



# CMPD Officer's Actions and Compassion Calm Distressed Teen

**Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Officer Tim Purdy used Mental Health First Aid skills in a photo (right) that went viral. According to the [CMPD Facebook page](#), this picture was shared and viewed more than 43 million people within a few days.**

**In a story that made local and [national news](#), 22 year law enforcement veteran Officer Tim Purdy is a self-described "people person," who embodied the spirit of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) when he approached local high school student Jeremiah in May 2016. Officer Purdy was dispatched, after Jeremiah's mother called 911 to report her 18 year old son, who is diagnosed with autism, missing and potentially suicidal. Although two officers were already on the scene, Officer Purdy was able to engage Jeremiah in conversation by first kneeling, then sitting down with him "to get on his level." Officer Purdy said, "I just paid attention to him and was calm and reassuring. Mental Health First Aid helped me with that. . .I went into the training with an open mind and I took away a greater awareness of mental health issues and what others might be going through." He further talked about the resources he gained for his "Batman belt" and spoke highly of the support he received from MHA staff after the December 2015 training when he sought additional advice to help a loved one. He added, "I think it's a great idea to take the class."**



When MHA's certified [Mental Health First Aid](#) instructors are not delivering the 8-hour evidence-based course to CMPD and Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Officers and other groups, they are offering free monthly opportunities for the general public. Many of our 2015-2016 trainings were co-sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and in 2016-2017 will be sponsored by the Mecklenburg County ABC Board. Register for the Adult or Youth versions on our website at [www.mhacentralcarolinas.org](http://www.mhacentralcarolinas.org).



*Officer Purdy and Jeremiah reunited after their May meeting and plan to keep in touch.*

## Recognizing Persons with Autism

- May be non-verbal; may communicate with sign language
- May not respond to "stop" command; may run or move away when approached
- May toe walk, have pigeon-toed gait or running style
- May appear as high on drugs, drunk or having a psychotic episode
- May react to sudden change in routine of sensory input with escalation of repetitive behavior
- May not recognize danger or hurt; may possess weak help-seeking skills
- May be poor listeners; lack eye contact

*Resource provided during MHFA training from Autism Speaks for Law Enforcement.*