

# WESTERN STATES HOSTAGE NEGOTIATORS' ASSOCIATION

**2023 Featured Presenters**  
**May 1, 2023 – May 3, 2023**



## THE WASHOE COUNTY TEAM WELCOMES YOU TO SPARKS, NEVADA



**Special Agent Cassie Taylor – Federal Bureau of Investigation**  
**Sergeant Andi O'Brien – Washoe County Sheriff's Office**

Cassie Taylor is a Special Agent for the FBI. She primarily works Indian Country matters in Northern Nevada. After attending the National Crisis Negotiation Course (NCNC) in Quantico, Virginia in April 2019, Cassie has been actively involved with the local crisis negotiation teams since that time. Additional collateral duties include assisting the Northern Nevada Safe Streets Task Force and coordinating the Behavioral Analysis program for the Las Vegas Division of the FBI.



**Sergeant Andrea 'Andi' O'Brien – Washoe County Sheriff's Office**

Sergeant Andi O'Brien is entering her 24<sup>th</sup> year in law enforcement. She joined the Sheriff's Office in 1999 as a civilian employee and post 9/11, she made the decision to become a sworn employee, entering the law enforcement academy in 2003. She was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 2018 and is currently assigned to the patrol division. Andi has had several ancillary assignments during her tenure, including being a negotiator with the Sheriff's Hostage Negotiations Team. After her promotion, and based upon her experience, she transitioned to Team Leader, providing guidance and support during crisis incidents, as well as facilitating training and negotiator and team development.

Sergeant Andi O'Brien's experience and caring attitude resulted in another ancillary assignment as one of the leads with her agency's mental wellness program. It is now recognized nationally that first responders are suffering and dealing with their own mental health issues. With her background and experience in negotiations,

Andi has answered the call to help her co-workers who find themselves struggling with surviving our profession. Unimaginable at one time, she has now found herself, several times, on the other end of a phone using her crisis intervention skills with her own brothers and sisters. Saving lives with words alone, and the power those words have on those we care about, has a lasting impact on every one of us who work as negotiators. These incidents confirmed and solidified the belief that negotiations are more than just words, it is an “Art.” Andi’s work has been recognized, having been her agency’s Peer Support Coordinator for the past five years. The WCSO Peer Support Motto “In this Family No One Fights Alone” signifies her career and the commitment she has to her special teams.

Sergeant O’Brien has had the honor of serving on the WSHNA Board since 2012 as a District Representative or as a member of the Executive Board. She has had a leading role in the coordination of four WSHNA Training Seminars and attended multiple NCNA (National Council of Negotiators Association) Meetings on behalf of WSHNA.

### **Rocky Boice Negotiation at Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation**

On February 26, 2018, Tribal Police officers responded to an assault with a deadly weapon involving a suspect known as “Rocky.” The suspect had recently been released from prison after serving time for murder. According to tribal sources, prior to the standoff with law enforcement, the suspect had held his estranged girlfriend “Christina” hostage for four days, stabbing her repeatedly during that time. “Christina” was eventually able to escape to seek and obtain medical attention. The suspect evaded law enforcement for a week prior to the standoff.

Several obstacles, including freezing temperatures, rain, snow, and wind, made this 11-hour standoff challenging. The incident, in a Native American community, involved a multi-agency response that involved the coordination of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, other regional agencies, and a relief Special Weapons and Tactics Team from Las Vegas, NV, from over three hundred miles away.



### **Robert Ragsdale - Phoenix Police Department - Retired**

Bob Ragsdale retired from the Phoenix Police Department with 29 years of service. Fifteen of those years were spent with the department’s full-time tactical team, the Special Assignments Unit (SAU). His negotiations career began in 1988 when the SAU lieutenant told him he was now a negotiator. In 1992 Bob started creating and conducting training in hostage/crisis negotiation and crisis communication, and has been doing that, off and on, ever since.

Bob has taught nationally for both the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) and Crisis Systems Management (CSM). He was the managing editor of the NTOA’s “Crisis Negotiator” journal and a member of their editorial board and has authored numerous negotiation-related articles. Bob has also been a speaker at national, regional, and state negotiation conferences. He no longer travels and teaches multi-day negotiation classes but still does an occasional zoom or in-person class or conference presentation when requested and volunteers his time helping local negotiators and teams with their training.

### **WSHNA “Operating as One Team” Synopsis**

Although the tools and tactics may be different for the tactical and negotiation teams, they share the mutual goals of the preservation of life and the peaceful resolution of a crisis incident. While not always possible due to uncontrollable circumstances, these goals cannot be accomplished if both teams do not work together as one

team under the leadership of a knowledgeable command element that ensures there is a unified strategy, a constant exchange of information between all elements, and timely decision making with input from both teams.

This interplay begins with the sharing of information from the initial intelligence gathering by the negotiators and the scouting of the crisis site by the tactical operators. A “Parallel Approach” is utilized, as the incident progresses, where there is a synchronization of talk and tactics (force) to encourage and promote communication, and incident resolution. Even when a negotiated resolution does not appear likely, the negotiation team, working in conjunction with the tactical team and command, can engage in “tactical negotiation” strategies that assist the tactical team with the risk effective tactical option chosen to resolve the incident.

Promoting this idea of operating as one team begins well before a crisis incident begins. The tactical, negotiation and command elements should know and understand each other’s philosophies, strategies, responsibilities, and capabilities. This can be done through education, cross training, and regular joint training exercises, all of which promote credibility, mutual trust, and respect.

This presentation was originally created for an agency’s joint training day and the information is relevant for incident and tactical commanders, tactical operators, and negotiators.



**Sergeant Jessica Hill  
Detective Justin Godfrey  
Agent Joshua Lynch**

**Layton City Police Department, Utah**

Jessica Hill is a Sergeant with the Layton City Police Department and has been serving her community for the past 9 years. She attended Weber State University, where she received a

bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice with an emphasis in Law Enforcement. During her career, Jessica has served in the patrol division and has held various positions, including Field Training Officer, Firearms Instructor, Women’s Assault Defense Instructor, Physical Fitness Coordinator and Domestic Violence Protocol Instructor. She is currently assigned as the Administrative Sergeant and Field Training Program Coordinator.

Jessica has been a Crisis/Hostage Negotiator on the North Davis Metro SWAT team since 2015. She has completed the Basic FBI Crisis Negotiation School, Phase II & III Crisis Negotiation courses and other advanced negotiations courses. Jessica has served as the North Davis Metro SWAT Crisis Negotiations team leader since 2020 and oversees a team of seven members. She has a passion for crisis negotiation and strives to develop more frequent and standardized training for the team.

Detective Justin Godfrey has been with the Layton City Police Department since 2017. He has worked as a Patrol Officer, Detective/School Resource Officer, Background Investigator and CIT Officer. Some of Justin’s extra assignments have included being a member of the Community Engagement Team and a Training Instructor. Justin has contributed to the North Davis Metro SWAT team as a Crisis/Hostage Negotiator since 2020. As a member of the negotiations team, he has responded to numerous critical incidents including suicidal individuals, barricaded suspects, and an armed hostage situation. Detective Godfrey finds great reward in

working with his team to use effective communication on a personal level to deescalate and create solutions to critical incidents.

Detective Godfrey lives in the community where he works with his wife and three children. He has a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Weber State University.

Agent Joshua Lynch has been an officer with the Layton City Police Department for 10 years. He has worked as a Patrol Officer, DUI Officer, Field Training Officer, Drug Recognition Expert, and a member of the Crime Reduction Unit. For the past year and a half, Joshua has been assigned to the Davis Metro Narcotics Task Force. During Joshua's first few years in law enforcement, he discovered a passion for influencing people through effective communication. He was selected as a member of the North Davis Metro SWAT Negotiations Team and has been on the team for the past 7 years. He believes that while negotiators see a wide array of outcomes, all individuals deserve a fair chance at a peaceful resolution.

When Joshua is not at work, he has a passion for all things outdoors, especially when it involves family, friends, a smoked brisket, and a cold drink.

### **“Wasatch Front Rescue: A Family Saved”**

In September 2021, a suspect was involved in a several days crime spree that spanned through multiple Davis County cities. The suspect had been committing violent crimes for two days and kept evading police. The suspect was eventually located and led police on a high-speed vehicle chase. At the conclusion of the pursuit, he fled again and unlawfully entered a residence in the middle of the night where he held a family hostage at gun point. For over 9 hours, the suspect assaulted, manipulated and terrorized the family. Several agencies, including the North Davis Metro Crisis Negotiations Team, were called to the scene to assist. Negotiators were eventually able to establish communication with the hostages and suspect, which began a tense multi-hour negotiation.

This presentation will discuss the outcome of the incident and the unique circumstances that concluded it. It will cover negotiating through text message and working through a perceived Stockholm syndrome. Lastly, it will discuss the incidents shortcomings, successes, and the importance of working together jointly with the tactical team.



### **Officer Erik Morris – Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department**

Erik Morris is a Police Officer with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) and has been with the agency for 14-years. Officer Morris has worked varying assignments as a patrol and plainclothes Officer; Patrol, Gang Unit and Organized Crime Detective and currently works full time as an instructor with the LVMPD Firearms Training and Tactics Unit. Officer Morris became a Negotiator with LVMPD in 2015 and is the Assistant Team Leader for one of two LVMPD Crisis Negotiator Teams.

### **‘Many Lessons Learned’**

In May of 2021, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's Crisis Negotiation Team responded to a callout of a barricaded subject. What was initially a lone barricade involving a male, wanted for battery on a police officer and other stolen property offenses, quickly turned into a hostage situation involving a 4-year-old boy and his babysitter. This incident would conclude twenty-nine hours later after several shift changes, multiple agencies becoming involved, and many lessons learned.





### **Steven W. Nicholas Ed. D., MFT, NCC**

Dr. Nicholas has his doctorate in Counseling and Educational Psychology. He has been practicing as a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) since 2007 and has immersed himself in the phenomena of trauma and the potential growth from adverse events. His trainings are aimed at normalizing the cultures of stress and trauma exposure. His copyrighted model, Living Ideation, is a positive contrast to the common suicide prevention models; Living Ideation aims to discover existing strengths within a person and then amplify those abilities for resilience. Ultimately, balance and strength out compete depression, burnout, and suicidal thoughts. In

addition to having a comprehensive private practice in Reno, NV, he is the in-house mental health clinician for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, and the clinical consultant for the Nevada Peer Support Network. Recently, he has worked with BLM and Forest Service wildland firefighters during their pre and post season trainings and he also facilitates Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) services nationwide. Throughout his studies and teachings, Dr. Nicholas has worked with individuals, couples, families, and organizations impacted by the co-occurrences of substance use disorders and mental health diagnoses. In addition to doctoral publications analyzing how groups create greater relational connections after suicide loss, Dr. Nicholas was a contributing investigator for the DSM-5. Dr. Nicholas has resided in northern Nevada for over forty-five years and has a comprehensive private practice in Reno.

### **Listening for Life**

Living Ideation is a contrasting philosophy and model to the traditional approaches of working with people experiencing stress. Response and medical approaches typically observe signs and symptoms of duress and then try to alleviate those situations. Living Ideation assumes that all people possess the abilities to have health and stability in their lives. This is accomplished through relationships, non-pain, and a sense of achievement.

Living Ideation “Listening for Life” will review the following principles for negotiation and interaction:

- Directionality of words, actions, energy.
- Charlie Brown theory (affiliation, non-pain, achievement).
- On your side: people, pets, environments, activities.
- Thoughts and behaviors of life.



### **Special Agent Ryan Randall**

**Bio Pending**

### **Colleyville Hostage Standoff**

On January 15, 2022, a United Kingdom national of Pakistani descent took four men hostage in the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas during a livestreamed Sabbath service. Local, state, and federal law enforcement responded including FBI Dallas

personnel and the North Tarrant Regional SWAT/CNT. The subject, a fervent Islamic extremist, demanded the release of a high-profile Pakistani national who was convicted of attempted murder of federal agents/military personnel in Afghanistan. Over a 10-hour period, negotiators maintained regular dialogue with the subject and the hostages while the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team was deployed from Quantico, Virginia. This presentation will review the negotiations as well as the integration of these efforts with the command post and tactical units.



### **Special Agent Karin Huston, Retired – Federal Bureau of Investigation**

Karin L. Houston retired after twenty-three years as a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

In 2001, Karin was selected for the San Diego FBI Crisis Negotiation Team. She also served on the Joint FBI-San Diego Police Department-Naval Criminal Investigative Service Crisis Negotiation Team, as well as the Joint FBI-San Diego Sheriff's Office Crisis Negotiation Team.

Throughout her assignments, Karin continued to serve as a member of the FBI Crisis Negotiation Team, and in 2013, assumed the role of Crisis Negotiation Coordinator for the FBI Kansas City Division. She completed hundreds of hours of negotiations training, including the 80-hour FBI National Crisis Negotiation Course and the 80-hour London Metropolitan Police Services National Hostage and Crisis Negotiation Course. Karin deployed on hundreds of SWAT Operations, barricaded subjects, hostage situations, suicidal individuals, kidnappings, and special events. She is a President of the Missouri Association of Crisis Negotiators and a member of the Kansas Association of Hostage Negotiators.

Karin holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Resource Development from Grand Canyon University and a Master of Science degree in Higher and Adult Education from Arizona State University. She was an FBI Adjunct Faculty Member with certifications in Negotiations, Presentation Skills, and Weapons of Mass Destruction.

### **25 Things You Forgot About Crisis Negotiation**

Has it been a minute since your basic or intermediate course? Since you have had a call out? Or since you have had a great training day? This presentation will address ideas for rebooting, refreshing and reminding you of how to best serve your team by assessing where and how you best fit in, how you can recommit to your team's mission as well as reminders of the 25 crisis negotiation techniques we often overlook or forget. This presentation is intended for all skill levels and positions and includes a handout to take back to your team.