

'Dinkheller' explores life, death of S.C. police officer

By **RICHIE McHALE**
Special to the Star and Wave

scenario play out before their eyes.

"It's been used for years at the academy level as an example of how quickly things can go bad," said Sgt. Eric Workman of the Maryland State Police. "We actually show it more than once per academy period."

Workman and fellow Maryland trooper Sgt. Matthew Allen were two members of the crowd that convened Feb. 21 at the Wildwoods Convention Center for a viewing of a new documentary film titled "Dinkheller."

The film, directed by filmmaker and former Atlanta police officer Patrick Shaver, is part biography and part investigation into the events surrounding the incident that led to Dinkheller's death.

"I had seen Kyle Dinkheller's dashcam video when I was in the police academy, and it scared the crap out of me for lack of a better word," Shaver said. "It's one of those things that doesn't go away. You see it once, and it sticks with you."

In 2017, after finishing his first feature film titled "Officer Involved," Shaver went looking for a new project. The Dinkheller story came to mind, and he decided to try to make contact with Dinkheller's family. His attempts were successful, and the film began production shortly after.

"With this film, my goal is to show who he (Dinkheller) was as a human," Shaver said. "The name 'Dinkheller' strikes fear in the hearts of police officers. I want

them to watch this video and not be afraid of his name anymore."

The film tells Dinkheller's life story through interviews with members of his family, most notably his father and his daughter, and with several of Dinkheller's co-workers from the Laurens County Sheriff's Department. Through the interviews, viewers learn that Dinkheller was only 22 at the time of his death, and left behind a pregnant wife and an infant daughter. Dinkheller is described by all as a loving husband and father, a dedicated worker and a man who loved to fish.

As the film progresses, the focus turns from describing Dinkheller himself to digging deeper into the event that led to his death. In the dashcam footage, it appears that Dinkheller is hesitant to use force to control Brannan. There are several moments throughout the video where it appears Dinkheller would have been justified in using physical, mechanical or even deadly force to subdue Brannan, but he does not progress beyond giving verbal commands until it is too late.

The movie explores many theories as to why Dinkheller was so hesitant to use force in the encounter. Some would say that the stress caused him to freeze up. Others believe that Dinkheller had such a negative track record at work that he was afraid any show of unnecessary force would

cost him his job. In the film, these and several other theories are explored in further detail in an attempt to try to shed light on what truly happened that day.

"I want the rumors to be put to bed," Shaver said.

The Feb. 21 screening was hosted by Cape May County PBA Local 401. Local 401 President and State Delegate Joe Berg said the goal of the event was to bring the community and the officers that protect it together for the night.

"The PBA is a community-based organization, so I wanted to find something we could do that involved everyone," Berg said. "I wanted to emphasize the fact that this was not a police event, but a community event."

According to Berg, "Dinkheller" was not chosen solely for its entertainment value. It was also a prime candidate to grease the wheels of conversation between police and the public.

"Use-of-force conversa-

tions are always the most divisive," Berg said. "I figured this could be a great way to bridge the gap between officers and the community to have that conversation."

The Wildwood screening is only one of many stops Shaver will be making on his tour. The film has been received well by audiences so far, and has won awards for "Best Documentary Directing" at the Colorado International Film Festival and "Best South Carolina Film" at the South Carolina

Underground Film Festival. The next three stops will be in Missouri, Alabama and Montana on March 14, 15 and 25.

"Dinkheller" is currently available for DVD pre-order at dinkhellermovie.com, and will also be available on iTunes, Google Play and Amazon in the near future. Shaver's first film, "Officer Involved," is also available on all of the above-mentioned platforms and can be found at officerinvolvedproject.com.

WILDWOOD — When Kyle Dinkheller started his shift as a deputy for the Laurens County Sheriff's Department on Jan. 12, 1998, he most likely did not know it would be the final shift of his life. In fact, even as he initiated what would turn out to be his last traffic stop, he presumably still had no clue what was about to happen to him only moments later.

Even when Andrew Brannan, the driver of the vehicle Dinkheller stopped, exited his truck and began to dance wildly in the roadway, Dinkheller probably still would not have guessed that the encounter would end in death. When Brannan removed a loaded M1 carbine from his pickup truck and opened fire, Dinkheller may still not have believed that any of it was really happening. Unfortunately for the officer, it was all too real, and within three minutes he was lying wounded on the ground next to his patrol vehicle taking his final breaths.

The chilling video of this incident in South Carolina, which was captured by the dashcam of Dinkheller's patrol vehicle, is now known to police officers around the world as "The Dinkheller Video."

For many police officers in the United States, their first encounter with the video comes during their police academy training. Sitting in a dark room among a sea of other nervous recruits, they see the ultimate worst-case

Food pantry

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chase perishable food items such as milk, eggs, bread, yogurt, meat and lunchmeat. The food pantry was Manfre's first project on such a large scale. She has worked with adults and children with developmental disabilities.

Manfre said receiving the 5th District award was overwhelming.

"I really just feel like it says a lot about what we did here, and to be able to represent these spouses here is just unbelievable," she said. "It really left me speechless."

She will travel to Washington, D.C., to accept her award in early May. Manfre's husband is being transferred in May to St. Louis, Mo., where he will serve as command senior chief.

Manfre is finishing a year-long internship and is one year away from earning a master's degree in social work. She will begin her clinical year working one-on-one with clients. She said her ultimate goal is social work with the Department of Veterans Affairs or a large military installation.

"No matter what I do, I want to work with military families," she said.

Manfre placed a quote on her Facebook page last week that may sum up her philosophy: "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend." — Melody Beattie

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