

Hope is a powerful human emotion. People have written and talked about hope for thousands of years. The Apostle Paul wrote about hope often in his letters to Christian congregations suffering through hardships and oppression, encouraging early believers to cling to the hope their faith provided. In Greek mythology, Pandora opens a box and releases upon mankind all the evils of the world, preserving only hope within the box to help humanity deal with our troubles. Hope motivates people to work, plan, and sacrifice. Hope serves as the inspiration for this column and a vision for the future.

On February 28th, two police officers and one paramedic were laid to rest following their murder at the hands of a suspect in Burnsville. Statewide, assaults against law enforcement officers are on the rise as crime continues to be an issue in our society. Like virtually all sectors of the job market, public safety agencies struggle to find people willing to take on the challenge of keeping their communities safe.

With these things in mind, where is hope? For me, hope is found in the fact that there are still people who are willing to meet the challenge of serving their community. I am privileged to work with these individuals daily. Whether these people have chosen careers in law enforcement, firefighting, EMS, or other public safety services, they are all remarkable individuals who answer a calling to make a difference in their community. In addition to those working in public safety, I have the privilege of working with a host of volunteer or charitable organizations whose members gather to do their part to better the community. Our area is truly blessed with an abundance of caring people who step forward daily to meet a community need. People across our communities work in service groups, volunteer in churches, give to charities, or step forward to help a friend or neighbor. To those who make a difference, thank you for all you do!

It is easy to look at a tragic situation, like the death of three first responders in Burnsville, and feel hope slip away. If you feel that way, I ask you consider this perspective. These three first responders went to work on February 18th knowing they could be called upon to give up their life to protect others. With this knowledge, these three first responders courageously made the choice to be a protector of their community. Every day, thousands of their brothers and sisters in public safety continue to make this same courageous choice. In these selfless acts, there is hope. Hope that each day and on every call, their community and the world is just a little bit better because of their work.

Amid all the negativity surrounding us every day, there remains hope that more people will take inspiration from the courage and sacrifice of first responders, from the help of good friends, from the compassion of caring volunteers, and from the service of faithful neighbors. There is hope that others will make the choice to be part of the solution for a better tomorrow. Our communities need people who are willing to step forward in service. Whether that service be joining the ranks of public safety agencies, volunteering in a service group, or being of service to someone on your block, our communities need people who are inspired to make a difference. For me, I intend to honor the sacrifice of those who have given their last full measure of devotion to their

community by running my race with passion to the end. I invite each of you to find your inspiration and join others in service by considering ways in which you may make a better tomorrow for your community.