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Two recruits have military backgrounds. Yeo was a firefighter in the National guard, while Jeffords was a medic in a war zone.

Jones, the youngest recruit, came from wildland firefighting, while Naomi Warren (Pete Warren's wife) is a bodybuilder.

The academy was originally scheduled for two-and-a-half months, but due to the small recruit pool, all the lessons were packed into a two-week crunch course.

"It was tough, but they prevailed," Warren told the Siuslaw News.

SVFR/WLAD Chief Michael Schick administered the oath, which found the firefighters swearing to protect the citizens and residents of the community and to treat the people they are called to help as if they are a

member of their own family.

At that point, SVFR Operation Chief Jim Dickerson gave the honor of pinning the badges on the new firefighters to the family "of these fine candidates that they just gave to me for two weeks straight, every day."

After the firefighters were official, Dickerson offered his congratulations, joking, "You may now be free to celebrate, but don't celebrate too much, because you're now on duty."

After the celebration, PeaceHealth Peace Harbor's Chief Administrative Officer Jason Hawkins gave a progress report on the Mobile Health Unit (MIH), which provides in-home checkups for recently discharged patients from Peace Harbor. The program is run by WLAD and the hospital, and funded through the Peace Harbor Medical Cen-



(From left) Jim Yeo, serving the Deadwood/Swisshome district, and SVFR recruits William Jones, Naomi Warren and Andrew Jeffords are sworn in.

ter Foundation.

Hawkins explained the program, which is now in its second year, is having a tremendous effect.

"The program has exceeded all of our expectations," Hawkins said. "We estimate for every dollar we spend on this program, we save five...

So, if you're running a program for \$100,000 a year, you're saving \$500,000 in health care costs, improving patient experience, keeping people from being readmitted, unnecessary ER visits. Obviously the healthcare industry is very interested in what we're doing here and how it's working in a rural area in particular."

The boards were then given an update on the newly created Mental Crisis Response (MCR) program that began operating on November 15. Based in part on the CAHOOTS program in Eugene, mental health professionals work with local law enforcement on issues to help out in situations originally just handled by the local police department.

"We respond to any kind of mental health crisis with depression, anxiety, bipolar, and kind of suicidal ideation," SVFR's Community Support Team Coordinator Lori Severance explained. "We also do interventions after a suicide with families who have experienced a suicide. Also we work with drugs and alcohol, homeless people and welfare checks."

The MCR team is deployed through the Florence

Police Department (FPD) dispatch, both through 911 calls or through FPD's non-emergency police number. The dispatcher works from a list of criteria to determine whether or not MCR should be deployed, at which point FPD officers and MCR staff will meet at the site of the incident.

In its first week, MCR has responded to four calls.

The program has funding secured for three years, and is being completely funded by Lane County, which has allowed the program to pay staff, instead of relying on volunteers.

"We're hoping we could maybe attract some more people in and have more responders," Severance said. "Maybe even double coverage at some point, which would be nice. Then the police could just send us calls, and not have to respond to some of these."

Finally, Schick talked about the possibility of creating a drone program for SVFR.

"The use of drones around the county has begun to grow rapidly," he said. "We had a drone up in Washington we used frequently for search and rescue, assessment of structure risk, and the police department asked to use it several times for searches."

Schick himself is just completing courses for his own drone license, and is looking to drum up support and grants to purchase drones, and find flyers.

"We were lucky in Washington, we had a company donate two drones to us," he said. "We were able to use them over the ocean, looking for swimmers. So I think it has a lot of potential, and we already have drone pilots in the community. It would definitely be a community effort."

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