portion of the FDIC International conference. She works alongside peers across the country to strengthen support networks, share research, and build healthier fire service cultures.



Beth Flaherty



Beth Flaherty, LPC is a licensed professional counselor and peer team clinician who has spent her career supporting the mental health and well-being of firefighters. She works closely with departments to strengthen peer support programs, address the unique challenges of the job, and make mental health resources more approachable for first responders. Beth has shared her expertise as an instructor at FDIC International and has written on firefighter wellness and neurodiversity. Known for her practical, down-to-earth teaching style, she focuses on helping firefighters and leaders create environments where their people can thrive both on and off the job.





Brendan "Stack" Stackpole is a retired firefighter and the creator of "The Things We All Carry podcast", a platform dedicated to breaking the stigma around mental health in the fire service. While still on the job, Stack noticed how rarely firefighters spoke openly about their struggles, despite the toll the work takes. He launched the podcast to start those conversations—raw, unfiltered, and without judgment—so others could see they weren't alone. Stack also does not know we're writing a Bio for him, and he will in fact hate it.



Lynn Lewis

Lynn Lewis is a Certified Grief Educator, speaker, author, and the Visionary & Chief Empathy Officer of Destined To Thrive Grief Coaching. A respected leader in grief education and coaching, Lynn empowers individuals to navigate life after profound loss with purpose and resilience.

Following the death of her firefighter son in August 2019, Lynn made a conscious decision that grief would not consume her. She openly shares her personal journey through her signature message, "I Choose to Live in the Aftermath," inspiring others to embrace self-love, honor their loved ones, and find a path forward.

Lynn specializes in supporting adults who are ready to reclaim meaning and live impactful and purposeful lives despite loss. Her compassionate approach reassures clients that while grief never disappears, they are not alone, and they get to choose how to navigate their grief journey. A sought-after speaker and advocate, Lynn has dedicated over 20 years to nonprofit service, including leadership roles with organizations such as the former Susan G. Komen Central VA Affiliate, The READ Center, Circles RVA and Full Circle Grief Center.

After a distinguished 39-year career in the automobile claims industry, Lynn is now devoted to addressing the stigma around grief and suicide loss, fostering open conversations, and equipping individuals with the tools to heal and thrive.

She resides in Richmond, VA, USA, with her husband, Keith, and finds immense joy in heartfelt conversations over a cup of tea—never imagining that her own grief journey would become a vital part of those discussions.



Corey Parker

Corey Parker is a retired Deputy Fire Chief with over 35 years in public safety — and a firsthand understanding of the toll the job can take. He spent his career building systems, leading teams, and managing critical incidents— all the while quietly facing a personal struggle with mental health. After facing his own battles, Corey became a leading voice for mental wellness and resiliency in fire, EMS, and public safety telecommunications (911). He now consults nationally with the Center for Public Safety Management and serves on the board of The Foundation for First Responder Wellness and Resiliency.

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Brad Goodwin



Brad Goodwin is a founding partner in the firm ReidGoodwin located in Richmond, Virginia. He has represented countless clients in a wide variety of areas of law, including workers' compensation, personal injury, domestic and family law, civil litigation, estate planning, employment law, criminal law, and traffic law. Over time, Brad has focused his practice primarily on helping injured workers pursue their claims through the Workers' Compensation Commission.

Brad is a trusted partner helping many Virginia IAFF affiliates protect the rights of their injured firefighters.

He holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia and his Juris Doctorate from the University of Richmond School of Law.

