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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE CITY OF LYONS, GA, POLICE DEPARTMENT IS GETTING AHEAD OF THE GAME IN ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISES



Lyons, GA Police Department hires a Social Worker to assist local law enforcement in Toombs County.

Recently the City of Lyons, GA partnered with Leigh-Ann White & Company and applied for and received a grant to fund two social workers for Toombs County. On Monday, December 5th, 2022, Wesley Walker, Lyons Police Chief, welcomed Ms. Shameeka Kent to the City of Lyons team. Ms. Kent navigated her way through a rigorous vetting process, including interviews with leaders from the Lyons Police Department, Vidalia Police Department, Toombs County Sheriff's Department, and other agencies connected to the mental health and addiction recovery community. Ms. Kent holds a prestigious position as one of the few Police Social Workers in Georgia. On her first day, Ms. Kent hit the ground running by meeting with Meadows Regional Hospital members and her counterpart in Vidalia, GA, Mrs. Jada Williams.

Ms. Kent's role as a police social worker will allow her to assist law enforcement in Toombs County when they respond to crises brought on by mental health diagnoses, substance abuse, or family crises. In addition, Ms. Kent and the law enforcement community in Toombs County will work together to seek out resources for those in need of help. The current mental health crisis is a beast facing many communities. The City of Lyons is proud to be at the forefront of seeking ways to tame this issue.

Ms. Kent earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Ashford University and a master's degree in Marriage & Family Therapy from Northcentral University. Before coming to the Lyons Police Department, she (had a lengthy career with several local County divisions of family and children services, including Toombs, Liberty, and Long. She also served as a Program Manager with the Georgia Department of Corrections. Ms. Kent expressed, "I can have a positive impact, influence, and improve the quality of life in Toombs County due to my God-given purpose of serving others and helping those in need." So, move over, Superman. We have a new Kent in town.

"This position is needed in our community as we struggle with issues outside the law enforcement scope. These issues often fall on the police officers' shoulders to sort out. These officers may not be equipped to follow up with those in our community who need encouragement and direction. The influence of a social worker may reduce the occurrences of domestic violence and substance abuse issues by offering a different vantage point on situations. This program will also assist our first responders and other medical teams within our community by improving the overall outlook of law enforcement," states Jason Hall, The City Manager for Lyons, Georgia.

"Having Social Workers involved with our local Law Enforcement agencies will put us ahead of the game. If successful, this program will improve the quality of life in our community. A person trained in this field can bring a sense of calm to an otherwise volatile situation. I believe their assistance to our law enforcement officers will be impactful. This is not a Co-Responder position. It is more like an investigator for mental health," explains Lyons Police Chief Wesley Walker