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INSIDE THE PBA

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COVER PHOTO BY GASTON DE CARDENAS



The new Heat features a special section commemorating the 27th Annual South Florida PBA Law Enforcement Awards. With the pandemic postponing the annual PBA Gala when the awards are presented, this showcase celebrates the outstanding efforts and extraordinary responses of members from the past year.

THIS 13-PAGE SPECIAL SECTION BEGINS ON PAGE 17



Main Number: 561-757-0464 Advertising: 201-880-7288 Editorial: 201-370-4082 Distribution: 201-880-7288 Email: cops@PBAHeatMagazine.com

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VOLUME 38, NO. 7

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MEMBERS ONLY SECTION

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Stories spotlighting the achievements of South Florida PBA members, including milestones on the job and the work they do to give back to their communities. Featured in this issue:





THE PRES SAYS

We are in tough times



Tumultuous times. Unprecedented times. Defining times. What better time to bring a new look and a new format to *The Heat*? We have given our 37-year-old publication a makeover to provide South Florida PBA members with more news and information, as well as a way to chronicle the great work you all continue to do.

More about that later. We have pressing matters needing comment and perspective, and even some words of encouragement.

Let me start right there. I know it feels demoraliz

STEADMAN STAHL I know it feels demoralizing right now, but I believe that with every bad situation, good will come out of it. We're already starting to see an uptick from the people who support the police. More and more people are coming up to us, thanking us for our service. They are not viewing us as the enemy as much as the news media would like us to think.

There's a small group of agitators looking to cause havoc, and that's what you're reading about or seeing on social media. Try to avoid all that. In fact, after you finish reading this magazine, put all media away for a while.

What we have been seeing is like watching an episode of *The Jerry Springer Show*. If you believe Jerry reflects what the world is really like, you are more attuned to reality shows than reality. It's always that small segment of the agitators who seem to get the most attention.

They are the ones calling for defunding the police department. What they fail to understand is that defunding the police is only going to benefit one aspect of the community: the bad guys.

They are the ones who don't know the reality of being a police officer, that we are now asked to do more than ever. We have to go to domestic violence calls and assess in five minutes how to help a 30-year relationship that has fallen apart. Because of how widespread mental illness has become in this country, we have to train officers to quickly identify if somebody is mentally unstable, on drugs or just an evil person.

Our members have been very active in their communities, which is why I think we haven't seen in South Florida what you have seen in other parts of the country. I believe we have a system that is based on dialogue with our leaders and seems to be working. The key for me is communication. We need to talk about what's working and what is not working and be willing to change the things that are not working. Defunding the police should never be an option.

You have heard some elected officials advocate standardized training for law enforcement. They should look at what has been taught here in Miami. Instead of taking money away, we should be investing more, and not just in equipment. Here in Miami, we are dealing with things we were never trained for at the academy. We had that election debacle a few years ago when we had to take over running the election. We had that stray animal debacle that the police department took over and straightened out.

I also think that when citizens get upset with government, police officers are the first ones to catch the blame. People who are upset about the laws should not blame law enforcement. It's the legislators who need to change the laws.

All defunding will do is add to the stress of our jobs and with all the anti-police rhetoric around the country, it's going to become even more difficult to get people to want to become police officers. We're already seeing people wanting to leave the profession. We're already getting calls from members asking, "I've got 19 years on. Can I retire right now?"

That's only going to benefit one aspect of the community: the bad guys.

We've been working with our local elected officials to get their support amid these tumultuous, unprecedented and defining times. We have some who unequivocally stand with police officers. I have spoken to Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody. She assured me that we have her support and she has our backs.

As you will read beginning on page 17 of the new *Heat*, we continue to do our jobs with unprecedented success. Our special section presenting our Officer Awards is only the tip of the iceberg. If we had more pages, we could honor even more officers doing amazing work. These are the best of the best going after the worst of the worst.

To properly honor our members not just this month, but every month, we needed to take our publication to the next level. We have partnered with Krurapp Communications, Inc., which publishes magazines for PBAs across the country. We hope you will find that Krurapp is among the best of the best in helping us continue to recognize our officers, our dispatchers, our 9-1-1 call-takers and other members for work they do that is the best I've ever had the opportunity to experience. Stay safe!

Steadman Stahl, President steadman@sflpba.org



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To the Fourth and looking forward



JOHN A. JENKINS EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT Happy Fourth of July, everyone. I hope everyone is enjoying summertime and starting to get back to some normalcy. The past few months at times appeared to be moving slowly, but actually went by rather fast in my opinion. If you went out, you saw record numbers of people walking, running and biking in your neighborhood. Even children, when done with their distance learning assignments, wanted outside instead of being holed up in front of the television or video gaming systems. Hoping this is a thing of the past and moving forward, this will be like having the flu or a common cold. By the way,

how do you like the new look of *The Heat*? Time for a change, and the new look is nice.

Although this pandemic forced us to make the harsh decision to cancel the 27th Annual PBA Law Enforcement Awards Gala, it was definitely the correct decision based on all the restrictions and executive orders. This event's planning took place way before the pandemic struck, and I want to thank everyone in the office who assisted with planning. Sorry we didn't get to see the event come to fruition, but I promise next year will be even bigger. I also want to thank those sponsors that allocated their sponsorships to the Love Fund, Inc. This was very noble of you and truly represents your commitment to law enforcement, our organization and our members. To the worthy honorees and winning recipients for 2019, I say congratulations and thank you for your commitment to service and the communities you serve.

Stay safe, everyone, and if you have any issues, concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to email me at jenkins@ sflpba.org or call me at 305-593-0044.



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Policing in the pandemic



Fourth of July is here, and it is one of our most important national holidays. The Fourth of July is the anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Our founding fathers voted to declare independence for the 13 colonies from England. This was the first step on a long road that led to the creation of the United States of America. Our forefathers' numerous sacrifices have made the USA the greatest country in the world. Today, we are so divided, and some take our freedom for granted. For this Fourth of July, let's unite and celebrate our free-

dom together, as Americans.

One of the few benefits of policing in the pandemic is that in most of our members' work areas, there has been less crime, traffic issues and calls for service. Before the pandemic, Miami was one of the country's top murder capitals. Seven weeks into the pandemic, we saw no murders for the first time since 1957. No open bars means there are fewer DUIs, fights and crashes, and since people are home more, burglaries are down also. Domestics have increased, because everyone is quarantined at home together.

Police departments nationwide are facing a new reality in the era of COVID-19. As familiar categories of crime go down, officers are being asked to handle new and unfamiliar assignments. For example, the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) officers are being tasked with enforcing social distancing orders, closing nonessential businesses like restaurants, café windows and construction sites, and kicking people out of parks. From April 12 through May 12, the MDPD made more than 69,000 business contacts, noting 332 non-compliance violations; and the Marine Patrol Unit issued more than 4,000 warnings related to the emergency order.

MDPD was better prepared than most and assisted several smaller departments with safety equipment when the pandemic hit Miami-Dade County. MDPD established a command post on March 13, and a "police officer hotline" on March 16. This was managed by the Department Safety Officer, DSO, for COVID-19 questions. I would like to thank Director Ramirez and his command staff for working with the PBA during these trying times. Remember, we did not always have this relationship. Director Ramirez has conducted daily conference calls with his district and bureau command staff for the first two months, starting on March 16. In these calls, he discussed all concerns and ensured that the officers have what they need to complete the job effectively, efficiently and safely. I have met with Assistant Director Hanlon every week since the start of the pandemic, and I can tell you that he and his staff have worked very long hours, seven days a week. Remember, this was a first - there were no procedures to follow for what they were facing, and now they are working hard on the reopening phases. I also have been in contact with several department heads, and they are working long days that turned

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



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At the Monroe County checkpoint with Sheriff Rick Ramsay.



At the Correction Officer Appreciation Lunch, Director Junior and his command staff, Lieutenant Jermaine Lawson and South Florida PBA Vice President David Greenwell.

Workers' comp and safety in changing times



If you caught COVID-19 from the novel coronavirus, you can claim workers' compensation for lost wages and medical bills. Workers' compensation is insurance that pays for an injured worker's medical bills and some of their lost wages as they recuperate. Most states require employers to pay into a fund that benefits employees who are injured on the job.

"Thank you" goes out to Florida's Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis for issuing a directive requiring that workers' compensation coverage be provided to public servants on the front lines

of the COVID-19 crisis. This directive reminds all regulated entities that Florida law requires an employer to provide workers' compensation coverage. This coverage must go into effect if the employee suffers a compensable injury arising from work performed in the course and scope of employment. First responders, health care workers, correctional officers and others who contract COVID-19 due to work-related exposure would be eligible for workers' compensation benefits under Florida law.

A great number of police and correctional leaders have been watching their ranks get sick as the number of COVID-19 cases has increased around the U.S. The growing tally raises questions about how laws can and should be enforced during the pandemic, and about how agencies will hold up as the virus spreads. Anticipating shortages, police academies are accelerating coursework to provide reinforcements. Although, background investigations for hiring are stagnant due to a part of their work being in the field to properly conduct research on a candidate to replenish the attrition and retirements.

Masks, gloves and high volumes of hand sanitizer are being distributed. Roll call and staff meetings are happening outside, over the phone and even online. You can wipe out an entire platoon of officers if you don't know whether someone really tested positive. Being in law enforcement, we are used to risks, as the are part of the job. However, at a time when Americans are being advised to stay six feet from each other to combat a virus that can live on surfaces for days, the perils and anxieties are new. I know that this job is service-oriented, but I hope all agencies take this opportunity to look at the type of calls for service that we respond to and make some changes to their respective protocols. For example, if a citizen needs a report, in many circumstances (non-criminal), they should be forced to complete it online or respond to a station and complete it at a self-service kiosk.

As the world changes, we as law enforcement officers need to assimilate to the changing times. Our first and main priority is to always keep our brothers and sisters in law enforcement safe. Contact me at ish@sflpba.org or at 305-593-0044.

GREENWELL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

into long weeks to ensure that their officers had ample safety equipment and that the health and well-being of their officers is prioritized.

Most proactive policing has come to a halt in order to protect both our members on the street and our great correctional officers in the jails. Law enforcement must now apply the public health model of "do no harm" in deploying officers for traffic enforcement and other types of discretionary enforcement activities. Making an arrest or traffic stop is now a last resort for serious offenses.

From day one of this pandemic, the PBA's top priority has been and is always officer safety, ensuring that our members have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that their families are safe. In a few cases, some departments did not have PPE, and through a contact that Sergeant Victor Milian provided me, we were able to get the badly needed equipment. I would like to thank Andres Betancourt, President of Saferite Solutions in Doral, for getting safety equipment, including N95 masks, gloves, eye protection, hand sanitizer and biohazard suits for our officers when no one else had these high-demand items.

In closing, please continue to take all safety precautions, wear your masks, use hand sanitizer often, do not touch your face and, if you're elderly or have health risks, use additional preventive recommendations. This is our new "norm."

As always, stay safe, wait for your backup and know that no one else does as much to protect your rights, your pay and your benefits as the PBA. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 305-593-0044 or greenwell@sflpba.org.

COVID-19 scheduling and legislation updates



During my visit to the facilities during Correctional Officers' Week in May, I had the opportunity to meet and speak with many of our members. Many of the members were curious to know what the PBA was doing to get additional benefits for them because of the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

LIEUTENANT JERMAINE LAWSON

Well, I am going to try my very best to answer some of these questions. Just to let you know, we were scheduled to negotiate the reopener for COLAs on April 20, with the goal to increase the initial 1 percent that other unions were getting by

invoking the "me to" clause.

However, due to the outbreak caused by the pandemic, the hearing was postponed until further notice. It is still our goal to push for an additional 1 percent increase for your additional risk undertaken by working through the pandemic, which we believe that the county can be reimbursed for by the federal government.

Thus far, the County Commission has been supportive of this, but as with most things, the devil is in the details. Importantly, in an effort to pave the way for additional funds for the pandemic risk you have been forced to undertake, we are working on new legislation at the national level to get those additional benefits (pandemic raises) for our members.

Once this pandemic became a national crisis, the PBA began a series of conversations with members of Congress, coun-



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Miami-Dade County Corrections Employee of the Month From left, Lieutenant C. Williams, Sergeant K. Howell-Chung, Lieutenant S. Menard, Corrections Employee of the Month Corporal C. Carter, Captain A. Yeber and Lieutenant R. Shaw.

ty commissioners and other elected officials, with the aim of lobbying for additional increases. We also are working closely with the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) to push for additional hazardous pay for the term of the state of emergency. The PBA will continue to disseminate information via email, the PBA website and other social media platforms as new information becomes available.

In the meantime, please know that we stand with you as we all work together to get through this pandemic, and not a minute goes by that we are not working toward making going to work safer, and making sure that you are properly compensated for your regular duties during this period of additional risk.



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An attorney's perspective on the Officer of the Year



It is unfortunate that we are unable to pay tribute to the winners and honorees in this year's Officer of the Year Awards Gala. Personally, it is my favorite event of the year, where those on the front lines, along with elected officials and honored guests, intermingle in a positive setting. We look forward to next year's Gala.

ANDREW AXELRAD GENERAL COUNSEL

In the meantime, I wanted to take the opportunity to use the event giving rise to this year's Officer of the Year to analyze the issues involved from an attorney's perspective, to illustrate that even where the officer does everything right – which Officer Gordon Hirsch surely did – there is

still the need for an attorney to respond, in order to represent the officer involved. In the case of Officer Hirsch – I'll call him Gordie from now on – I was the designated on-call attorney at the time of the shooting, so I personally responded to the scene and met with Gordie and many of the hierarchy of the Miami-Dade Police Department, including then-Director Juan Perez.

If you are involved in such an event, the first thing you need



to do is contact the PBA. No matter what time of day or night, we are on-call to assist. While the PBA is on the shift commander's notification list, we are pretty far down on that list. We generally get that official notification well after we are first notified by the shooting officer or their sergeant or other colleague. We generally get the notification quickly enough from on-scene personnel that we arrive prior to the Homicide Unit, FDLE or Crime Scene.

Upon notification of Gordie's shooting, I immediately called him while making my way to the scene. When you are involved in an event such as a shooting, you are understandably stressed. In the case of Gordie's shooting, it involved a husband stabbing his wife to death and then going after their kids. As you can imagine, there was quite a bit of blood on the scene, and not much time for Gordie to react. I was impressed with how he was handling the stress, even though it was clearly at a high level.

I find that speaking to an officer right away helps to immediately calm the officer down, as they are aware that "the PBA cavalry is on the way." Upon arriving at the scene, I immediately met with Gordie to understand what his first thoughts and recollections were of the incident. You must wait until an attorney arrives to discuss your actions when involved in a major event like a shooting. You must not discuss what happened with a representative, and certainly not a supervisor, as you do not have attorney/client privilege with anyone other than an attorney.

After speaking to Gordie, I met with several members of the command staff to get an appraisal of the scene. While giving "proffers," which are statements generally from an attorney regarding what occurred so that the shooting officer does not have to provide the statement, are generally not conducted any longer due to potential issues of waiver of the attorney/ client privilege, there are times that, in order to better conduct the investigation, the attorney may be able to provide certain details. These details, while perhaps not substantive, aid greatly in the investigation. This is especially true if there were no witnesses or video. The goal is always to best represent the officer involved, so there is no hard-and-fast rule regarding proffers, although with witnesses and videos, such as body cameras, proffers are increasingly rare.

In Gordie's case, the shooting was very clearly justified, and his quick assessment of the scene and his actions most assuredly prevented the murder of the husband's two children. However, whenever deadly force is used, a criminal investigation is opened to ensure that the shooting officer's or officers' actions were justified, furthering the necessity for an attorney to respond and be involved from the beginning.

In the end, Gordie did absolutely everything right, and while the criminal investigation is still pending – not to worry, they often take years to formally close – the situation and Gordie's actions were such that he is abundantly deserving of being named the 2019 PBA Officer of the Year.

Congratulations, Gordie. Great work!





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Legislative session ends with some pros and cons for PBA members

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

More evidence of the epitaph, punch line or mantra resulting from these unprecedented times came from the enigmatic conclusion to the Florida State Legislature 2020 session.

"We were having a pretty good year until the virus hit," Florida PBA Executive Director Matt Puckett observed.

Seems like we've heard that a lot lately.

The state had built up more than \$4 billion in its "rainy day" fund with a surplus of more than \$260 million, much of it in reserve for hurricane season. And the legislative session was in the process of addressing some issues that would improve life on the job for many law enforcement and corrections officers throughout the state.

"It was a really strange ending to what really became a strange session," Puckett added. "We just don't know what the damage is going to look like."

Even though Governor DeSantis lifted the Safer at Home order for all but the most populous areas of the state – which includes Miami-Dade along with Broward and Palm Beach – on May 4, the recovery prognosis is uncertain. A financially healthy Florida depends very much on tourism coming back, and nobody knows what that will look like. With its attractions and vacation spots, Florida's most reliable source of revenue is not set up for social distancing.

Chuck the speculation, though. Let's focus on what we know and don't know about the legislative action that most directly affects PBA members.

We know that money is the root of all questions, and the pandemic has only intensified interrogation about the state budget. Nearing the end of the session, the budget had been earmarked to include raises for state law enforcement, corrections and probation officers.

So will the pandemic funding needs sap the budget?

"The pay raises were announced," Puckett reported. "The legislature held tight to the pledge to reward all employees with an across-the-board raise. Our fear has been a diversion of the pay raise toward funding the COVID-19 response. That hasn't happened. Hopefully, the governor has the frame of mind to keep that up."

The upside of the legislative session for law enforcement turned out to be a combined bill addressing the Peer to Peer legislation that had been festering in both the House and the Senate and a necessary upgrade to the Law Enforcement Officers and Correctional Officers Bill of Rights. The combined bill became a life raft after both chambers balked at the Peer to Peer legislation going into the last weeks of the session.

But the bill that was sent off to the governor created the following:

• A new peer support system for first responders within agencies to combat the growing epidemic of suicides. A peer support system implemented in agencies across the countries has been shown to save lives.

• Adding part-time officers into the Law Enforcement Officers and Correctional Officers Bill of Rights. It also specifies that complaints must be investigated within 180 days of receipt regardless of origin (internal or external), and the small agencies of 35 or less can seek an outside agency to conduct an investigation.

The bill of rights upgrades were necessary and overdue. And the legislature didn't seem to take any issue with that.

But Peer to Peer legislation might not go as far as law enforcement officers currently need. It sets up a framework but does not appear to address all the issues that will lead to widespread use.

"I think it's something that's going to be a work in progress," Puckett commented. "There's a lot of distrust in management and the legislature. We don't think it will be widely utilized until we make wholesale changes that allow real confidentiality."

To move toward a better peer system, the legislature created the First Responders Suicide Deterrence Task Force within the Department of Children and Families' Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention. The task force is made up of representatives from the Florida Professional Firefighters, the Florida PBA, the Florida FOP, the Florida Sheriffs Association, the Florida Police Chiefs Association, and the Florida Fire Chiefs Association.

The mission for the task force will be to identify or develop training programs and materials to better enable first responders to cope with life and work stress and foster an organizational culture that supports first responders. The task force, which will work for three years, reported its findings and recommendations on preventing suicide to the governor and legislature each July 1. Senior Vice President Mick McHale, the Southwest Florida Chapter president, will represent the Florida PBA on the task force.

"It's a step in the right direction; that's why the task force is so important," Puckett continued. "Hopefully, some good recommendations will come out of this. There have already been discussions about trying to create a law enforcement and corrections only mental health campus in the state. That's the ultimate goal."

The next task at hand is to get ready for the next legislative session. There's a positive perspective on the horizon because of the leadership. Incoming Speaker of the House Chris Sprowls has been a longtime law enforcement advocate whose father was a PBA member. And Puckett noted that incoming Senate President Wilton Simpson also has shown a real love for law enforcement during his career.

All allies will be needed, as the 2021 session will face budget challenges not seen in nearly 10 years. And whenever a budget challenge looms, public workers worry that one of the first line items to become a target will be pension funding.

So the PBA is getting ready for that challenge.

"We will need to be more proactive and have a good game plan," Puckett submitted. "When it comes to what can be done, we have a lot of good ideas. We will sit down with the incoming leadership and find some common ground. We might have to be super-innovative."

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Nobody does it better

Gordon Hirsch's award-winning response to stop a man coming at him with a knife exemplifies how South Florida officers are the best of the best

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

May 1, 2019, began with the ritual Miami-Dade Police Officer Gordon Hirsch has practiced to strive for consummate policing. He prayed for the strength to do the job the way it best serves the department and the community, and to get home safe.

And then came the first call of the day, an emergency domestic dispute. A young female reported that her father was stabbing her mother in the neck.

Hirsch arrived at the house to find an eerie quiet. He knocked on the door and didn't get any response. He confirmed the address with dispatch. He knocked again.

"Two kids came to the door and they were splashed with blood," Hirsch confided.

Hirsch had responded to an incident that personified how to go about the job.

"You hope for the best and ready for the worst," he added.

His heroics that morning ended a deadly threat,

saved two kids and thwarted

who knows how much more residual carnage. His heroics have been honored by the South Florida PBA as its 2019 Officer of the Year.

Hirsch has earned such distinction not just for what he did, but how he does it every day. And who he is: a testament to law enforcement, infusing life, hope, breath and protecting and serving into everybody he touches.

He is a consummate professional who sweats the job so much that he has to drink a gallon of water each day. But that dedication truly defines Officer of the Year.

"You approach the day to be ready, to be alert, to stay focused," explained Hirsch, who has 18 years on with Mi-

Gordon Hirsch Miami-Dade Police Department Officer of the Year

ami-Dade, all in patrol. "When I go to a call, I try to resolve the situation the best I can. I try to treat everybody with a liberal amount of respect and a liberal amount of discretion. I always try and treat everybody with as much respect as is warranted, based on their actions."

Sweat equity

The images of Hirsch displayed on the cover of this magazine and here reveal important details about the man and the police officer. Gaston De Cardenas, the forensic photographer for the Miami-Dade Police Department, had Hirsch into his studio for a photo session and commented about the challenge of creating a great image, because Hirsch couldn't stop sweating.

The thousand words behind that picture would illuminate just uncomfortable how Hirsch is in the limelight. "Hero" doesn't come

through in these images, because that's the last word he would ever want used to describe him. "Grunt" would be more comfortable, because he thrives on being in the foxhole, doing the frontline work the department so much needs.

And Hirsch is much more comfortable as just a regular guy.

"Everybody who knows me, knows I have to carry a little towel around with me. My buddies that I hunt with joke about how I sweat in 28-degree weather eating ice cream," he quipped. "I like my Class B and modified uniform. I like sitting in my truck with the air conditioning blowing, smoking a cigar."

Not surprisingly, Hirsch loves working patrol. This past Feb-

The 27th Annual South Florida PBA Law Enforcement Awards

ruary, he transferred to the MDPD Agricultural Patrol Section after spending all of his career on the road. With agricultural patrol, he covers 400 miles of farms, ranches and the like.

Clearly, there are no boundaries to the lengths he will go for the job. Inspiration for his dedication most likely comes from what made Hirsch want to become a law enforcer. He recalls always having positive encounters with the police from the time he was a kid, and the prospect of helping people always appealed to him.

"I always had a lot of respect for the police," he noted. "I never liked bullies. I was always protecting people. That's just my thing."

Perhaps another noteworthy attribute to the photos De Cardenas shot is how straight Hirsch is standing. He asserts that patrol is the backbone of the department in responding to the more than 500,000 calls for service received each year. He loves how there is no such thing as a routine day, how important it is to be prepared for the next domestic or burglary turning into something bigger.

"One minute you are fighting a guy who is beating his wife and sending him to jail and another you are settling a dispute between two people arguing over a garbage can in the front yard," Hirsch informed. "That's the professional side of being a cop. You have to be able to shift gears so many times during the course of your shift. You have to go from zero to 100 and 100 to zero so many times during the day."

The response

The morning of May 1, 2019, accelerated to 100 as soon as the kids answered the door. Hirsch asked the location of their mother and father. The 20-year-old daughter pointed to the master bedroom, where her mother was lying on the floor. The 13-year-old boy indicated that his father had run out the back door.

Hirsch went to check on the status of the mother and suddenly heard the daughter scream, "There he is." He was trying to escape through a gate in the backyard, but it was locked, so he headed back into the house.

"He was armed with a large cutting knife," Hirsch recounted. "I kept the kids behind me and gave him verbal commands to drop the knife. He refused and he came at me."

Hirsch had to use deadly force to end the threat.

But there was no time to dwell on that just yet. He called Miami-Dade Fire Rescue and for backup. During the next six minutes, Hirsch scrambled to render aid to the mother. He retrieved his AED from his patrol car, put on gloves and tried to revive her. When he put his fingers on her throat to check for a pulse, he realized her head was almost completely severed and she appeared to be deceased.

He also performed CPR on the father, but could not revive him. Fire rescue arrived and pronounced both the mother and father deceased.

Shortly thereafter, mixed emotions set in. Hirsch realized that all officers hope they can make it through their careers without ever having to harm an individual. But he ended a threat, and might have saved the lives of the two children and more.

"To this day, I still think about the children. I still pray for them," Hirsch divulged. "Think about it? They lost both their parents on the same day. I've been able to stay in touch with the victims' advocate who handled their case. They are both doing pretty well, from what I understand."

He is also grateful for the support he has received in recovering from this trauma. MDPD psych services showed up on the scene to debrief, and he said spending time with the department chaplain helped bring him a lot of peace.

"The PBA has also been great looking out for me," Hirsch added. "(Vice President) David Greenwell checks on me a couple times a week. (President) Steadman (Stahl) also checks on me. It's a bit of a Catch-22. You get the recognition for something you hope you never have to do. But the response from my peers is a little embarrassing and definitely humbling."

He heard from his peers who were listening to the incident on the radio as it was happening that Hirsch sounded like he did when they trained on similar scenarios so many times. Perhaps this lends even more insight into Hirsch.

He served as a field training officer for 10 years. That appears to be an attribute he still takes out on the job every day, and probably what saved the day during this response.

"The training we receive annually, plus all the extra training, will enable you to perform like you train if you take it seriously," he revealed. "And it did."



Uncommon Valor

City of Doral officers team up to respond to active shooter

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

The sound of gunfire and not knowing where it's coming from. Reports of somebody fleeing the scene, somebody who could be the shooter. People screaming, "They're shooting, they're shooting," and getting bystanders to a secure spot. A bloody victim. A blood trail. Bullet casings on the floor. Moving up a stairwell and not knowing if the shooter is lurking around the next corner. The possibility of a gunfight. Not knowing how many shooters or victims.

On July 13, 2019, a myriad of evidence emphasizing that law enforcement officers will stand up and do what nobody else will – or what nobody else can – confronted City of Doral Officers Johnny Beautelus, Raaju Siddo and Erick Leon. They arrived in separate cars at a large apartment complex following reports of a fight taking place and multiple shots fired. They assumed tactical positions just like they had been trained and moved forward, knowing this is what they signed up for.

"I'm thinking, 'It's about to be real,'" Beautelus recalled.

At this point, when there's no turning back, your mind is doing 100 mph, when you don't have time to think and you can only react to what is in front of you, police officers define valor and bravery. As they entered the building, residents told them the shots had come from the second floor. So Doral's finest moved forward, facing the worst the job has to offer.

"We were in the second hallway, and I'm thinking, 'This is a really tight space. At any point, a person could have come out,'" Leon described. "There's no cover, so we're just pushing forward and hoping for the best. If that person would have come out, it would have been an ugly fight."

Working with limited information beyond shots fired, that there were two males and that one male fled the scene, the trio began the ascension up two flights of the stairwell. Siddo had the



From left, Doral Officers Erick Leon, Raaju Siddo and Johnny Beautelus.

long gun, so he took the lead. Teamwork kicked in like clockwork, with all three officers taking turns shouting out commands and information about the scene as they stepped up.

On the stairwell, they encountered a bloodied man slumped over a railing. A quick check revealed he was not breathing and had no pulse. They concluded he was deceased and then had to determine if he had been a shooter or a victim.

"This is where you're like, 'Where is this guy?" Siddo explained. "He could be anywhere waiting for us."

Leon stayed with the victim while Beautelus and Siddo proceeded forward. A blood trail led them to the second floor hallway, where they experienced that pulsating moment between "is there anybody there?" and "all clear."

The hallway, however, was littered with bullet casings that led them to an apartment door full of bullet holes. Beautelus and Siddo took positions on either side of the door and yelled out the "show me your hands" command. Leon joined them, and they were prepared for the worst.

"Somebody answered in Spanish, 'Don't shoot. Don't shoot,'" Leon detailed. "The door opened, a male came out and we were able to get him into custody. But we still don't know how many people we have or if there is another shooter."

The man revealed that his gun was in the bedroom. When they entered the apartment, the officers found a woman screaming and another bleeding from the head. She had been grazed by the ricochet of a bullet. They searched the apartment, found it all clear and began to render aid.

Even though they had a weapon, they still weren't sure they had all the suspects. The officers learned that the fight had broken out during a barbecue and one man started shooting at the other. The women confirmed that there were two men and produced the driver's license of the other one.

The officers were confident they had the shooter, but they needed to confirm the identity of the man who fled. When they matched the license to the victim in the stairwell, it was finally all clear.

Beyond all the courage, fortitude and following of their training to every detail, Beautelus, Leon and Siddo exhibited a skill set in their response that ultimately made the difference. Doral Chief Hernan Organvidez praised the importance of a trio of officers who came from different locations to combine so seamlessly when they arrived at the crime scene.

"A successful law enforcement organization develops, builds and fosters its members' teamwork skills and abilities," Organvidez wrote in his letter to the South Florida PBA, nominating his charges to be Officers of the Year. "Officer Beautelus', Officer Leon's and Officer Siddo's exceptional teamwork is indicative of their dedication to duty."

The debriefing confirmed as much to Siddo. He noted how everybody did what they were supposed to do, how they all took care of each other.

"Throughout the incident, we kept communicating," he added. "The training just kicked in. Until you have to use it, you don't really know."

Beautelus revealed that his training was the reason he was so locked in from the moment he heard the call. He now knows it works, and this response has made a profound impact on his law enforcing.

"It kind of changed my mindset that anything can happen," he shared. "You keep it in your mind that you will always be ready."

As a field training officer, Leon has been able to refer to the incident as reinforcement to new officers that you never know what you are going to face. And he also refers to it to reinforce his love of the game.

"One of the reasons I love this job is because not everybody was born to do it," Leon declared. "Not everybody is born to put on a badge and a gun. But we love going out there. We love doing the things that nobody else is going to do."

Officers of the Year Runners-Up City of Doral Police Department

Johnny Beautelus

- Time on the job: Three years
- Why I became a police officer: My dad always told me I was going to be a police officer. I love answering calls and supporting the community.



Erick Leon

- Time on the job: A year and a couple months
- Why I became a police officer: We do this job for one reason. We love helping.



Raaju Siddo

- Time on the job: Four-anda-half years
- Why I became a police officer: I tried out as a police explorer. After that, I realized there is no other job I would rather do.



Air Force

Miami-Dade Aviation Unit officer makes daring rescue

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

A glimmer of light burst through the mangrove trees near the cliffs off Manatee Bay. Officer Brendan Gill, a pilot in the Miami-Dade Special Patrol Bureau Aviation Unit, caught the flash as he searched for the man who reportedly went to this remote spot to take his own life.

Edward Hasselman rode his bike to the end of Card Sound Road on the morning of May 23, 2019. He had consumed enough alcohol to go through with the act and began choking himself with two zip ties fastened together around his neck.

Hasselman had made a 9-1-1 call that provided coordinates to his location. Gill beelined his helicopter from the north end of the county to this south-end lo-



Brendan Gill Miami-Dade Police Department Aviation Unit

cation. Somehow, the sun reflected off Hasselman's bicycle wheels, and somehow Gill saw that.

Talk about a glimmer of hope.

"There's no way to describe the area where he was," Gill explained. "Ground units would not have been able to find this guy. I couldn't see him. I just saw two circles. He would have died if we had not located him."

Hasselman was so determined to take his own life that he came to Miami-Dade County by train from Clearwater the night before to target this spot. He brought his bike with him and reportedly picked up a bag of zip ties from Home Depot.

Apparently, he had second thoughts and made the 9-1-1 call. Dispatch pinged the coordinates and Gill plugged those in as he took off.

Hit the switch

Aventura officer's fast response leads to nabbing a murderer

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Working patrol keeps Angel Melendez going. Now in his fourth year with the Aventura Police Department, Melendez gets jacked up every day because he doesn't know whether it will lead to helping an elderly woman victimized by identity theft, dealing with a mentally ill person who is being combative or something in between.

"To me, the best part is never knowing what you're going to get," Melendez stated. "I always tell the young guys that you never know when you have to flip the switch."

Melendez didn't know he would have to turn it on the morning of June 30, 2019, when he was working an off-duty detail. He heard a call of two males fighting in front of a nearby Winn Dixie and prepared to respond. Then, he heard that it might be a stabbing.

"As soon as I heard that, I put on the lights and siren," he recalled. "It's a priority call. You just go without even thinking."

As he sped to respond, Melendez heard that a suspect had fled in a blue car. One person on the scene was found deceased and another had serious injuries.

Melendez arrived at the Promenade

Shopping Center near the Winn Dixie thinking the suspect might have gone that way. He pulled in, turned a corner and noticed a blue car with a door smashed in. He also found a security guard and a bunch of patrons jumping up and down. They were screaming and pointing at a man wearing a hoodie covered in blood.

"They were screaming, 'He killed her,' but at this point I didn't know if I had the suspect or a victim," Melendez detailed. "I was able to handcuff him and it turns out it was the suspect."

As he took the suspect into custody, the man began describing how he brutally murdered the first victim inside his vehicle and chased a second victim around several cars in a parking lot, repeatedly stabbing him. Melendez recorded the comments, which led to a first-degree murder charge and evidence to convict the suspect.

Melendez insisted that his ability to flip the switch resulted from his training. But it might be an innate quality, too. After all, this is an officer who started his law enforcement career working as a parking enforcement officer in Surfside so he could earn enough money to put himself through



Angel Melendez Aventura Police Department

the academy.

"I've been in a few other intense situations before and I have been able to keep my cool," he explained. "It's just a matter of focusing on the task at hand and knowing you are part of a great team. Our department did a fantastic job, and I was able to be in the right place at the right time."

The 27th Annual South Florida PBA Law Enforcement Awards **Officer of the Year Finalists**

The Miami-Dade aviation unit exists for moments like these, to see where no other unit or officer can. Some days, pilots go up on proactive patrol, like looking for chop shops. Other days, the unit is called out.

"It's a different perspective looking at things from above," Gill commented. "It's a unique way to support the ground units."

After locating Hasselman, there was really no time to waste. Gill would find out momentarily how little time.

Air rescue showed up, but there was no way to get their much larger helicopter on the ground. Gill had to carefully maneuver his bird down on to a landing area so small that the tail hung out over the water.

Once he hit the ground, Gill grabbed his survival bag and made his way toward Hasselman. All the while, he was relaying directions to ground units about how to find him. And then Gill found out how dire the situation had become.

"When I first saw him, I had never seen a head this color," Gill recalled. "He



Miami-Dade Police Department Aviation Unit Officer Brendan Gill landed his helicopter in a remote spot in the southern part of Miami-Dade County to rescue a man attempting suicide. was maroon. He had gotten to the point where he passed out."

Gill pulled a knife from his kit and tried to work his way under the zip ties. They were pulled so tight that he wasn't sure if he could get the knife under the ties without cutting Hasselman's skin.

"Suddenly, I noticed him struggling a bit," Gill added. "He came to on his own."

Gill cuffed him, mainly to ensure Hasselman wouldn't do any more harm to himself. Ground units then responded and walked him out of the area. He was taken to Homestead Hospital for treat-

Wildlif Biscayne National Park

ment.

Gill was honored with a Miami-Dade Police Department lifesaving award for his response, and he was selected as a distinguished officer for August 2019. But he realized a greater reward for his actions than all the recognition.

"We prevented him from taking his life," Gill declared. "It was a good feeling to make a positive difference. That's why we get into this profession."

enabled the incident to adhere to law and order.

"Lots of thoughts are going through my head as it's all happening," Perez commented. "I'm thinking, 'Is what I'm doing within department policy? Is there a greater danger out there if he hits a traffic device?' They say that sometimes things slow down a little bit when things occur. It felt a little bit like that."

Perez eventually learned that drugs were involved in the incident. The driver wanted to commit a theft, and when the woman found out about it, that's when she tried to escape.

Eventually, the driver lost control and crashed into a tree. He tried to flee, but Perez had radioed ahead to warn officers from Miami-Dade that he had driven into their jurisdiction. They were waiting for the suspect and apprehended him as soon as he got out of the car.

The report of the incident detailed that the woman had been forced into the vehicle against her will. When she tried to get out, the suspect slammed the door on her leg. She was in fear of her life.

"Sergeant Perez was her savior that day," Juriga wrote in his letter to the South Florida PBA to nominate Perez for Officer of the Year.

Perez said he was thankful to have the training to know the policies and procedures to lead him on this response. Clearly, it was all in the line of duty.

NMPD True Blue

Sergeant's heroics make for a must-see response

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Inspiration to become a police officer comes from so many sources. North Miami Police Department Sergeant Nelson Perez easily could have found his law enforcement muse from his parents, who taught him to respect the authority of the thin blue line in a very impactful way.

"They taught me not do anything that would get me in trouble with the police," he recalled. "Because if I did, it would be far worse when I got home."

But additional exposure also made Perez want to pursue a life representing the shield

"When I was younger, I was really intrigued by watching cop shows on TV," he quipped.

Fatefully, on Aug. 4, 2019, Perez wound up as the hero in what could have made a great episode of any cop show. North Miami Vice actually began when he heard a call that a woman was trying to get out of a car traveling at high speed near NE 135th Street and Biscayne Boulevard.

"In all my time on the job, I had never seen anything like that," explained Nelson, who has been on for 10 years and had just



North Miami Police Department

been promoted to sergeant at that time. "It was like something out of a movie."

Perez eyeballed the gray Chevy with the back door open and positioned himself to conduct a traffic stop. A woman in the back seat was waving a white cloth trying to exit the car. The suspect accelerated and swerved each time the woman made another attempt to escape.

The initial investigation would later reveal that the woman was the victim of a kidnapping. North Miami Chief Larry Juriga cited how the composure of Perez

Great Minds Thinking Alike

An eight-year investigation pays off in a TV-worthy homicide case

BY KAREN STAHL

Detective Christopher Villano and Sergeant Douglas McCoy have the same mind — or so they tell people.

Both were trained by Detective Thomas Romani when they came on to the homicide unit with the Miami-Dade Police Department. McCoy came to the unit 20 years ago, though he's been with the department for 28 years, and Villano has been with the unit for 9 years, but on for 18 years total. Villano was one of the final people Romani trained before retirement.

"[McCoy and I] have the same mindset, the same training," Villano said of his 15-year friendship with McCoy. "So I think that's pretty cool and special."

"A lot of why we do this job and how we do this job is the same," McCoy added. "It definitely helps to have that other mind there working through the case with you. And to be honest, neither of us ever did it for the awards or recognition. We do it because we care about the work."

But despite not pursuing accolades, the pair received the Arthur E. Felton Investigative Excellence Award for their work in nailing down guilty verdicts for two defendants on Nov. 7, 2019, as the pinnacle of an eight-year investigation of a homicide that shook the community.

In 2011, the murder of a man was reported to the Miami-Dade Police Department. Officers were able to identify the body, while McCoy and Villano's former training officer, Romani, served as the lead detective on the case.

After extensive investigations of cell-phone records that identified three suspects, two of whom were former MMA fighters, Romani retired, and thus the case lost its lead detective. His sergeant also retired, which made room for a new team of investigators.

McCoy came on to the case in 2015. He was well versed in the details after inheriting it from the retired sergeant. Not long after, Villano took over the case as lead detective from Romani, and the pair got to work solving the homicide investigation, already in its fourth year.

When the friends started, they only had cell-phone evidence, which put individuals in key locations as circumstantial evidence. But the tipping point that would ultimately lead to arrests was a fingerprint on the victim's car that never had a match when the team ran it in 2011. They decided to run the fingerprint again.

They got a match.

For the first time in the entire investigation, McCoy and Villano had physical evidence that led to them finding witnesses, interviewing people and putting their case together. After years of developing close relationships with



Arthur E. Felton Investigative Excellence Award Detective Christopher Villano Miami-Dade Police Department

Sergeant Douglas McCoy Miami-Dade Police Department the victim's family and piecing together accounts, the team located two suspects in April 2018 and had them arrested. Then in August 2019, they located another individual potentially responsible for the murder.

"We located him up in Vancouver, Canada. We went there, Detective Villano and myself, for five days," McCoy recalled. The pair was able to get the individual to provide a full confession to his involvement in the homicide.

Months later, in October 2019, the trial for the two suspects previously arrested commenced. Villano provided compelling testimony and sat on the counsel's table for the trial, while McCoy coordinated witnesses outside the courtroom. On Nov. 7, 2019, the two suspects finally received guilty verdicts for second-degree murder.

"There were so many emotions, because it had been building up for nine years," McCoy said of that November day in the courtroom. "So to get to that point and hear it, it gave me chills. You were so happy and grateful because you've got the guilty verdict, which is so hard to get."

The victim's family sat behind the investigators in the courtroom, and when the verdict was announced, McCoy and Villano stood up, turned around and shared a hug.

"You really felt like you were part of the family with them," McCoy said. "I think that that was the best feeling from that moment of receiving the guilty verdict. They have really made us part of their family." Villano agreed that the room had an electric energy that day.

"It just provided some sort of justice for the family," he said. "We work these cases for a long time, and we have these deep relationships with the families, and you're just fighting for that closure for them. If it were my loved one or family member, I'd want someone to investigate the same way for me."

The teamwork that McCoy and Villano have comes from years of trust-building partnership. After meeting through playing sports — football and softball — while working for the Miami-Dade Police Department, the pair has "basically become best friends" over the past seven years, according to Villano. And working so closely on this case has solidified their friendship for years to come.

As they begin to receive national attention for the work on this case, with the television show "Dateline" set to showcase it in the near future, McCoy and Villano know that they would not have achieved the guilty verdicts without the cohesion of their friendship and the teamwork of everyone involved over the past eight years.

"There's a lot of moving parts," Villano said. "It's a pretty cool gig. I attribute it to the fact that it was a very big team effort, and that I was able to do it with Doug helped me out a lot. That's probably one of the coolest things, is that we get to receive an award for all this together, as a pair. We're both so honored to be recognized."



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One memorable birthday

A celebration dinner becomes the scene of a lifesaving response

BY KAREN STAHL

Lauren Howard knows how to remain calm in stressful situations. As the mother of an 11-year-old girl, she's had her fair share of parenting fires to put out.

Her expertise in doing so proved to be a lifesaver on the evening of her 34th birthday. As Howard sat down to celebrate at Black Rock Bar and Grill on Aug. 28, 2019 with her boyfriend and daughter, she anticipated the annual revelry.

But when duty unexpectedly called, the corrections officer didn't hesitate to leave her food and family at the table to lead a lifesaving response.

"It all happened pretty quickly, and it was just so surprising," Howard recalled. "I just jumped into action without thinking about it. Getting training from work, it becomes automatic. So I got in there and just did exactly what I'm trained to do."

She's been on the job with Miami-Dade County Corrections for five years, but that night in August was the first time Howard has ever had to utilize her first-responder knowledge while assisting someone off duty.

The officer's boyfriend let her know that a situation was occurring near the bathroom. Howard wasted no time in getting up to check out how she could help. Raising her daughter taught the officer how to be quick on her feet, which undoubtedly aided her response that night.

"The crazy part about it is my daughter was still at the table, and it was [happening] around the corner from my table," Howard noted. "So my daughter had no idea what was going on."

And that's when Howard saw a man going into a seizure. She began giving first aid instruction to onlookers and workers at the restaurant. As the man was seizing, he stopped breathing.

A sea of panicked customers had amassed. While employees were still being coached over the phone with a 9-1-1 call-taker, Howard assured the staff that she could take over.

After several cycles of CPR, she heard the first small gulp of air. And as she watched the now-breathing man loaded in for transport to a local hospital, Howard still didn't fully comprehend the weight of what she had just done.

Instead, she stood up and took a deep breath. Like a hero walking away from the harrowing event behind her in an action movie, she quietly returned to her table and gazed at her meal.

"Everybody just looked amazed and shocked at the same time," Howard noted. "I was actually really ready to leave, because I was so stressed out after the fact, but I decided that I should stay and continue on with dinner with my family."

And it wasn't until the car ride back home that her daughter heard the details of how her mother had just saved a man's life.

"On the way back, my family was so amazed," she said. "They were just calling me a hero, and I'm like, 'No, this is what I took the oath for.' I honestly wasn't thinking too much of it,



Corrections Officer of the Year Lauren Howard Miami-Dade County Corrections

but they were like, 'Do you realize what you just did?' They thought it was amazing."

When Howard got the call that she would be named Corrections Officer of the Year, she was shocked. She knows that now when she goes into work, she's held to a higher standard than she was prior to her lifesaving response. And the powerhouse officer is committed to meeting and exceeding expectations, just as she did on the evening of her 34th birthday.

"I feel like it was a job well done," Howard said. "I was definitely surprised when it happened, and I'm still honored, to be honest. I believe that incident changed me for the better."

Fresh Eyes

How attention to detail led to an important catch

BY KAREN STAHL

Everywhere he goes, Rawle Fraser can be seen taking note of the details.

His career has sharpened his attention to the minute. With five years in the Miami-Dade Corrections Mental Health Unit and 17 years in the U.S. Coast Guard conducting law enforcement boat boardings — a type of safety check performed by searching any type of watercraft under reasonable suspicion — Fraser is sharp when it comes to sniffing out peculiar situations.

"I'm always just looking for things," Fraser said. "I adapt what I need to look for to the situation at hand."

The corrections officer's quick thinking was active on the morning of July 24, 2019, when an inmate received a visit from his attorney. Fraser let the attorney into the interview room and then headed upstairs to bring the inmate down.

After their meeting, Fraser knocked on the door, signaling that time was up, and then started in to retrieve the pair. But before he could even get through the double doors, the attorney had darted out of the room.

"That wasn't a problem, I didn't care," Fraser recalled. "But we still had his pink ID in the office."

And the identification wasn't the only item the attorney had left behind. In the inmate's hands was a brown folder that he hadn't been carrying prior to the meeting. Immediately, Fraser's perceptiveness kicked into gear. After exiting through the first door, they stopped by the computer, and Fraser took the folder from the inmate.

Though the man protested and said he needed the contents of the folder to write a letter to the judge prior to trial, Fraser calmly said that he just needed approval from his supervisor. They went back upstairs and left the folder on top of the computer desk.

But the inmate was hesitant to go back into his cell, which only prompted Fraser to get downstairs to test the contents of the folder even more quickly.

Along with his corporal, Fraser inspected 40 stamps, 18 envelopes, one legal pad, nine red pieces of paper and seven blue pieces of paper. Immediately suspicious, Fraser turned to his supervisor.

"I know I'm right, but I just need some verification," he recalled saying to her. "Are the inmates allowed to have all this stuff?"

She confirmed that in forensic mental health, they're not allowed to have anything unless it's the legal work, which has to be approved ahead of time.

That was all the confirmation Fraser needed to listen to his intuition. He sent the contents of the folder to the ION Scanner 600 drug screening device.

The items tested positive for methamphetamine.

"At the time, it just felt like another day in the office," he said.



Corrections Officer of the Year Runner-Up Rawle Fraser Miami-Dade County Corrections

"I'm like, 'Whatever, no big deal.' But then it's kind of changed my life a little bit."

In addition to being recognized by the South Florida PBA for his efforts, Fraser has been nominated for a number of awards since the incident. But he holds to the idea that he didn't do anything out of the ordinary. He admits that he'll always remember how his acute awareness and keen attention to detail helped de-escalate a situation that could have turned much more dangerous.

"My eyes are fresh," Fraser conveyed. "I'm continuing to build up new skill sets every day, and I'm looking forward to what I'll catch in the future."

To Catch a Thief

From victim to hero, Victorero finds unique inspiration to fight crime

BY AMBER RAMUNDO

Stolen. It's a word that has resonated deeply with Orlando Victorero since he was sworn in as an officer with the Hialeah Gardens Police Department on March 12, 2018. In fact, it was an act of theft that inspired Victorero to become a law enforcement officer in the first place, after he was mugged in a taxi in October 2015. Less than a year later, Victorero was in the police academy, preparing to enter a rewarding career of serving and protecting.

"The detective that helped me out [that day] was really genuine and I thought to myself, 'I could do this,'" Victorero shared about his experience of having his Rolex watch stolen off his wrist.

Victorero's subsequent initiative to catch a thief in action came to fruition on Aug. 23, 2019, when the young officer conducted a traffic stop of a tractor trailer and discovered a dismantled 2016 Lexus GX460 inside. Victorero could hardly conceal the thrill when he looked up the vehicle's VIN to find that it was reported stolen.

"It was a cool feeling to be like, 'OK, I got one,'" Victorero said. "I enjoy catching people who steal. That's what I like to do as a cop."

Victorero's arrest of the tractor-trailer driver, who ended up being involved in a chop-shop operation, was just the start of the success this rookie officer would have chasing down criminal activity in the area, especially those related to vehicular burglaries.

"One of my ultimate goals is to become a commercial vehicle enforcement officer," shared Victorero, who has put his commercial vehicle interdiction training to good use.

Shortly after that arrest, when Hialeah Gardens experienced a spike in vehicular burglaries, Victorero was assigned to the midnight shift to work an undercover detail to track down the perpetrators. Over the course of two months that consisted of midnight shifts, car chases, civilian interviews and persistence, Victorero proved instrumental in apprehending suspects and closing cases of 12 vehicular burglaries.

"When I closed those 12 burglary cases, that was a great feeling," Victorero said. "That was the pinnacle. It feels like an accomplishment that I got to finish, and now I've got to go get more."

Victorero's skill and perseverance on the job have led him to earn the South Florida PBA Rookie of the Year award. While his passion and dedication continue to fuel Victorero throughout his career, Victorero recognizes that he is constantly learning from his brothers and sisters on the job.

"I honestly couldn't have gotten any of these arrests with-



Rookie of the Year Orlando Victorero Hialeah Gardens Police Department

out listening to the older guys," Victorero said. "Whenever the older officers speak, I listen, and then try to go out and execute what I've learned."

Highway to Hero

Bus driver reacts quickly to rescue crash victims

BY AMBER RAMUNDO

Elijah Saleem arrived at the Miami-Dade Transit Depot at his usual time of 12:30 p.m. for what seemed to be an ordinary day of work. No transit bus drivers had called out for their routes on Feb. 18, but Saleem reported to the depot on time, where he would wait and be ready to fill in on any route if needed.

This routine was customary for Saleem, who after 10 years as a transit bus driver holds the vital role of board operator — leaving all the routes he drives to come by chance, always based on other drivers calling out sick or taking a day off. Given the nature of his position, it seemed meant to be that he would be called upon at the last minute to drive Route 27 that afternoon, when he would encounter a life-threatening situation.

"I wouldn't have been there if that driver hadn't called out of work that day," Saleem said.

The 35-year-old was driving a bus carrying nearly 20 passengers when he witnessed a car in front of him veer off the road and into a canal. The clock was approaching midnight as Saleem struggled to make sense of what he had just seen through the darkness on Northwest 155th Street.

"The first thing that went through my mind was, 'Is this real?' I was like, 'There's no way I saw what I just saw,'" Saleem said. "I was shocked."

Saleem did not hesitate to act. The driver first ensured the safety of his passengers by pulling over to the side of the road and parking the bus before calling in to the station for help. Saleem paused momentarily for a response, but he knew that what he had witnessed couldn't wait for professional aid to arrive.

"I knew I didn't have any time to waste if what I saw was real," Saleem said. "I just jumped off the bus and I ran over to [the water]. I saw someone screaming for help, and I just went into action."

By the time Saleem approached the water, the driver was standing on the hood of the sinking vehicle. The man called for help as he held tightly to a young child. When Saleem jumped into the water, the man didn't hesitate to place his trust in him.

"When he saw me, he was so relieved that he literally tossed his son in the air," Saleem explained. "The kid actually hit the water, and I had to rush to go get him."

Saleem could hardly stand as he held the young toddler in his left arm. The car was nearly submerged as the driver and passenger both stood on the hood of the car, hesitating to make the leap into the water.

"I had to try to boost them up to have the confidence to do it," Saleem recalled.

The two adults, neither of whom know how to swim, finally jumped toward Saleem. The civilian held tightly to the child while dragging the adults on his other arm out of the water.



Miami-Dade Transit

That day, Saleem arrived at work a Miami-Dade Transit bus driver, but he emerged from the canal a hero who put his life at risk to save three strangers. Listening to Saleem recount his critical response to three individuals trapped in a sinking car, it can be easy to forget that he is a bus driver and not a first responder. It seems only fitting that this young Miami Gardens resident would be named the 2019 Citizen of the Year by the South Florida PBA.

"It feels incredible," Saleem said of the honor. "I grew up in Miami-Dade County, so to actually be able to do something that benefits the community or something that would make my daughter or my mom proud feels amazing."

Roll Call of Honor

The law enforcement community shares the sorrow of the families and friends of the officers who lost their lives in the line of duty. We take pride in their courage, and vow that they shall never be forgotten.

Rhett McGregor, Deputy Sheriff Dade County Sheriff's Office Aug. 12, 1895 Gustav A. Kaiser, Jaller Dade County Sheriff's Office Aug. 24, 1895 Wilbur W. Hendrickson, Deputy Sheriff Dade County Sheriff's Office Dade C June 2, 1915 John Rhinehart Riblet, Officer Miami Police Department June 2, 1915 Ilen Butler Henderson, Deputy Sheriff letro-Dade Police Department ept. 16, 1916 William Z. Henderson, Deputy Sheriff Metro-Dade Police Department Sept. 16, 1916 Charles R. Williams, Deputy Sheriff Metro-Dade Police Department Sept. 16, 1916 Frank Angelo Croff, Officer Miami Police Department May 22, 1921 Richard R. Marler, Officer . 28, 1921 Charles D. Bryant, Town Marshal Homestead Police Department June 15, 1923 Dilion Duncan Brooke, Corrections Officer Mami-Dade Corrections Department Oct. 21, 1924 Laurie Lafayette Wever, Sergeant ch 15, 1925 Hubert Carl Paul, Officer City of Miami Police Department Sept. 4, 1925 John D. Marchbanks, Officer Miami Police Department Feb. 16, 1926 Samuel J. Callaway, Officer 10, 1927 Jesse L. Morris, Officer Miami Police Department July 8, 1927 Albert R. Johnson, Offic Miami Police Department Sept. 25, 1927 es Franklin Beckham, Detective ni Police Department . 3, 1928 David Cecil Bearden, Officer Miami Beach Police Department March 20, 1928 Ralph G. Langworthy, Marshal Fulford Marshal's Office June 10, 1928 Augustus S. McCann, Officer Miami Police Department Sept. 26, 1928 Francis Cyril Guest, Sergeant Coral Gables Police Department ec. 25, 1928 Sidney Clarence Crews, Officer Miami Police Department April 25, 1929 hn I. Brubaker, Officer ami Police Department Irch 31, 1933

Robert Lee Jester, Detective Miami Police Department Nov. 18, 1933 John Edward Dickson, Deputy Co State Attorney's Office Dec. 24, 1933 William Lawrence Nichols, Officer Miami Beach Feb. 4, 1936 ach Police Depart Samuel D. Hicks, Officer Miami Police Decat Miami Police Depa August 9, 1936 Robert Boyle, Sergeant Mami Beach Police Department August 31, 1936 Homer Collins Barton, Sergeant Coral Gables Police Department June 6, 1938 Patrick Howell Baldwin, Officer Miami Police Department March 29, 1940 Wesley Frank Thompson, Officer Miami Police Department Sept. 18, 1941 Luther Paul Daniel, Trooper Florida Highway Patrol Dec. 5, 1941 John Milledge, Officer Miami Police Department Nov. 1, 1946 Johnnie Young, Officer Miami Police Department March 7, 1947 Frampton P. Wichman, Jr., Officer Miami Police Department Sept. 24, 1948 Leroy Joseph Lafleur, Officer Miami Police Department Feb. 16, 1951 Luther T, Hardison, Constable District 3 - Coral Gables Feb. 17, 1951 James Herbert Brigman, Officer Miami Police Department Feb. 28, 1951 William Franklin Brantley, Chief Homestead Police Department Edward Emile Fritz, Jr., Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Feb. 3, 1953 March 17, 1952 Robert J. Staab, Lieutenant Bal Harbour Police Departmer Oct. 31, 1957 Billy Howard Stephens, Officer Coral Gables Police Department Nov. 23, 1957 John Thomas Burlinson, Officer Miami Police Department March 8, 1958 Leonard Claude Tribble, Officer West Miami Police Department Oct. 18, 1958 Jerome Roger Christman, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Dec 3 1960 Earl Lee Johnson, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Feb. 3, 1962 Jerrel Eugene Ferguson, Officer Miami Police Department Nov. 7, 1962

Carlos S. Stuteville, Officer Metro-Dade Police Departmen Aug. 23, 1964 Owen Karl Bender, Captain Florida Highway Patrol Sept. 9, 1965 Hugo Max Becker, Detective Hialeah Police Department Hialeah Police Dep June 25, 1966 Paul G. Anderson, Officer Metro-Dade Police Departm May 7, 1967 Walter Franklin Stathers, Officer Coral Gables Police Department Dec. 19, 1967 Ronald F. McLeod, Officer Miami Police Department May 8, 1969 Joseph O. Kephart, Sergeant South Mami Police Department Jan. 18, 1970 Rolland John Lane II, Officer Miami Police Department May 23, 1970 Victor Butler, Jr., Officer Miami Police Department Feb. 20, 1971 Johnny Edward Mitchell, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Dec. 31, 1971 Robert DeKorte, Officer Coral Gables Police Department Jan. 21, 1972 Frank Searcy, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department March 27, 1974 Harrison Crenshaw, Jr., Sergeant Metro-Dade Police Department May 18, 1974 Simmons Arrington, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department May 21, 1974 Nickolas Fragos, Special Agent Drug Enforcement Administration Aug. 5, 1974 Charles H. Mann, Special Agent Drug Enforcement Administration 5, 1974 Clark Hamilton Curlette, Detective Metro-Dade Police Department April 1, 1976 Francis Kenneth D'Azevedo, Detective Metro-Dade Police Department April 1, 1976 Thomas Allen Hodges, Jr., Detective Metro-Dade Police Department April 1, 1976 Bradley Steven Glascock, Trooper Florida Highway Patrol August 4, 1977 Elmer Cecil Barnett, Ill, Trooper Florida Highway Patrol Feb. 14, 1978 Louis Pena, Officer Coral Gables Police Department April 2, 1978 Alvin Vincent Kohler, Trooper Florida Highway Patrol Sept. 19, 1978 William Coleman Cook, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department May 16, 1979

William Franklin Askew, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department July 24, 1979 Eva Mae Jones Miami-Dade Corr Dec. 18, 1979 Edward Francis McDermott, Lieutenant Miami Police Department May 18, 1980 Alfred William Terrinoni, Sergeant Coral Gables Police Department Oct. 12, 1980 Carl W. Mertes, Officer North Miami Police Department Nov. 5, 1980 Nathaniel K. Broom, Officer Miami Police Department Sept. 2, 1981 Edward Russell Young, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Sept. 23, 1981 Cheryl Weiner Seiden, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department July 28, 1982 Bjorn Thomas Svenson, Florida Parole Florida Department of Corrections July 31, 1982 Ariel Rios, Special Agent U.S. Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms Dec. 2, 1982 Stephen Owen Corbett, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department May 28, 1983 Eddle Benitez, Special Agent U.S. Treasury's Bureau of Alcoh Tobacco & Firearms July 12, 1983 Robert L. Zore, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Dec. 25, 1983 Dec. 25, 1965 Donald Bernard Kramer, Sergeant Miami Beach Police Department Feb. 25, 1984 Jose DeLeon, Officer Miami Police Departme Dec. 21, 1984 John Koppin, Officer Miami Beach Police Department Dec. 26, 1984 Robert E. Fitzpatrick, Officer Miami Beach Police Departmer April 3, 1985 John R. Melendez, Officer Bal Harbour Police Department Oct. 17, 1985 Jerry L. Dove, Special Agent Federal Bureau of Investigation April 11, 1986 Benjamin P. Grogan, Special Agent Federal Bureau of Investigation April 11, 1986 Ephriam Brown, Officer Opa-locka Police Departm June 3, 1986 James Mathis Beasley, Jr., Officer Sweetwater Police Department June 25, 1986 David Wayne Herring, Officer Miami Police Department Sept. 3, 1986

Emilio Fidel Miyares, Officer Hialeah Police Department Nov. 6, 1986 Laverne Daniel Schulz, Officer South Miami Police Department Nov. 27, 1987 Victor Estefan, Officer Miami Police Departmen March 31, 1988 nartment William Don Craig, Officer Miami Police Department June 21, 1988 Scott Richard Rakow, Officer Miami Beach Police Department June 30, 1988 Richard Allen Boles, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Nov. 28, 1988 David Henry Strzalkowski, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department Nov. 28, 1988 Jose Teodoro Gonzalez, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department March 28, 1989 George Reyes Saenz, Jr., Special Agent U.S. Customs Service Nov. 2 1989 2, 1989 Joseph Preston Martin, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department April 27, 1990 Thomas James Leis, Lieutenant Metro-Dade Police Department April 29, 1990 Charles Brian Stafford, Officer Mami Springs Police Department June 11, 1991 Donald Dante Thornbury, Officer Miccosukee Police Department Oct. 26, 1991 Steven Ernest Bauer, Sergeant North Miami Police Department Jan. 3, 1992 Robert H. Bonnett, Officer Coral Gables Police Department Jan. 17, 1992 Osvaldo Canalejo, Officer Miami Police Department Oct. 13, 1992 Pedro Antonio Cainas, Sergeant Hialeah Police Department Nov. 19, 1992 Evelyn Gort, Detective Metro-Dade Police Dep Oct. 30, 1993 Lynette Anita Hodge, Sergeant North Miami Police Department Nov. 16, 1993 Carmen Gonzalez, Officer Miami-Dade Police Department Nov. 29, 1993 Meredith Thompson, Special Agent Drug Enforcement Administration Aug. 27, 1994 Leonard Trudeau, Corrections Officer Metro-Dade Department of Corrections Jan. 16, 1995 Carlos Santiago, Officer Miami Police Department May 30, 1995 Theodore J. Lozada, Corrections Officer Miami-Dade Department of Corrections Aug. 4, 1995

Randall Ross Kugler, Detective Miami-Dade Police Department March 10, 2000 Michael D. McLane, Deputy Sergeant University of Miami Police Department May 15, 2000 William Williams, Officer Miami Police Department July 3, 2000 Theodore Zorsky, Officer Key Biscayne Police Department Jan. 8, 2002 Nirza Rodriguez, Officer Miami-Dade Police Departm May 5, 2003 Orestes J. Lorenzo, Officer North Miami Police Departme July 9, 2004 Rosa I. Echevarria, Corrections Officer Miami-Dade Department of Corrections June 5, 2007 Jose Lazaro Somohano, Officer Miami-Dade Police Department Sept. 13, 2007 James Walker, Officer Miami Police Department Jan. 8, 2008 Giovanni L. Gonzalez, Officer Miami-Dade Police Department June 16, 2009 Patrick Ambroise, Trooper Florida Highway Patrol May 15, 2010 Roger Castillo, Officer Miami-Dade Police Department Jan. 20, 2011 Amanda Haworth, Officer Miami-Dade Police Department Jan. 20. 201 Tony Koga, Officer Homestead Police Department March 8, 2011 Dwight Blackman Jr., Officer Customs and Border Patrol Aug. 8, 2015 Henry McAleenan Jr., Officer Miami-Dade Police Department March 6, 2016 Jorge Sanchez, Officer Miami Police Department Nov. 1, 2016 Rickey O'Donald, Special Agent Federal Bureau of Investigation Feb. 17, 2017 Jermaine Brown, Officer Miami-Dade Police Department Dec. 12, 2018

Robert Vargas, Officer Metro-Dade Police Depar Feb. 7, 1997

Richard Wentlandt, Officer Metro-Dade Police Department March 15, 1997

Shaun E. Curl, Senior Special Agent Drug Enforcement Administration Dec. 12, 1997

Rueben I. Jones, Officer Miami-Dade Police Department Oct. 5, 1998

Roberto Calderon, Officer Miami-Dade Police Departm Dec. 7.1999

Robert G. Smith, Trooper Florida Highway Patrol July 26, 1997

SOUTH FLORIDA PBA

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Miami Gardens Police Department goes viral for 2020 graduates

BY KAREN STAHL

It's finally graduation season, but for this year's seniors, the memories look a lot different from how most remember their own celebrations.

In the age of COVID-19, where social distancing and concern for safety are paramount, graduations and birthday parties have had to rely on creative alternatives. From parades to commemorative Zoom calls, this year's celebrations are geared for seniors who live in a digital age in which they've experienced the majority of their congratulations virtually.

And a message from the Miami Gardens Police Department follows suit.

In a head-bopping-and-grin-inducing video posted by the department on May 6, officers slipped their own former graduation gowns over their uniforms to share heartfelt words of praise for everything that 2020 seniors have endured.

But, in true-blue fashion, the officers added their own personal twist.

"This video was created with you, all graduating 2020 seniors, in mind," the caption reads. "To encourage you to 'dance in the rain,' 'to make lemonade from lemons' and to be great no matter what!"

The opening clip of the video portrays an officer holding a piece of paper: "*We understand this year didn't go as expected…*" In a transition, he drops the piece of paper off a balcony to a different officer finding it at her feet.



She then picks it up and reveals the next piece of the puzzle — "Despite the hand that has been dealt..." — before throwing it out of the frame to another officer, who catches it in the following clip.

He unrolls the paper, and shows it to the camera: "Your friends @MGPD acknowledge all of your hard work."

The format of the video is inspired by a popular TikTok video app trend, called the #DontRushChallenge, in which participants utilize creative transitions to move objects through different clips of a video. With every transition, the officers begin in their own graduation caps and gowns and then change into uniform. The four-minute video features 12 different officers, all in varying locations, including some schools in the district.

"Class of #2020, you are history in the making!" one of the final scrolls of paper reads.

The end of the video relays a heartfelt

A two-wheeled act of kindness in the North Miami Beach PD

A young lady was riding her bike along the winding Snake Creek Canal with her family on May 29 when she suddenly lost control and stumbled into the lake. Quick reflexes from her father led to her rescue, but unfortunately, he was unable to retrieve the washed-away bike.

As soon as Sergeant Aldo Alfonso with North Miami Beach Police Department

heard the tragic tale, his heart ached for the young girl.

He headed to Target and purchased a brand-new bicycle with training wheels. Alfonso was able to deliver the bike, adorned with pink ribbons, at the girl's home and ensure that she'd still be able to ride along Snake Creek Canal with her family for years to come.



spoken message, encouraging graduates to follow their dreams and pursue the next phase of life creatively.

"This is only a moment in time of what we're going through. Congratulations 2020 seniors, you have done it," says the last officer in the video. "You have graduated, you are at the top of your game. I would like to say stay encouraged, stay focused, because you can be anything you would like to be. The sky is the limit — so let's go do it."



Drive-through kindness by Miami-Dade County Animal Services

During the coronavirus pandemic, law enforcement has been taking special care to make sure that all families have meals on the table with various food drives and community donations.

But what happens to those who want to make sure there's food in the bowl for their furriest family members?

The Miami-Dade County Animal Services Department has been conducting a series of pet food drives to provide resources to families who are struggling to keep their animals fed. The latest drive-through food distribution on June 4 saw a huge turnout, with some pets tagging along for the ride.

"It's really nice when they're coming through, and we can actually see where the food is going and who we're feeding," said Flora Beal of Miami-Dade County Animal Services. "They're not just animals —



they're really a member of your family."

As each car drove through the line, the driver was asked how many pets they had and the specific size of each pet. From there, staff and volunteers sorted through the stock of pet food bags and passed a full package of food through the window.

And with each car came a new snout poking out of the window, ready to say "hi" and thank the attendants for the help with



licks and barks. The food was donated to the department as part of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Initiative.

"You plan during a crisis for your pets the same way you would for your family members," Beal said. "You worry about keeping them fed and keeping them healthy during this time of crisis."

Retiring from Sunny Isles after 30 years

Officer Joe Alvarez officially hung up his uniform and moved into retirement on May 4. Boasting more than 30 years in law enforcement, he came on with the Sunny Isles Beach Police Department in February 1999 after completing a number of years at the Hialeah PD.

His dedication to community policing and chats accompanied by a friendly smile were commemorated on his final day with a cake and certificate at the station. Alvarez will be missed around the Sunny Isles Beach Police Department as he begins this new phase of life.





Delivering doughnuts to the Aventura Police Department

As part of their education in giving back to the community, young Michali and Yosef Shalom personified their last name on June 4 by bringing peace — and delicious doughnuts — to officers at the Aventura Police Department.

The children attend The Nurtury in town, which is a Jewish Reggio-inspired nursery and preschool that teaches students through a play-based program. As part of the curriculum, the school often encourages kind acts as a means of social development.

The smiles were endless as Michali and Yosef handed over two full boxes of Dunkin' Donuts to show officers their love and appreciation for the protection they provide every day.

Key West police officers go head-to-head with flamingos

At Poinciana Elementary School in Key West, the fifth-grade students in Sarah Garr's math class can be sure to enjoy regular visits from members of the Key West Police Department through a special program she developed called Pelicans and Police.

But with children in virtual schooling due to the pandemic, the program — which brings officers into the classroom to engage with students through knowledge-building games and experiences — also had to adapt.

That's why on May 28, for their final meeting of the school year, Sergeant Jeffrey Dean and Officers Michael Pettee and Scott Standerwick packed up to head to the Key West Butterfly Conservatory to take Garr's students on a virtual field trip.

"It was fantastic," Garr said. "Thank you to each officer for stepping up for the kids of Key West."

Fully masked, the officers sat face-to-face with live flamingos and shared their interactions with the students virtually. Dean even enjoyed a kiss on the top of his head from one particularly friendly flamingo.

Engaging with community members, and especially children, is important for members of the Key West Police Department, and they hope to be involved with the Pelicans and Police program for years to come.

"This year's [Pelicans and Police] has been a truly rewarding experience for the members of the Key West Police Department," the department shared in a Facebook post.





Honoring service and integrity in Miami-Dade Corrections

Under their masks, staff were all smiles in the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department the week of May 18.

The senior command staff in the department decided to honor National Correctional Officers and Employees Week as well as Nurses Appreciation Week by surprising all line staff and healthcare professionals in the facilities with a meal during all three shifts.

With good food and rousing fellowship, the senior command staff made sure all members personally felt the values of the department: integrity, service, honor and dedication. Balloons and special goodie bags were the bow on top of this welcome gift for the staff.





Ensuring officer safety

Though masks hide smiles of appreciation and personal protective equipment (PPE) hinders meaningful embraces, law enforcement officers are now in need of support more than ever as the pandemic rages on in communities and departments.

From individual donations to those supported by local



Josh Finvarb is an 11th-grade student and resident who began the "Save the Brave" initiative, in which he donates PPE to first responders. Officers of the Bal Harbor Village Police Department benefited from Finvarb's kindness on May 4 by receiving a package of protective equipment from him.



Dr. Barry Burak, with Healthcare Centers, Inc., donated an unbelievable 800 face masks to the South Miami Police Department on May 8 to assist law enforcement officers and their families in staying safe.

businesses, members across the South Florida PBA have enjoyed generous gifts from people in the community looking out for the safety of workers on the front lines.

The acts of kindness shown during this public health crisis will improve the bonds between officers and the areas they protect for years to come.



Doral Digital Reprographics is making sure that members of the City of Doral Police Department stay safe. The company created and distributed custom face shields to officers as a way of saying "thank you" for serving the community in the era of COVID-19.



A donation of custom face masks and hand sanitizer from Axon Enterprises was welcomed at the Village of El Portal Police Department on May 11. Appreciation went both ways, as officers felt deep gratitude for the kind efforts of the local business.

Autism awareness training with Key West Police Department

BY KAREN STAHL

The partnership of the Key West Police Department and Autism Society of the Keys (ASK) helps train officers in the area to recognize indicators of individuals who fall on the autism spectrum. This disorder is characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication.

While a number of outreach events for the spring and summer had to be canceled due to the coronavirus, Key West officers are still working hard to raise autism awareness.

In April, patrol vehicles were wrapped with the society's puzzle piece logo and officers could wear blue badges, which is the official color of autism awareness.

In addition to awareness training, Chief Sean Brandenburg initiated a method of registering addresses that alert law enforcement to the presence of an autistic individual at a residence, should a response be necessary at that address.

And the department has personal ties to the important cause. Lieutenant Matt Haley's 13-year-old daughter is on the autism spectrum. His wife, Hope Haley, is involved with ASK and has spent the past few months working with the department to increase awareness and education.

Being able to recognize behaviors of those on the autism spec-



trum is vital in protecting them, and this important work is continuing. The society still meets virtually every month to keep up its knowledge and skills, and events originally planned for the spring and summer with the Key West Police Department and ASK are slated to be rescheduled.

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