

TRAINING REVOLUTION

Expected to go live in June, new **OPOTA ONLINE** will offer significant upgrades in content, platform and interactivity

The days of passive online law enforcement training are numbered.

“The presumption is that you’re sitting there intensely watching and retaining all the information, but come on,” Attorney General Dave Yost said. “In real life, you’re being pulled away to take care of something else, you’re multitasking, your mind is wandering. Blame it on human nature — and an outdated approach to presenting online lessons.

“With the new OPOTA Online, we’re tossing out the things that didn’t keep officers’ attention and focusing on what is meaningful and useful.”

The new system will replace the old eOPOTA in the next month or so, offering a more user-friendly platform and updated content, with more coming.

The wholesale improvement is important because in 2019 — even before the COVID-19 pandemic struck — 73% of the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy’s “students” opted for online classes. The appeal is obvious: Officers can complete training when it works for them, instead of rearranging their schedules to accommodate a far-away class.

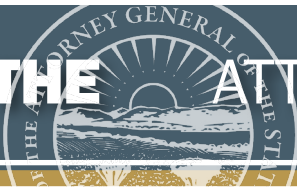
“The old eOPOTA was like working with rotary phones compared with the new system,” said Dwight Holcomb, executive director of OPOTA.



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— DWIGHT HOLCOMB
Executive Director of OPOTA

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Officer Kaia Grant of the Springdale Police Department was killed on the job in March 2020.

To this day, you can find photos she posted on the social media site Flickr. They serve as a window into the way the budding photographer viewed the world.

There are romping dogs, nature scenes and a number of pictures she took in Yellow Springs during a visit with her mentor, Detective Ritchy Tuazon, a fellow Springdale officer and professional photographer. These street scenes each tell a story, and, in one of the most striking, Officer Grant found beauty in an old stairwell and a pair of dirty Crocs.

Officer Grant saw the good in things, and people, that others might overlook.

She majored in politics and economics at William & Mary University in Virginia and had an endless love of adventure. She went into policing to serve her community but didn't like to write traffic tickets.

And she also may have been a bit naïve about the nature of evil when taking the job — I'm sure she is not alone. You see, her primary aim was to help people in need.

Contrast Officer Grant with the disparaging image of law enforcement officers splashed around by some these days. She doesn't fit the narrative. The vast majority of law enforcement officers do not.

She brought joy to the people she knew and a helping hand to community members and crime victims. And she had a bright future stolen when a rampaging driver targeted her as she went to put out tire-deflation devices.

We must never forget Officer Grant, just as we should always remember Sgt. Brian Dulle, a 12-year veteran of the Warren County Sheriff's Office and a married father of three who was struck and killed by a fleeing driver dodging stop sticks in 2011.

And Officer Ralph Miller of the Toronto Police Department, a World War II veteran and grandfather who was killed in 1978 by a driver who rammed the roadblock the officer had set up.

And Marshal Teddy Ray Holcomb of the Trimble Police Department, a married 29-year-old who



was killed the same way in 1976, after reporting to help out even though he was off-duty.

The courage and dedication these officers showed forever tie them to Officer Grant, and to Cpl. Adam McMillan, Detective James Skernivitz, Officer Anthony Dia and the three other officers honored at this year's Ohio Peace Officers' Memorial Ceremony, held in early May.

The Christian philosopher and novelist C.S. Lewis said: "Since it is so likely that children will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker."

We must hold up our stories of courage in the face of evil, especially when they come at such a tremendous cost. We must hold up our fallen officers.

Yours,

Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General



Also honored at this year's Ohio Peace Officers' Memorial Ceremony were those killed in 2019: Colerain Township Officer Dale Woods, Clermont County Deputy Bill Brewer and Dayton Detective Jorge Del Rio, who were honored in *On the Job's* Spring 2020 issue. To read more about them, visit www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/PoliceResources.



Gone but never forgotten

On May 6, the officers who lost their lives in the line of duty in 2020 were honored at the **Ohio Peace Officers' Memorial Ceremony**



CPL. ADAM McMILLAN

**Hamilton County
Sheriff's Office**

End of Watch: Oct. 23, 2020

Cpl. McMillan was a mischievous, adventurous gentleman who embraced joy in his daily life and spread it to others. He was fond of bicycle riding, primitive camping, playing practical jokes and celebrating holidays — complete with so many outdoor Christmas lights, they could be seen for blocks.

The corporal brought a sense of ease and big heart to his 19 years at the sheriff's office, where he was recognized four times with commendations for performing heroic efforts, saving lives and arresting criminals.

"Being a deputy sheriff did not define Adam," said Cpl. Jason Hovekamp, a good friend. "But his undeniable character and qualities led to him being a decorated and celebrated deputy sheriff."

Cpl. McMillan, 42, died after a chain-reaction crash in which his patrol car hit a bus.



DETECTIVE JAMES M. SKERNIVITZ

**Cleveland
Division of Police**

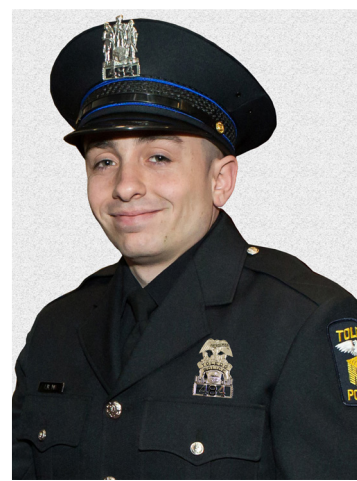
End of Watch: Sept. 3, 2020

Detective "Skern" Skernivitz didn't seek recognition during his 22-year career, but he repeatedly earned it. A veteran member of the Gang Impact Unit, he was recognized dozens of times with commendations and service medals for taking violent criminals off the streets.

"What he did out there was to try to lift an entire city to a higher, more noble life," Chief Calvin Williams said.

The detective rarely took a day — or night — off work. But when he did, he enjoyed attending concerts, playing softball, watching sporting events, traveling and just being Dad — "no frills, no fanfare, just Dad," according to his wife and three grown children, who also called him "a master prescriber of nicknames."

While in plain clothes, Detective Skernivitz, 53, and an informant were fatally shot by robbers.



OFFICER ANTHONY DIA

**Toledo Police
Department**

End of Watch: July 4, 2020

"Anthony was the example of a fine officer. He never had anything negative to say about anyone or anything," Lt. Joe Trudeau said. "If I could have 50 Dias, I would take them all, knowing everything would be done right and we would be a happy shift."

Officer Dia died just short of serving two years with the Toledo Police and previously spent two years with the Mercy Health System Police. He dedicated himself to protecting his city; following Islam; and loving his wife, two young sons and the rest of his large, extended family.

He was a fan of the L.A. Rams, loved pitbulls and enjoyed coaching Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

Officer Dia, 26, was killed when an intoxicated man he tried to help shot him in a parking lot.



OFFICER KAIA LAFAY GRANT

**Springdale Police
Department**

**End of Watch: March 21,
2020**

Officer Grant was as natural a police officer as she was an athlete. She handled domestic situations, got victims, especially children, to open up, and mediated disputes with ease. She spoke three languages and knew a martial art.

"In eight years, I never once saw her lose her temper," said Officer Michael DiStefano, a friend. "Calm breeds calm in our world — it's just that sense she put out there when she showed up at a scene."

The officer also was a goal-setter: She planned to get her master's degree, go into politics, open a gym, become a great photographer and a better mountain biker, and never stop spoiling her beloved dog.

Officer Grant, 33, died after being run down by a driver whom police were chasing.

My Dashboard
Once you log into OPOTA Online, you are directed to “My Dashboard,” which serves as your home base. From here, you can access **courses** you have enrolled in or are completing. You can choose your own setup, adding **widgets** such as course transcripts and completion certificates. The **Message Center** is accessible on all pages.

Course Catalog
Courses available for enrollment are listed in the Course Catalog (“Catalog” in the top menu bar). They are grouped by **category**, such as “Statutory Mandates” and “Roll-Call Refreshers,” but a search function also is available. When you enroll in a course, you will receive a confirmation email notifying you that the course is available in your dashboard to be accessed at any time.

Accessing a course
Once you’ve enrolled in a course, you can access it through your dashboard. Your personal course page will include the description, list the **modules**, track your **progress** and offer any linked **resources**, such as **handouts**.

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“OPOTA Online offers much more flexibility — courses are designed to be cellphone-friendly, and the system is configured to remember officers’ spots if they get pulled away.”

The new platform also allows officers to register their own accounts, set their own passwords and customize their dashboards. The navigation is simple and intuitive.

“The experience will be a giant step forward from what you’re used to seeing from eOPOTA,” Attorney General Yost said. “And that goes beyond the design of the website to the course content and even the way the lessons are presented. What works in a face-to-face classroom, we now know, is not as effective online.”

Kim Eggerton, the e-learning design specialist OPOTA hired to create new course content, says successful online lessons avoid passive learning.

“You can deliver content in any way — a video, a slide show, text, images,” she said. “But at intervals of about 5-10 minutes, you have to take a break and give the learner some time to reflect and apply what they’re learning.”

On OPOTA Online, those pauses will be interactive and built around, for example, mini-quizzes and activities such as sorting or matching. Feedback in response to officers’ answers is viewed as essential, given that e-learners can’t raise their hands to ask a question if they don’t understand a concept.

“Everything has to be as clear and concise as possible,” Eggerton said. “And we’re intentionally designing these classes for officers — they

Special note:

Before OPOTA Online goes live, the old eOPOTA must be turned off. OPOTA will contact agencies once that date is set so that any in-progress training can be completed before then. Officers will not be able to start a course in eOPOTA and complete it in OPOTA Online.

are professional adults with limited time and resources, meaning computers and things like that. So we are focused on making content relevant, scenario-based and impactful in an efficient way.”

At launch, OPOTA Online will offer:

- **Roll-Call Refreshers:** These concise, 101-level-type courses are designed to give quick-hit, useful information either as (1) reminders about basic topics, such as search warrants or direct and circumstantial evidence, or (2) necessary updates, such as explaining new laws. They fit into the time that departments might use for roll call but also can be easily accessed from a cellphone.
- **Comprehensive, multipart courses:** These classes provide a deeper dive into a subject in the newer and more-engaging format, potentially including multiple modules and interaction opportunities. Examples of topics are use of deadly force and search warrant preparation.
- **Statutorily mandated subjects:** Topics required by Ohio law — including child abuse, crisis intervention and missing persons — will all be available. Eggerton said such courses will be updated from the eOPOTA versions in both design and content, although they all won’t be fully overhauled when OPOTA Online goes live.

“When you have improved material to offer, it doesn’t make sense to sit on it and wait until every single piece is updated,” Yost said. “That would just be a waste for officers who could already be getting the improved training.”

Each course in OPOTA Online includes a survey that officers are encouraged to complete. Such input can be used to clarify points in courses or develop new material. In addition, every user has access to a personal message center, from which they can contact OPOTA Online’s administrators.

“When we looked at what we wanted from the new OPOTA Online,” Executive Director Holcomb said, “high on our list were adding system stability — things should work when you click on them — and incorporating instructors who are fresh industry leaders and subject-matter experts. We emphasized those elements because local officers told us they wanted more of both.”

Such feedback has also prompted OPOTA to add in-person classes throughout the state — now at 20 locations and counting.

“These days we are constantly asking: ‘Do we need to do this in London? Do we have to do it in person?’” Yost said.

Sometimes the answer is yes, but even in those cases, OPOTA leaders hope to, down the road, embrace a hybrid approach by moving some portions of the class online, such as understanding foundations.

“The point,” Yost said, “is to minimize the time officers need to be away from their home base, to get them high-quality, inexpensive instruction while respecting their time.”

Slowly, more women gaining sheriff's boots, badge in Ohio

Three of Ohio's 88 sheriffs are women – an all-time high.

In fact, Sheriffs Deb Burchett of Clark County, Charmaine McGuffey of Hamilton County and Kandy Fatheree of Summit County double Ohio's previous total. Since Maude Collins was elected Vinton County sheriff in 1926 (her husband, the previous sheriff, was fatally shot by a speeding driver), only two other women have served in the position.

The scarcity isn't unique to Ohio.

"Out of about 3,200 sheriffs nationwide, there are only about 60 of us who are female," Sheriff Fatheree said recently.

That works out to less than 2%, and Sarah Shendy, director of Ohio's new Office of Law Enforcement Recruitment and a full-time patrol officer in Copley, estimates that women make up only about 12% of all law enforcement nationwide.

"It's a shame," Sheriff Fatheree said. "Law enforcement is a noble profession, and women do extremely well in it."

She and Sheriff McGuffey won election last year; Sheriff Burchett was first elected in 2016.

Fighting from the start

Sheriff Fatheree has wanted to be Summit County sheriff since she joined the office in 1995.

"I didn't just want to be a manager, I wanted to be a leader," she said. "I wanted to make changes, and leadership is really where you can do that."

When she went to the academy, she was a single mother who was finally making good on her lifelong goal to become a police officer. As a child who was sexually abused by a neighbor, she had decided at the age of 9 that she wanted to be part of the profession whose members go after bad people.

"I wouldn't end up doing that until I was in my 30s, though," Sheriff Fatheree said. "What happened to me adversely impacted the first part of my life up until I made a conscious decision that I was going to do something for myself,



ABOVE: Clark County Sheriff Deb Burchett

BELOW: Hamilton County Sheriff Charmaine McGuffey



"I didn't just want to be a manager, I wanted to be a leader," Summit County Sheriff Kandy Fatheree says.

rather than always doing something for someone else and being somewhat meek and mild."

Four years in at the sheriff's office, she took a promotional exam and finished No. 1, but she and two other women scoring in the top 10 were passed over. That was part of what led Fatheree to file a federal lawsuit charging gender discrimination by the sheriff at the time.

"It was one of the most horrible times of my life because they tried hard to discredit and intimidate me," she said.

Proving the value of elections, that sheriff was defeated in 2000 by Drew Alexander, who made good on promises of equal treatment. Fatheree was among the women earning promotions — she first became a sergeant and, later, a lieutenant — during Alexander's 12 years in office.

She had achieved the rank of captain when she decided to run for sheriff last year to succeed retiring Sheriff Steve Barry. After contentious primary and general election races, Fatheree won the job with 52% of the vote.

"What makes all the trouble worth it are all of the changes that I have implemented and all the plans for future changes that we are setting up," Sheriff Fatheree said.

The power to change

Sheriff Fatheree spoke to On the Job just before she hit 100 days in office leading an agency with 320 sworn deputies, including those who work the jail; about 70 support staff members, including dispatchers; and as many as 100 special,

or volunteer, deputies.

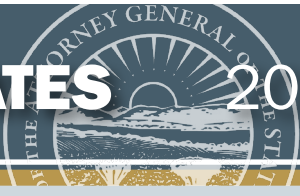
She has revamped the promotion process, with the top 10 scorers on exams now advancing to a committee interview and being judged on qualifications, training, achievements and the interview. Those not selected learn why and what skills they can improve to increase future prospects.

Sheriff Fatheree also has started the process to diversify recruitment, including reaching out to the local African-American community and the International Institute of Akron, a first step into the sizable immigrant populations from Bhutan, Nepal and Congo.

She increased the size of the human trafficking task force and increased partnerships with federal, state and local law enforcement and courts addressing the issue. She also is leading a multidisciplinary team seeking to create a program offering 30 days of after-jail, supportive housing for homeless people with both mental illness and substance abuse issues. The goal is to reduce recidivism.

Shendy said: "I always use the phrase 'People don't believe the message until they believe the messenger.' All those female deputies out there who might want to become sheriff, if they see someone who looks like them, who lives like them, it automatically becomes something they can achieve, too.

"That's why it's important to have these barrier-breaking female sheriffs."



Mark Your Calendar

Law Enforcement Conference

The Attorney General's 2021 Law Enforcement Conference, an event focused on training and celebrating law enforcement, is set for **Oct. 18-19** in Columbus. Registration will open in late summer.



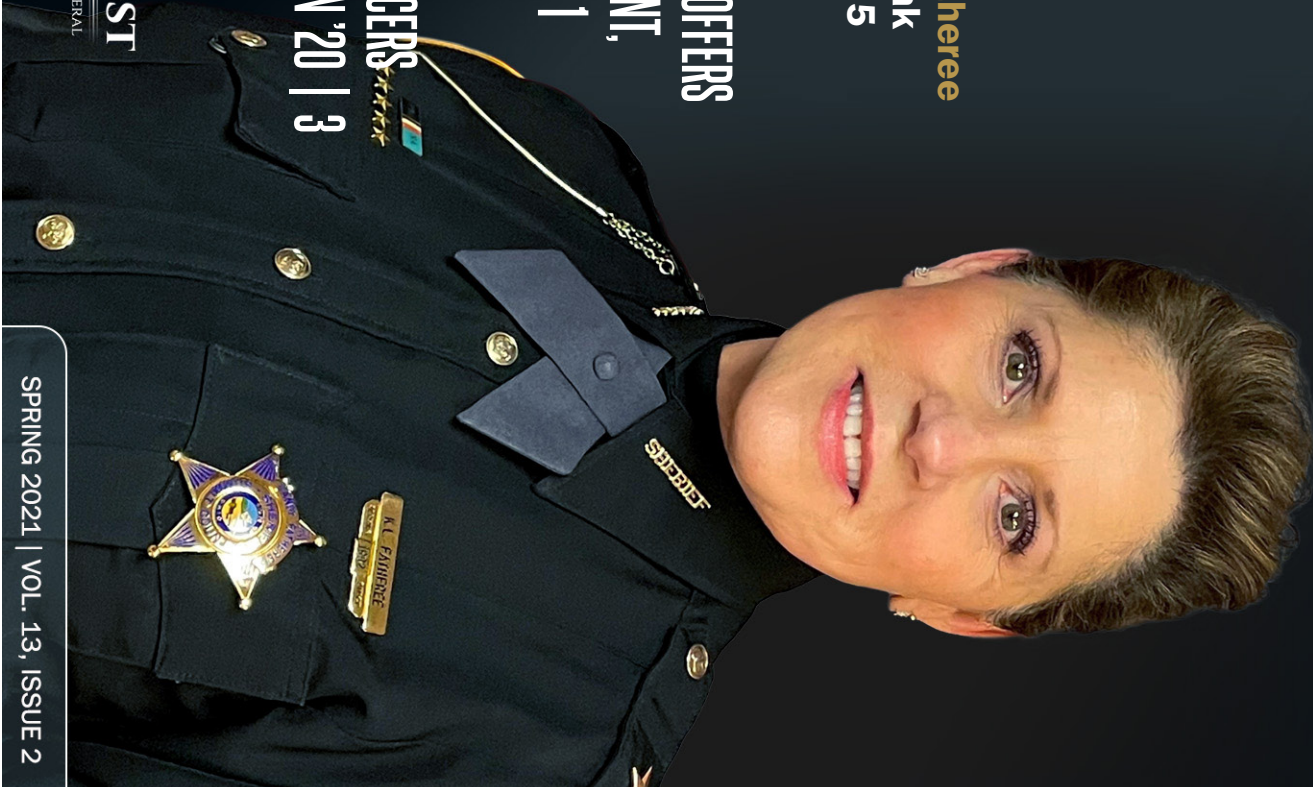
Ohio Missing Persons Day

To remember Ohio's missing persons, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation will host the public, law enforcement and families who have missing loved ones at a free event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Sept. 18** at 2937 W. 25th St. in Cleveland.



DAVE YOST
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

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ON THE JOB

CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE

