

# Place where warriors heal

by Barry Wanger

**V**irtually every police department has officers who have experienced traumatic situations, whether they assisted victims of a horrendous auto accident, witnessed a shooting or a person who was severely injured, or faced down a particularly dangerous situation.

Research shows that law enforcement officers suffer a depression rate 10 times higher than their counterparts in other professions. They are more likely to commit suicide than be killed in the line of duty. For those reasons and more, Frank Gallo, a former Cranston, Rhode Island police officer who served on a SWAT team is leading an innovative program specifically designed for first responders who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and oth-

er mental health problems. Since 2009, the Uniformed Services Program (USP) has provided care for more than 1,200 first responders from around the country.

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in a profession where showing feelings is seen as a sign of weakness and where a cultural taboo exists about getting help,” Gallo said.

He added that peer support is a major component of the program. The Uniformed Services Program involves a number of psychotherapy groups, including mindfulness training, sleep and dream therapy, recreation therapy, practical recovery, and trauma sensitive yoga.

The program’s residents work with their peers in a supportive group while focusing on their individual problems.

“Group therapy emphasizes getting out of the trap of an unworkable behavioral situation and developing practical life skills to live more vital, meaningful lives,” Gallo points out.

Program participants

have an option to stay together at a Vermont inn near the Brattleboro Retreat, which provides a calm and relaxing environment.

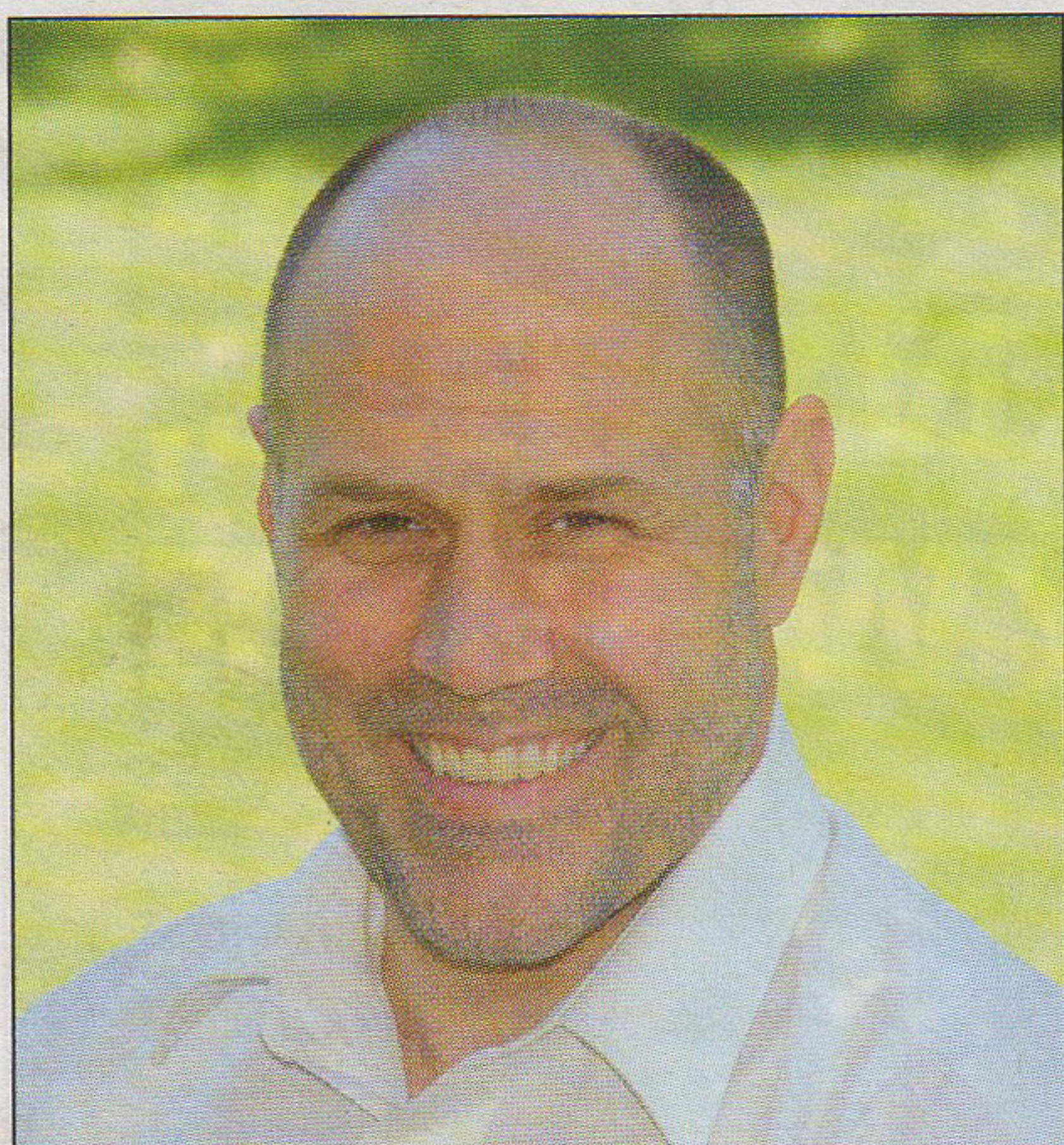
Gallo said physical activity is an important part of the treatment process as it enables residents to feel calmer.

“This is particularly important for police officers and other first responders as they often experience states of hyper-arousal owing to their training and experiences,” he said. The Retreat has nine miles of trails, a ropes course, a basketball court and other facilities.

Residents participate in an intensive series of activities with therapists, yoga teachers, and others. Most participants are at the Retreat for 10 days.

Each police officer is assigned a personal clinician who meets the officer to discuss individual needs and aftercare planning. In addition, patients meet with a psychiatrist to discuss treatment and medication options.

Program participants must be an active or retired member of a uniformed service, including police, fire, corrections, military, EMTs, and paramedics. Contact the Brattleboro Retreat ([www.BrattleboroRetreat.org](http://www.BrattleboroRetreat.org)) located in Brattleboro, VT.



Frank Gallo, a former Cranston, Rhode Island police officer

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