

# Triad Holds 21st Annual Conference

By Director Edward Hutchinson



Our S.A.L.T. Council members came from all over the nation for the conference – Jan Harper drove in from Chillicothe, OH!

The National Association of Triads held its 21st Annual Conference on December 7th through 10th 2009 at the new Doubletree Resort in Orlando, Florida where twenty-six workshops and three luncheon presentations by nearly fifty presenters delivered older adult training on Triad topics to more than 200 attendees. Triad is in its' twenty-second year of assisting law enforcement to keep older adults safe in their communities by utilizing senior volunteers and those within the private sector who have a vested interest in older adult safety.

Led by Director Edward Hutchinson, the National Association of Triads' Inc. (NATI) team brought together hundreds of law enforcement, volunteers, and senior service professionals from across the United States for the event. In the opening address to the conference, Mr. Hutchinson stated that studies show that five million of the 38 million Americans

over the age of 65 suffer some type of abuse, and that the National Center for Elder Abuse indicates that as much as 84% of elderly abuse and neglect goes unreported to authorities. He indicated that at the onset of Triad, it was a community policing effort that quickly outgrew Sheriff Fuselier's five deputies assigned to check on older adults living alone in St. Martin Parish, LA. This community outreach opened the door as a conduit for reporting a myriad of other crimes being perpetrated against this older population.

When President Lyndon Johnson signed the Older Americans Act, physical abuse of older adults was unheard of and financial crimes were civil in nature. Sexual assault of older adults was unheard of and unspeakable. Laws, public services, social discourse, and Triads needed to change to address these and other emerging issues – issues that have been in

the community all along. Today, Triad has redefined itself to meet the needs of each local community, with strong partnerships and programs to address many different needs of older adult safety. Mr. Hutchinson emphasized the Triad partnerships with the US Department of Health and Human Services, specifically, with the Administration on Aging, with the Federal Trade Commission, AARP, Alzheimer's Association, Department of Transportation, and the Office of Victims of Crime, among others, which assist Triads to address these issues comprehensively. These partners were represented at the conference and seminar presentations and Ed encouraged those who do not partner with these organizations, to do so now. NATI has evolved to become a clearinghouse of information for local and state Triads, with manuals, a newsletter, a website, reference lists, technical support, and other materials, free to local Triads



Deputy Executive Director of the National Sheriffs' Association, Mr. John Thompson delivers opening remarks and underlines the need for additional Triad funding.

and Ed encouraged those present to look for new materials there.

Mr. Hutchison encouraged local and state Triads to review its policies on volunteer selection. He indicated that preliminary reports show an elder abuse correlation to pedophiles a generation ago. Specifically, individuals who seek out opportunities to do harm to older adults are looking to place themselves in positions of volunteer, in order to have access to vulnerable older adults. Mr. Hutchison encouraged Triad leaders and law enforcement to review its risk management policy for its Triad and to implement background checks. If the Triad does not have one, get one today, he insists.

Finally, Ed stated that every year since the Hurricane Katrina disaster that devastated the lives of older adults in Mississippi and Louisiana, NATI had vowed to provide disaster preparedness for older adult communities at its conferences. He stated that he was pleased to announce that through the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) and US Department of Homeland Security, this conference had the most comprehensive address of this issue to date. Through the efforts of Deputy Executive Director John Thompson and Mrs. Lynn Topp, the finest trainers in the nation had been brought together to train on the subject.

Also at the opening General Session, Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings alongside his wife, City of Orlando Chief of Police Val Demings, provided a warm welcome for the conference attendees as well as providing the honor guard for the opening ceremony.

Orlando Chief of Police Val Demings prepares to speak at the opening general session of the 21st Triad Conference



Detective Reginald Roberts of the Orange County Sheriff's Office gave a stirring rendition of our National Anthem. The conference kicked into high gear with a charge from NSA Deputy Executive Director John Thompson to take full advantage of the many opportunities available at the conference. Mr. Thompson reiterated the strong support the National Association of Triads receives from its parent organization, the National Sheriffs' Association in a time without grant funding – not having been received in several years now, NATI has been supported by private funds, specifically through the 911 Cell Phone Bank. Without support of older adult programs through federal funding, programs like NATI cannot continue to bring such excellence in programming. Mr. Thompson called upon those present to encourage such funding at the national level.

The highlight of the Opening General Session was a double coup. The NATI team had devised a plan to invite Mrs. Betsy Cantrell of the Merrymeeting Bay Triad, ME, First Director of National Triad, and pioneer of the National Triad concept, to present the Volunteer of the Year award to Undersheriff Ted Freeman, of Monmouth County, NJ, Board of Directors for Triad, and one of the early implementers of a local Triad. Both are long time friends, as well, being introduced through Triad, and having much mutual professional and personal respect for each other. Mrs. Cantrell has been a long time mentor to Ted and others in implementing Triads across the nation. Unbeknownst to Betsy, Ted had been solicited to present her with a special NATI Trailblazer Award. Simultaneously, Betsy had every indication that she was to present Ted with the Volunteer of the Year award.

Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings assists NATI Director Ed Hutchison present the NATI Trailblazer Award to Mrs. Betsy Cantrell, Merrymeeting Triad, ME, and the NATI Volunteer of the Year award to Undersheriff Ted Freeman, Monmouth Co., NJ



Neither knew that they would also be receiving an award! At the conference, the double-cross went off without a hitch and the presentation was very moving. “One of the things I have learned about Betsy is that she will modestly suggest that she played but a small role in each of these [Merrymeeting Bay Triad] programs, and she will deflect the credit to others who have worked with her on these projects.” “Without a doubt, she has made Mid Coast Maine a welcome and safe place for all seniors and elders who consider this area their home. Her dedication is untiring and she is an absolute wonderful person to know and work with. Her name will always be synonymous with elder service.” says her sheriff and colleague, Sheriff Joel Merry, Sagadahoc County Sheriff’s Office, ME. Betsy has received the “6 Who Care Award” from NBC, was responsible for the first Triad Handbook, National Triad Conference, monthly newsletter concept, and national dissemination of the Triad model. She maintains her work in Maine.

As for Undersheriff Ted Freeman, he is no blushing flower. Ted is a state certified teacher, state certified trainer, certified police instructor, WMD instructor, and frequent presenter at state and national public safety conferences. Ted was named New Jersey State Triad Association Person of the Year in 2000, Goodwill Fire Company Fireman of the Year in 2006, and Garden State Law Enforcement

Person of the Year in 2007. Ted has been actively involved in Triad since 1992.

In addition to networking and idea sharing opportunities, the Triad team of Ed, Mrs. Terri Hicks and her husband, Mr. Mike Hicks, and supported by the Orange County Triad, arranged and supported 26 separate workshops for attendees to improve their local Triads. A preemptive taste of what was to come came from the headliner, Mr. David Williams, Retired FBI Special Agent Bomb Technician; he encouraged individuals to seek out volunteer and personal growth opportunities after retirement. The attendees were regaled with stories of hair raising insight into our nation’s most notorious criminal moments and international heartbreak caused by terrorists, and how the cases were exposed and solved.

“Our goal is to bring you relevant, emerging trends in Triads Nationwide. National Triad is the vessel that you fill, for others to partake.” said Director Hutchison. The schedule invited participants to learn more about a diverse range of topics focusing on Triad’s mission of serving the senior community. Seminars were held on senior specific subjects. Mrs. Cantrell led the workshops with an innovative new program to collect and dispose of medications in concurrence with guidelines set by the DEA. The conference offered specific Elder Abuse issue topics; Federal Trade Commission resources; Healthcare Scams; Pandemic Preparedness; Community Partnerships to

Homeland Security; Protective Actions for Older Adults; Promoting Safety for People with Alzheimer’s and Dementia; ID Theft; Evacuation without the Crisis; Successful State Triads; Neighborhood Watch; AARP Programs; Bankers and Financial Exploitation; Older Adults Behind the Wheel; Preventing Prescription Drug Abuse; and a wrap up session with Triad Veterans.

Despite the current economic climate, attendance was solid at this year’s event. The Triad Conference drew individuals from 26 states. “The fact that many folks traveled here on their own time and at their own expense reveals not only how dedicated these people are, but is a reflection of the quality of training that Ed (Hutchison) has been able to put together year after year.” observed John Thompson while on a break from a class on H1N1 Preventive Measures. For information on the National Association of Triads, visit the National Association of Triads website at [www.nationaltriad.org](http://www.nationaltriad.org).

NATI has an ongoing partnership with the 911 Cell Phone Bank to provide emergency telephones to older adults and victims of crime. This partnership provides an income stream for local Triad programs as well as financial support for NATI. NATI also has a partnership with Cyalume Technologies to provide emergency lighting products to NSA members and Triads, while generating revenue to support the National Triad Program. ★