







Massachusetts State Police introduce “Chat with a trooper” as a way to reach out to the elderly during COVID-19 pandemic

The State Police Association of Massachusetts (SPAM) and the Massachusetts State Police today announced that they are starting a new program to help a vulnerable population during the COVID-19 pandemic. “Chat with a Trooper” connects a group of senior citizens with volunteer state troopers for a friendly conversation during the COVID crisis. The idea was the brainchild of Cathy Draine, the Director of Community Engagement for SPAM. Draine, who works part-time for SPAM, is a long-time community organizer who is familiar with the needs of the elderly population.

In order to identify grandparents who are most in need, the troopers are partnering with “Grandparents Raising Grandchildren”. This is a state commission formed in 2008 to assist grandparents who are facing the challenge of raising another generation after bringing up their own kids. SPAM members who choose to be participants in this charitable effort will be partnered with a particular grandparent and simply have a friendly chat about how that individual and his or her family is doing during these unprecedented times.

“We should be concerned for all of the elderly who may face social isolation during this pandemic,” said Draine. “However, grandparents who are raising their grandchildren may be particularly vulnerable because many are homeschooling children who also don’t have the usual opportunities for interactions with their peers. We saw this as the way for our

troopers to lend some support through a friendly phone call.”



CHAT WITH A TROOPER

Preventing the Social
Isolation of Massachusetts
Older Adults through Friendly
Conversations

**The Massachusetts State Police in
conjunction with the State Police
Association of Massachusetts wants to
help ensure all of our older adults in
the Commonwealth feel connected and
remembered during this time of social
distancing. Calls will begin April 2020.**

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“Thanks to the leadership of the State Police Association and the commitment of our personnel to that goal, we are already sharing the expertise of our fitness unit with young people through our online Workouts With A Trooper,” said Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State

Police. "Now, with Chat With A Trooper, we are reaching out directly to our senior citizens, to remind them they are not alone and are in our thoughts during these anxious days. As we continue to seek ways to serve others amid these unprecedented times, I am grateful to SPAM and to the many Troopers who have volunteered to make these calls. I have no doubt these conversations with our treasured elders will be richly rewarding for our Troopers, and I hope the recipients of these calls enjoy them as much as I know the callers will."

Participating troopers will be given resource documents before making their first calls. These include tips for starting a conversation, responses to some anticipated questions and guidelines for the program. This initiative seeks to calm fears, provide companionship to those who are isolated and help the state police more fully integrate with the communities they serve.

The program is scheduled to run until the State of Emergency restrictions are relaxed. When it is safe to gather again, there will be some type of event held where the participants could meet each other in person. This would be a natural finale to the program. However, the hope is troopers, grandparents and perhaps the grandchildren will develop relationships that would continue well after "Chat With a Trooper" is formally concluded.