



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FAYETTE COUNTY SHERIFF NEW PSA PRESIDENT, AUGUST ‘FACE’**

**UNIONTOWN, PA** - Standing on the steps of the Pennsylvania State Capitol building in Harrisburg was both a “special” and “surreal” moment for Fayette County Sheriff James Custer. Last month, Custer, 54, a lifelong Uniontown resident, was sworn in as president of the Pennsylvania Sheriffs’ Association. He is the first PSA president from Fayette County in the organization’s 98-year history.

“It’s always nice to be the first in anything, and I’m proud to represent Fayette County at the state level,” Custer said. Custer’s groundbreaking representation of Fayette County has made him the latest “Face” in the Fayette County Public Relations Initiative’s Faces & Places series, which seeks to honor the many citizens and locations that make Fayette a wonderful place to live, work and visit.

A Laurel Highlands High School graduate, Sheriff Custer served in the United States Air Force from 1984-88, and the Air Force Reserves from 1989-91. He began his career with the Pennsylvania State Police in 1989, serving in the patrol, criminal investigations, fire marshal and Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement divisions.

Upon retiring from the department in 2011, he became a Fayette County deputy sheriff, completing his training and certifications at Penn State University. He was then elected and re-elected Fayette County sheriff in 2015 and 2019, respectively.

While in office, Custer has attended the National Sheriff’s Institute Leadership Academy in Aurora, Colo.; been deeply involved with community programs promoting drug prevention, active shooter training and church security; and currently sits on several county boards. “The best part of being sheriff is working with a great staff and getting out and meeting the people of our county,” Custer said. “I’m very grateful for the opportunity they have given me to serve. I’ve been very blessed, and God has been good to me.”

Sheriff Custer, who lives in South Union Township with his wife, Renee, and their daughters, Morgan and Mariah, has been an active PSA member over the years and was appointed to its executive committee in 2018. He also belongs to the National Sheriffs’ Association, where he serves on the Animal Abuse, Rural Sheriff and Community Outreach committees.

The special swearing-in ceremony took place July 15, honoring members of the new executive committee and taking the place of the association’s annual summer conference, which was

canceled due to COVID-19. In keeping with PSA tradition, which sees a judge from the president's home county issue the oaths of office, Fayette County President Judge John F. Wagner Jr. proudly accompanied Custer to Harrisburg for the ceremony.

"These are different and challenging times for law enforcement," Custer said. "I hope to form working groups comprised of sheriffs from across the state to discuss what has and hasn't worked in the past, so that we can all be better prepared for future emergencies dealing with the pandemic and civil unrest." He also looks forward to continuing his work with the PSA's legislative committee and state legislators. He is currently working on a new surcharge bill to benefit sheriffs' offices, and plans to reintroduce a new sheriff authority bill to restore investigative powers. While he knows the next year may be "challenging," he hopes working with the executive committee will allow him to continue moving the association forward and "making the office of sheriff better to serve all Pennsylvanians."

"The PSA is always reviewing the training received by sheriffs and deputies. As law enforcement officers, we all take an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Pennsylvania, but we were never trained on what that means," Custer said. "I want to have constitutional training added to our curriculum, because - more than just enforcing the vehicle code, crimes code and civil procedures - we are here to secure the God-given rights and liberty of each American."

For more information on the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association, visit [www.pasheriffs.org](http://www.pasheriffs.org).

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.info](http://www.fayettecountypa.info).

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