

I recently had the privilege of participating in a tribute to first responders for their efforts on behalf of domestic violence victims. In the aftermath of “Sandy,” I thought it worthwhile to reiterate how invaluable these individuals are to the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Fire, police and emergency medical personnel carry a heavy burden, witnessing other people’s suffering and need. This burden can sometimes weigh them down physically and emotionally.

The words of a former paramedic capture the true character of first responders:

(They) ...go forward into circumstances ‘normal’ folks might sensibly run from: frightening, dirty, difficult, dangerous, painful and often seemingly hopeless situations, prepared to make tough decisions and sacrifice (themselves) if need be, to save someone or something, alleviate suffering, offer hope, restore life, make it better.”

To first responders, I say thank you for not running away from the frightening, the dirty and the difficult. Thank you for all you do to rescue, protect and comfort victims of crime, accidents and natural disasters. Please remember to take time to care for yourself while doing this critical, life-saving and often heart-breaking work.

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