Welcome back. This is Jen Lee, the creator and host of I Need Blue. Survivors Talk Surviving. Visit **www.ineedblue.net** for additional stories. As you listen, if the message moves you, there are sponsorships and advertising opportunities available. Please share the story with friends and family. The more we share, the more we learn, and the more we can help. Today’s episode doesn’t contain a trigger warning, but rather a warning of joy and gratitude when you hear what the ladies of Back Brevard Heroes have to say. I will call this episode, “Acts of kindness”.

Back Brevard Heroes can be found at **www.backbrevardheroes.com**

No worries in a week on February 14th, the stories of survivors will continue. In fact, my next guest is Dr Michele Finneran. Her expertise was called upon when some student survivors of the Parkland shooting were in need trying to cope with and deal with the scenes they witnessed. It will be the 4-year anniversary and I can’t imagine the trauma left behind from a school shooting, but Dr Finneran is here to discuss. You won’t want to miss it!

Last May, I was scrolling through Facebook, and I see a post for “Back Brevard Heroes 2nd Annual First Responders Appreciation BBQ. I thought wow! That is great. I reached out and connected with Sherri Centore, President of this non-profit. I said, “my husband and I want to volunteer. What can we do to help?” This is how I learned about Back Brevard Heroes. I have had the pleasure of meeting these ladies and attending other functions. I’m excited to have Sherri, Kimberly, and Tina as my guests today. Hello ladies, can you introduce yourself to our listeners.

Hello, my name is Sherri Centore and I'm the President of Back Brevard Heroes.

Hello, I'm Kimberley Tucker, the Vice President for Back Brevard Heroes.

Hello, I'm Tina Herman and I'm the Public Relations Director for Back Brevard Heroes.

Jen - Welcome, ladies. Did you know each other ahead of time or how did you connect?

Kimberley - Sherry and I have known each other for many years. We are small business owners, have networked together and participated in many local giveback fundraisers in our community. We met Tina at the first BBQ for Back Brevard Heroes.

Tina – My husband and I are business owners on Merritt Island and have been for years. I met them while getting ready and preparing for the barbecue.

Jen- Passion for a cause brings people together. This episode is important because there are many people within different communities who want to do something special for their first responders and Back Brevard Heroes is a great example of how communities can make that happen. For the past 2 years they hosted a barbecue and are getting to host Back Brevard Heroes 3rd Annual First Responders Appreciation BBQ again.

For the first 2 years, they organize these projects without a nonprofit status. The support from the community is all it took to make a difference; it starts with one person and grows from there. This year they did receive their nonprofit 501c3 status which for them as their organization grows, make sense. **WWW. BACKBREVARDHEROES.COM**

Kimberley - Back Brevard Heroes 2nd Annual First Responders Appreciation BBQ was formed after hosting a community barbecue in 2020 to show our appreciation and support for Brevard County law enforcement and other first responders. We had such positive feedback that we decided to make the barbecue an annual event. In addition, we also had the desire to do more than just the barbecue. We wanted to find other ways to show our appreciation and say thank you to all of them. The 3 of us decided to start a nonprofit. Sherrie, Kimberley and Tina.

Jen - That's great. And we are going to talk about their third annual barbecue, which is May 1. So ladies, for each of you, where did your passion for our first responders come from? Was there an experience with a first responder that helped you?

Tina - my passion started a few years ago when I was watching the television and was seeing some things going downhill with the way people were treating police officers. It hit a nerve and really bothered me. As time went on, I decided instead of being frustrated and upset about it, I would do something to make a positive Impact. Also, my daughter's a BCSO Deputy in Merritt Island. It’s kept me in the game. She is out there helping people and I wanted to help too.

Kimberley – My mother was a LEO in Detroit while I was growing up, and both of my sons are disabled vets. One is Army one is Air Force. I'm a proud military mom so first responders have a special place in my heart.

Sherri - I'm the mom of a Brevard County Sheriff's Deputy. My dad was also Navy, a military police officer, so I grew up a Navy brat. I've always have held military and first responders in high regard.

Jen

That's great. Let's talk a little bit about back Brevard heroes. I know you all just became a nonprofit 501c3, which is awesome. Can you explain who is considered a first responder?

Sherrie - First responders are law enforcement, firefighters and EMTs, but we also include dispatchers and military in our current effort.

Jen- I didn’t realize 911 dispatchers where not considered first responders.

Sherri - Now they're not. There is a campaign to try to get them included.

Jen - Can you tell us about the BBQ?

Sherri – This will be our 3rd Annual First Responders BBQ and it's being held May 1 from 11am to 3pm at the Brevard Veterans Memorial Center in Merritt Island. It is a free community event for our first responders, military, and their families. It’s open to the entire community and we invite everyone to come out and show our local heroes how much we appreciate them. It’s a fun way to tell them thank while eating great food

Tina – Yes and in addition to the BBQ, we put together gift baskets for firefighters. We've delivered them to 20 stations now in Brevard County. We're going to continue to do this as we get the money needed to buy all the goods for the baskets. I wanted to include some of the community as a team effort, so I reached out to a retirement community in Rockledge.  We had an arts and crafts day with some of the ladies and they helped put the baskets together. They even painted a little fire truck for each one. They had a ball and it really made them feel like part of the community.  When I delivered the baskets, I told the firefighters who had helped put these together.

We connect with other nonprofits who have a similar mission. We work to promote their message too. Today I would like to mention,
**Heroes On The Water:  https://heroesonthewater.org/chapters/space-coast-florida/
Survive First: https://survivefirst.us/
Misfit Warriors:** [**https://www.facebook.com/WarriorMisfits/**](https://www.facebook.com/WarriorMisfits/)

We did a toy drive at Christmas time and collected over 1000 toys for our first year, which we were just could not believe the support that we had from local businesses**.** Some the above nonprofits listed, do kayaking tours, fishing tours, hunting, to help some of the first responders that have PTSD. They discuss suicide prevention among first responders.

Jen – The response from the community has been and continues to be amazing. These are simple examples to show support. Sometimes you just have to ask, and the generosity of a community will flow. They are willing to help.

I follow these ladies on Facebook, Back Brevard Heroes. Follow them, like their page. They always have great pictures; they keep us up to date on what they're doing in the community. So please give them a shout out on there as well.

Ladies, can you share your future?

Kimberely – Our future includes continuing to give back. We want to love and hug on our first responders. We can't wait to see where the direction of our nonprofit takes us. And you know, we're open to possibilities. Follow us on social media to check out our future path.

Tina – We’d like to do more events. We had an event at Bugnutty Brewing Company, https://www.bugnutty.com/. One of the first responders won a raffle at the barbecue. He got to make his own beer, and name it. The event included a fundraiser and proceeds came back to Back Brevard Heroes, which was really nice. The funds raised allowed us to make little gift bags which we delivered to police stations, and they put them in their officers’ mailboxes. It's not just the firefighters that we've done stuff for, we do things for the police officers too, and we've helped a military person who found himself with a health issue. We want to do more of those things and when we find a need which needs to be met, we want to be able to meet it.

Jen –The first two years that Back Brevard Heroes was here and doing the BBQ etc, they were *not* a nonprofit, 501c3; they had not gotten their official documents yet. I say this because I want you to know, as a community, you don't have to be a nonprofit to make a difference. Don't feel like that is stopping you from doing nice things to help.

Tina – We love when the community jumps in and shows their support. For example, we had people donate leftover Halloween candy. It was amazing and the amount we received! Every small way someone helps adds up. It’s not always about contributing big things. Maybe you would like to volunteer which I really encourage. Reach out and tell us what it is you would like to do, and we'll find a place for it. If you want to offer something big, that is ok, but it's more about the whole community coming together.

Jen - That’s a great message. Thank you. Do you ladies have any final thoughts?

Kim - There are small ways a community can contribute other than a financial donation.  Our first responders love sweets! Full size candy bars, chips, candies, and even homemade goods are always welcome. Please make sure it is wrapped. We are always looking for additional ways to support our local first responders.

Tina - We’re trying to find creative ways to do something special for the dispatchers. April is 911 education month with April **11-17, 2021** being National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (NPSTW) which is held annually during the second week of April to honor telecommunications personnel for their commitment, service, and sacrifice.

I would like to thank everybody who's helped so far because they've been very generous. It's been easy to go out in the community and see the support. The BBQ runs off donations and sponsorships. No one gets paid. No one has to work that hard because people are being generous, and we really appreciate it

Jen – If someone wants to make a financial donation, how do they do that?

Sherri - They can visit our website: https://www.backbrevardheroes.com/ and use the link to donate. They can reach out on our FB page: https://www.facebook.com/backbrevardheroes

The barbecue is May 1 at the Brevard Veterans Memorial Center in Merritt Island. It'll be from 11am to 3pm. If you want to do a sponsorship, reach out to us at backbrevardheroes@gmail.com.

Jen -

Thank you for being here today.

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