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Group Seeks To Support Responders Foundation formed to raise funds for police and public safety needs

BY CALIN RILEY

In the nearly two decades that Annie Falk has served on the board of the Palm Beach Police & Fire Foundation, she says she has witnessed the community there transform in many positive and meaningful ways, thanks to the work of the foundation, which was created to help support the area's first responders and their families and forge ties between members of those departments and the community at large.

Which is why she says she and her husband, Michael Falk, were eager to replicate the same kind of success in the other community they call home: Southampton Village.

That's how the Southampton Public Safety Foundation was born.

The Falks teamed up with Palm Beach Police & Fire Foundation founder Tim Moran to create the new nonprofit this year, which has a mission statement "to enhance public safety and community well-being in Southampton by supporting our police department through funding, resources, and programs that foster trust, collaboration, and excellence in policing."

The Falks are philanthropists who split their time between Palm Beach and Southampton. Through their foundation, they support causes that are "dedicated to improving the lives of children and to preserving our environment by protecting animals and conserving natural resources. The foundation also supports and funds nonprofit organizations responding to environmental emergencies that adversely affect families and negatively impact the environment."

Moran, who is now retired, was the president and CEO of Apple

Sports Inc./Dorson Sports Inc. from 1988 until 2011. The company manufactured and distributed sports products throughout the United States under various brand names. In 2004, he established Moran Inc. and served as the president and CEO through 2011. Moran Inc. was responsible for the manufacturing and distribution of consumer products under the Rubbermaid name as well as private label.

Last week, Annie Falk spoke about why she and her husband, with the help of Moran, wanted to create the new foundation.

"The idea was really inspired by the work I've seen in Palm Beach," she said. "They really made a meaningful difference in not only the lives of the first responders, but in the community. It's been really amazing to watch as it has evolved. It has brought the community together in a way I've not seen any other community organization do."

Both the Palm Beach foundation and the burgeoning Southampton organization have four main objectives, Falk explained. Money raised through the foundation will go toward funding the purchase of equipment and covering the cost of technology upgrades and training that aren't already covered by the village budget; offering educational scholarships to the children of police officers; supporting wellness and mental health programs for first responders; and creating community outreach programs to help build better relationships and understanding between the police force and first responders, and the community members they serve.

"The impact is that the community really understands with greater clarity what our first responders go through on a day-to-day basis serving us," Falk said of the foundation model, and the impact she saw it have in Palm Beach. "There was more of a mutual respect and appreciation that didn't exist before."

Falk and her husband are long-time part-time residents of Southampton Village, and she said they wanted to do for this community what's been done in Palm Beach.

"I've spent many, many years here in Southampton, and I feel like our own local police, who are deeply committed to protecting this unique community, year



Southampton Village Police Captain Christopher Wetter and Officer Lisa McCulley.

round, deserve that same level of support," she said. "And I feel like the community here needs to bond better with the first responders. It's just about a desire to keep us safe, keep the first responders safe, and make sure they have the resources and recognition they need to do their job well."

Falk said that she, her husband and Moran began having informal conversations with Southampton Village leaders and public safety officials about a year ago, pitching their idea for the foundation. The Southampton Public Safety Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and will operate entirely independently, Falk said, with a board of directors, which currently includes her and her husband as well as Moran. They are looking to add more board members from the Southampton Village community, mainly civic leaders and those with experience in public safety. The foundation will raise money through events and direct donations.

Falk said that the Southampton Village police officers they spoke with about the foundation — including Police Chief Suzanne Hurteau, were "very open-minded and welcoming" of the foundation and what it can offer.

"A lot of the questions were around what are the legacies of this, can we accept scholarships,

things like that," she said. "And the answer is yes."

Falk said that the foundation has attorneys who worked on the bylaws, and added that because of everything they went through to set up the Palm Beach foundation, they have a blueprint for this new one.

For his part, Moran said he was happy to embark on another project with the Falks. He said that Annie Falk has been "instrumental" in the growth of the Palm Beach foundation since joining the board just two years after it was created. He spoke about why a nonprofit public safety foundation is so beneficial for a community and its police force and first responders.

"It comes down to, a community makes a community," he said. "When the community gets involved and works together with public safety, good things will happen. You want to support the people that support you, and safety is one of the most important features of anybody's life."

Both Moran and Falk pointed out that there are many similarities between the Palm Beach and Southampton communities — the seasonal nature of the population there, the fact that both are coastal communities, and that, geographically, they are roughly the same size. They also deal with many of the same quality-of-life



Southampton Public Safety Foundation founders, from left, Tim Moran, Annie Falk and Michael Falk. PB PHOTO CONCIERGE PHOTOS



Gene Bernstein, Southampton Village Police Chief Suzanne Hurteau, and Kathleen Walsh.

issues, including traffic problems, which has been the biggest topic on the minds of Southampton residents for a long time, particularly during the summer months. Hurteau, who was at the launch event last week with several members of her police force, said earlier in the week that she's eager to see what the foundation will bring to the community as it embarks on its first year.

"We're happy and grateful for this opportunity that the Falks and Tim Moran are building out here in this community," she said. "I look forward to seeing what they can do."

Mayor Manger also expressed gratitude for the foundation, and said it was another example of the community coming together to create something good.

"We are thankful for support, and are looking forward to working with the newly formed police foundation, which is intended to provide our local police with additional resources to keep the village safe," he said. "The village is always appreciative when members of the community go above and beyond to support the village and our first responders."

"In addition to the police foundation, one of the families in the village hosted a thank-you party for our volunteer firefighters this summer. And just last week, another village family hosted a fundraiser to support the much-needed renovations to the village's World War I Memorial in Agawam Park. This type of community collaboration is heartwarming and truly inspiring."

Correction

In an article in the July 17 edition of The Press, "Teen Helps Raise \$100,000 for Monument," the article misstated the facts about the names inscribed on the monument in Agawam Park in Southampton Village. The monument includes the names of local veterans who served in World War I, not just those who died during the war.