OFFICER ASSISTANCE FUND

By David McFarland, ISPA 1st Vice-President

I’m sure by now most of you have heard of the very unfortunate closing and sale of Rabiner Treatment Center (RTC). The real estate closing for the sale of RTC took place on June 29, 2018. It was a very difficult decision made by the RTC board but one that had to be made. While there is much sadness in the closure of RTC, we should take solace and pride in knowing RTC was able to help thousands of kids and their families since founded in 1962.

For the last 30+ years it has been a tradition for the locals and members to make donations to RTC at the annual ISPA conference. Without this generosity Rabiner would not have been able to stay open for as long as it did. We should all be proud of all the kids, families and communities that these donations helped for so many years.

With the closure of RTC, the ISPA board was looking for a way for the locals and members to continue their generosity in making our communities a better place. In doing some research, we found several other states have “Officer Assistance” programs. Each program, from state to state, is a little different but at a minimum almost every “assistance program” assists law enforcement officers killed or seriously injured in the line of duty and their families. Other programs assist the officer(s) when:

* The officer is seriously injured and unable to work.
* The officer or the officer’s immediate family member is hospitalized for an extended stay due to long term/terminal illness.
* The officer’s home is seriously damaged or a complete loss due to a catastrophic natural disaster.

The financial burden created by these situations can result in substantial strain on the officer and their families. It can also affect the officer’s work performance, which affects the whole community. The creation of this program would help relieve some of the burden and offer assistance in coping with costs which often exceed insurance coverages. This program would assist the officer and their family in focusing on recovery instead of financial burdens.

Initially the ISPA board sees this program being open to ISPA members and their families. We hope as the fund grows, we are able to open it to all Iowa Law Enforcement Officers and their families. Who knows, with enough support maybe someday this program could assist any peace officer while in Iowa, no matter where they serve as an officer.

As far as the final mission, bylaws, application process and the awarding of funds for the “ISPA Assistance Fund” we have decided to create a committee, which will make these decisions. The committee will be made up of: current ISPA board members and three at-large ISPA members.

The three at-large committee members can be any active ISPA member (non-ISPA board member) in good standing. The at-large members will serve three year terms. The three at-large members will be appointed and approved by the delegates at the ISPA 86th Annual Conference in Dubuque this October.

Initially the appointed at-large members will serve staggered year terms on the ISPA Assistance Fund. (One member serving one year, one member serving two years and one member serving three years) In the following years we will appoint and approve a member to the ISPA Assistance Fund at the annual ISPA conference each year. Once a member’s term is up, he/she is allowed to request to be re-appointed to the committee. If you are interested in being on the ISPA Assistance Fund committee please send an email to David McFarland mcfarlandd@waterloopolice.com

Also you may or may not know over the last 10-15 years, the ISPA has made several sizable loans to RTC. With the sale of RTC we were able to recoup all of the money loaned, plus a little bit of interest. Given this the ISPA board felt it was appropriate to use a portion of this money to help start the ISPA Assistance Fund. On July 10, 2018 on a unanimous vote, the ISPA board voted to start the ISPA Assistance fund and transfer $15,000 to the fund. The board believes this program will greatly assist our members in easing their financial burdens in a time of need so they in turn can continue to help make their communities a better place to live.

On behalf of all the ISPA board, we hope our locals and members will continue their generosity by donating to the ISPA Assistance fund at the annual conference in Dubuque this October and for years to come. United we are stronger than trying to face our battles alone!