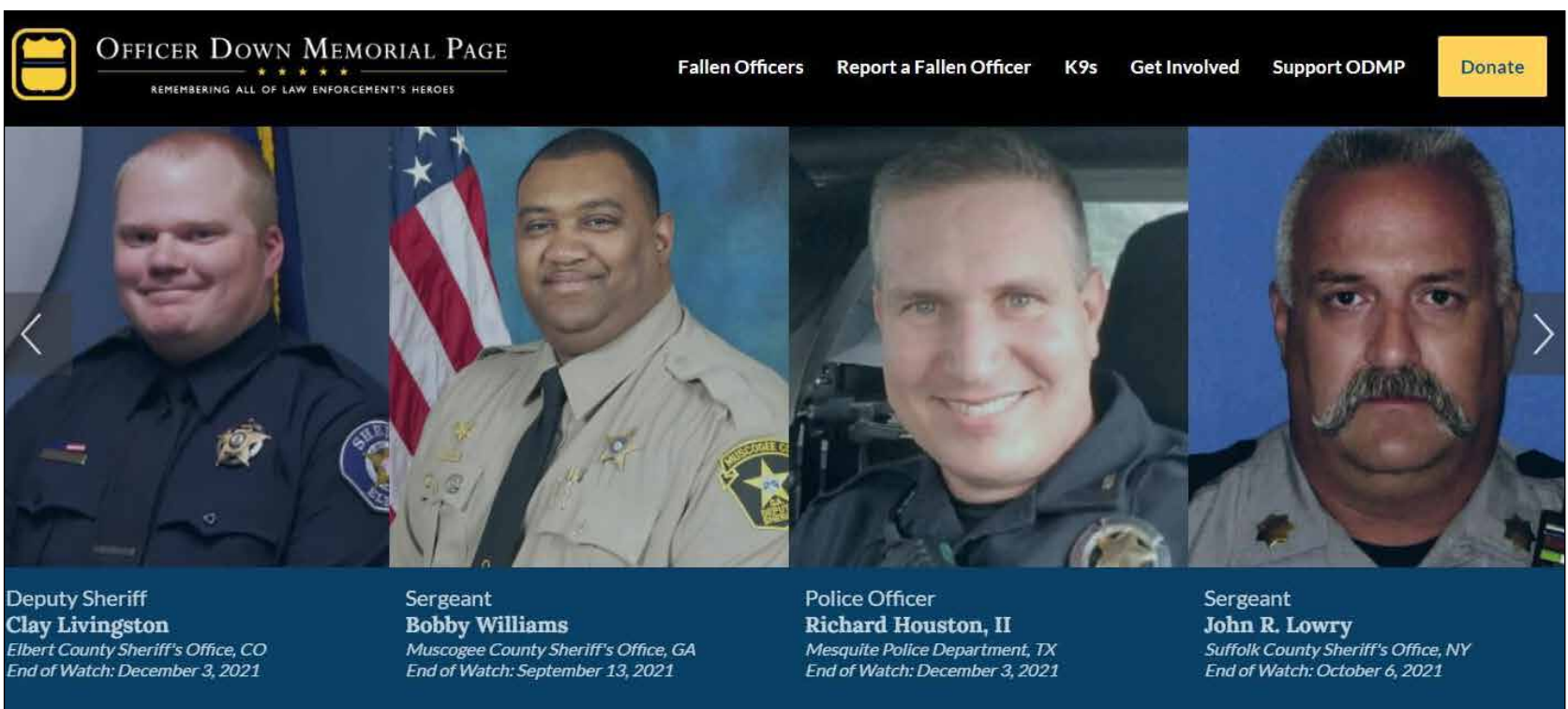


'COVID IS ENDEMIC'

Elbert County joins a club no one should, in which public servants are dying



COURTESY OMDP.ORG

Elbert County Deputy Sheriff Clay Livingston's picture is on the Officer Down Memorial Page. Livingston, 30, died from COVID on Dec. 3.

BY MARIANNE GOODLAND
marianne.goodland@coloradopolitics.com
AND LUIGE DEL PUERTO
luige.delpuerto@coloradopolitics.com

As COVID-19 raged in Elbert County, Deputy Clay Livingston responded to an emergency call last month.

The call would be among his last. Several days later, Livingston died of COVID-19, the virus that has now claimed more lives of law enforcement officers, both in Colorado and nationwide, than gun violence.

And in this rural county, death's grip has extended to other public officials. Between Nov. 24 and Dec. 3, three public servants lost their lives to the virus. In addition to Livingston, Deputy Coroner William Graeff, 73, died on Nov. 24 and Elizabeth Town Council Trustee Bret Wade, 47, passed away on Nov. 28.

Multiple sources said Livingston had responded to a call from Graeff's home, although the county sheriff could not say how Livingston contracted COVID.

Elbert County has become a microcosm of rural regions that are resisting calls for vaccinations and are getting hammered by cases. At only a 52.1% vaccination rate for one dose, Elbert's is ninth-lowest in the state. As of Dec. 14, the county's two-week average COVID positivity rate stands at 11.04%, while the one-week average positivity is 9.45%. The statewide average, in comparison, stands at 7.64%.

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BUY AND DRY?

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