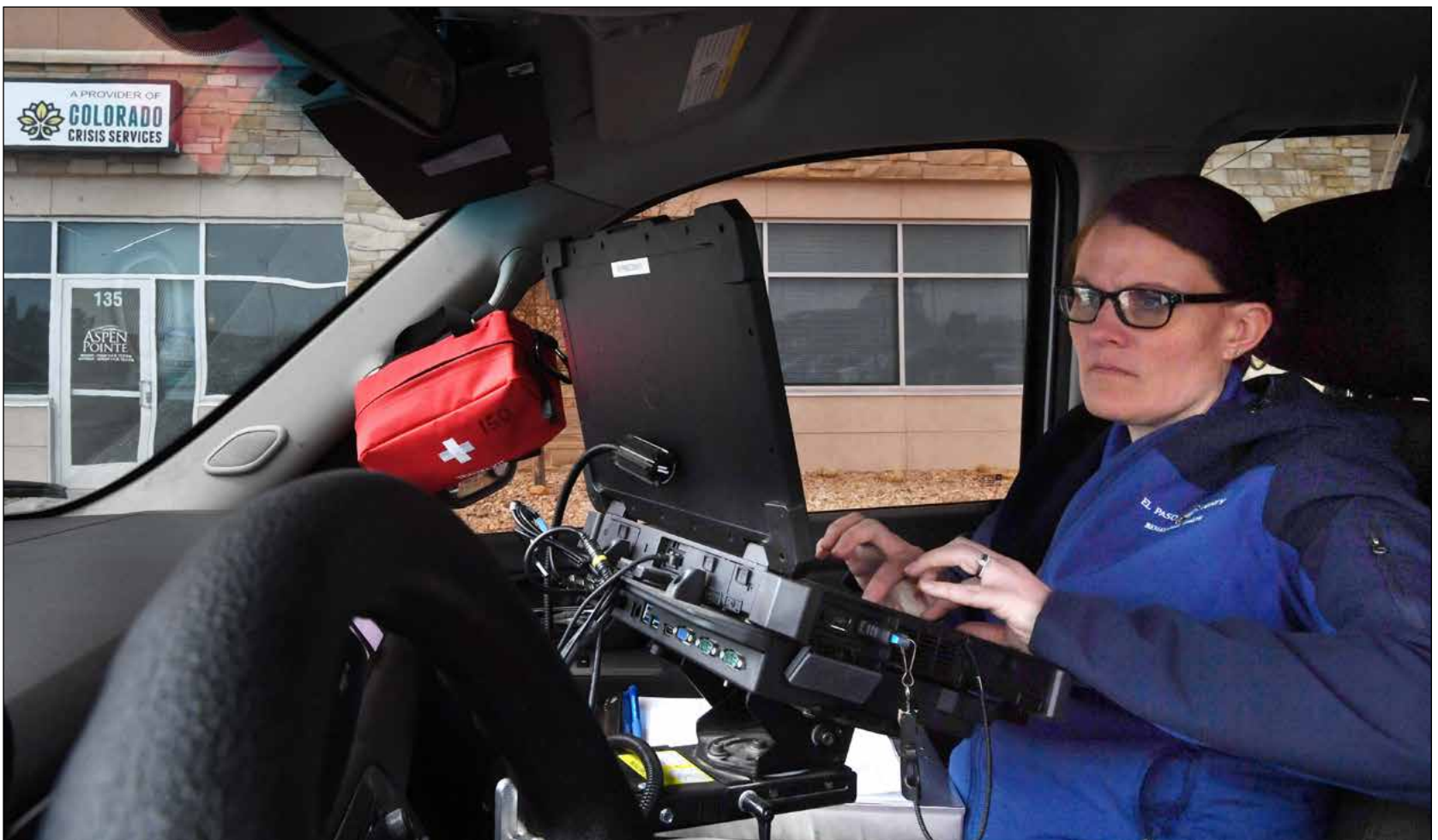


## Responders on front lines

In a state notorious for its fractured approach to mental health care, emergency personnel must increasingly shoulder the load.



JERILEE BENNETT, THE GAZETTE

Robin Schawe, a civilian therapist from UHealth Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs, is part of a Behavioral Health Connect Team with El Paso County sheriff's Deputy John Hammond. Schawe works on a computer after accompanying a woman in crisis to a center run by Aspen-Pointe, a Colorado Springs nonprofit health care provider.

### PART 4

BY LANCE BENZEL • THE GAZETTE



**P**atrol cars sit at a tire store in the El Paso County community of Falcon as a woman sobs in the parking lot, her dog tugging at its leash. • A life is at risk — hers — and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office wants to hear her terms in their bid to save it. • A deputy and his partner drop normal protocol and agree to follow her on an errand to the bank, provided their next stop is the AspenPointe Crisis Center to discuss the suicidal threats that led to this weaponless standoff. • "You're doing great, sweetie," sheriff's clinician Robin Schawe tells the woman by cellphone from an idling SUV, wrapping up negotiations. "I'm proud of you. Thank you for letting us help you." • Across Colorado, a state notorious for its fractured approach to mental health care, police and first responders often are left to shoulder the load.

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Remembering a veteran editor and Colorado Politics' Denver columnist. **Page 3**