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## COVER STORY



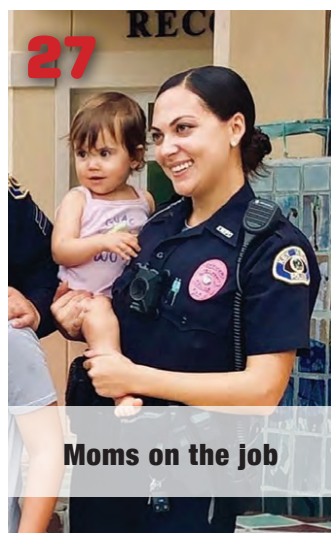
## Inspired

Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation Officer Kedson Julmiste returned home three months after a catastrophic vehicle crash left him paralyzed from the chest down to a greeting that was filled with cheers and tears. As he hugged his daughter Olivia, Julmiste found the inspiration that enabled him to vow he will walk again. The story of what he's overcome already and what he wants to do is, in a word, inspiring.

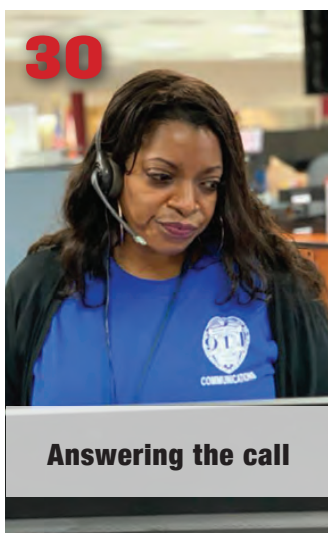
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Moms on the job



Answering the call



He gave so much



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## THE PRES SAYS

# Focusing on what is really happening out there



STEADMAN STAHL

This picture here is worth a thousand words.

Starting with these:

I believe support for the police is more apparent and

abundant than many of us really know. And from

places you would never expect, all the way to the top.

The community comes together, and when they see wrongdoing by people, they step in and stop it. We saw that last year during a peaceful protest when some anarchists were going to loot a Walgreens. Citizens stepped up and stopped it. They helped the police and stopped Walgreens from being looted. These are signs of hope that we look for. I keep saying that there's more good in mankind and faith in the police than the media wants to show.

The other picture you see on the next page includes members of our Florida State PBA executive board joining Governor DeSantis after he signed the Law Enforcement Protection Act – the anti-riot bill – on April 26. It was really an honor to be invited for a bill signing of that magnitude. I think it was a great message that everybody in law enforcement needed at this time.

We really did need it. If you've paid attention to the negativity that we're seeing all over the country and the attacks against the profession – attacks against officers for just doing their jobs – it was becoming extremely demoralizing. But when you heard the bill was being done and then you actually saw it come to fruition, it was one of those post-worthy moments.

What made it even more significant was that the governor signed it immediately. It wasn't one of those that you sign and it goes into effect later. It was great, and we can't thank the governor enough for making sure that we were invited and front and center for a very pro-police bill.

I hope it doesn't end here. I think we're going to need more of these as we see more and more attacks against our public safety at all levels. I hope that there's going to be continuous strengthening of other laws like qualified immunity to make sure that's not attacked.

We also had some extraordinary support come on a night when we didn't know to expect it. We attended the Palm Beach County PBA Officers' Ball held at Trump National in Jupiter on April 24. The owner (and 45th president) showed up to show his support for the police.

His speech was all about the great work you are doing, and then he stayed for an extra half-hour to meet and greet everybody and oblige every photo op. That's not just support for the police. That's unconditional love coming from the highest source.

These are signs that the work we are doing legislatively and politically is generating the support you have earned. We have elected officials who understand that our police officers are the best of the best and go after the worst of the worst in society. There is real evil out there that lurks, just looking to take advantage of people, to steal from people, to disrupt lives, and we are the only thing standing in between chaos.

But the actions we are seeing confirm that nobody wants this to become a real-life version of the "Mad Max" movie series or "The Purge", where it's survival of the fittest.

We've made great strides and we're going to continue. Is it perfect? No, but we are certainly going in the right direction. We're not the ones who have caused it. We have to get our politicians on board to start changing this narrative to communicate that the police are not the problem.

It's a two-way street. We have to teach our pastors whom we work with in the community to tell their congregations that it's not OK to get in stolen cars. It's not OK to run from the police.



## SOUTH FLORIDA PBA

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**STAHL** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

It's not OK to throw bottles and rocks at people.

This has been one of my goals here since becoming president – to make sure that the hard work our officers do day in and day out, the hard work that our dispatchers put in and the hard work by members doesn't go unnoticed. There was a campaign that I saw that they did out in Texas where some citizens got together and would hold signs in front of the police station saying, "Thank you and we see you." It caught my attention, and one of the things that I look for is to highlight the good out there that we're doing.

We need to let officers know that we see them, and we say, "Thank you." It's those random acts of kindness that we take for granted. It means a world to people to say, "Thank you." It doesn't cost anything, and it makes a difference to somebody's life or the officer. It just makes them go through their day feeling they're appreciated, which has been lacking these last few years.

That said, let's shift the focus a bit to the way we are coming

out of the pandemic and how that is affecting the contracts we are negotiating for members. We have both counties going on right now, Miami-Dade and Monroe County contract negotiations. We are negotiating a lot of city contracts as well.

With most governments, when you put the people that are charged to negotiate contracts against the employees, they always give you the doomsday scenarios, the worst-case scenarios, the rainy day funds. Nobody could have predicted a worldwide pandemic, so that's got to be the worst of all rainy day funds.

But in Florida, and particularly South Florida, coming out of a worldwide pandemic, our economy has never done better. The property values for houses in Florida are through the roof.

Hotels are at capacity. Sales are up. So we're finding that it's refreshing that there doesn't seem to be the fight to get the well-earned benefits the men and women deserve. It hasn't been as strenuous as I thought it was going to be.

I think we're only going to get stronger and the economy's going to get better. And now we can get to what the real issues are. People want safe communities. They want quality of life. I think that's what we're seeing, and so I think the message I'd like to see is just stay positive.

OK, that's more than a thousand words, but I think you get the picture.

Stay safe, my friends.

**Steadman Stahl, President**  
steadman@sflpba.org

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# A beautiful tribute to our fallen officers



DAVID GREENWELL  
EXECUTIVE  
VICE  
PRESIDENT

The Miami-Dade County Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony at Tropical Park on May 6 was another beautiful and fitting tribute that honored our fallen officers and their surviving families.

This year, we added four names to the wall of honor: Miami Beach Police Department Sergeant Shirley Fagan, Miccosukee Police Department Sergeant Stephen Greco, Miami-Dade Corrections Officer Jairo Bravo, and Miami Police De-

partment Officer Aubrey Johnson Junior. This brings the total number of officers killed in the line of duty while serving the citizens of Miami-Dade County to 151.

The Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony pays tribute to federal, state and local officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice. It was their duty to serve, but it is our duty to remember their sacrifice and honor their surviving family members. We should all attend this event, which is scheduled for the first Thursday in May each year.

Special thanks to Chief Fred Maas for being this year's master of ceremonies and doing a fantastic job, especially given

the difficult circumstances of a bad storm.

The aerial tribute was outstanding, with seven helicopters from Miami-Dade Police Department, Broward Sheriff's Office, City of Miami Police Department, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, and U.S. Customs. I also want to thank the entire Police Memorial Planning Team, led by Chairperson Major Gina Beato-Dominguez.

As always, please stay safe out there, wait for your backup, and if you have any concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 305-593-0044 or [greenwell@sflpba.org](mailto:greenwell@sflpba.org).



Congrats to new Miami Gardens Deputy Police Chief Ricky Carter.



Congratulations to City of West Miami Officers Richard Menor, Felix Velasquez and Erick Alvarez on being given the lifesaving award by Chief Carlos Ávila and Major Pedro Delgado.



After the storm cleared, it was a beautiful evening for the Miami-Dade County Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony.



Thanks to Commissioner Joe Martinez (blue shirt) for always supporting law enforcement and Director Freddy Ramirez (right).



Homestead Police Department Honor Guard.



Thanks to the PBA volunteers, from left: Orlando Sosa, Alex Munoz and Robin Pinkard.



The family of fallen Corrections Officer Jairo Bravo with the corrections command staff at the memorial ceremony.



# Separating good supervisors from bad



**CAPTAIN  
NIZAM "ISH"  
ISHMAEL  
VICE  
PRESIDENT**

I mentioned in my previous article to monitor the 2021 Legislative Session, particularly SB 84. This bill was going to close the pension plan to all new hires effective July 1, 2022. Well, the session closed on Friday, April 30, and this bill did *not* make it through the Florida House of Representatives. Pension reform will make it back next year, so stay informed.

Moving on, I have a question: Why do some people/supervisors forget where they came from?

When supervisors receive a promotion, some think that they have made it. Many give orders and watch others work. Natural-born leaders will always remember the difficulties of those who do the work. Remember to stay grounded and constantly remind yourself of this. Try not to micromanage, as this is the No. 1 killer of creativity and innovation at any assignment. We have many talented people among us; just let them work.

Some merely think that they could never be wrong. It is easy to think you are always right when you are responsible for calling the shots. Being responsible is not the same thing as being right. Many of the employees doing the work can provide you with the best solutions. Some will take negative feedback personally and treat the person who provided it poorly. Many go with the flow and just do not say anything. Do not distance yourself from the people you work with, or eventually you will lose your grip on reality.

Once you become a supervisor, do not become a ghost. Many have so much time on their hands that they spend all day on social media and can even talk you to death. Your title does not entitle you to a get-out-of-work-free card.

Some of the supervisors just plain forget to take responsibility. If you make a mistake, just admit it and move on. We are all human, and none of us are perfect.

Some supervisors constantly pick their favorites from their inner circle for assignments and opportunities. Never surround yourself with "yes" people; you want people to tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear.

Some like to take credit for employees' work. Bad supervisors will do anything to look good, including taking credit for employees' work or ideas. Some just must feed their ego. This is the easiest way to demotivate someone from working hard ever again.

Some just need to learn to grow a backbone and learn to stand up for employees. Throwing your staff under the bus is never the answer. It is demotivating to work for a person who does not stand up for their employees. If someone makes a mistake, they quickly turn into judge, jury and executioner. Many are quick to point fingers.

Employees just want to feel appreciated, respected and included. Your job as a supervisor is to facilitate a good working environment for your employees. Bad bosses create toxic working environments. Toxic environments drain employees

emotionally, mentally and physically. I have seen many employees in these circumstances become disengaged to the point that they are only there for a paycheck until they retire.

There is nothing like having a boss who has your back. A good boss is, without a doubt, one of the best incentives to keep staff happy and engaged. I am not singling out anyone, but merely pointing out observations from being a cop for 24 years. If this pertains to you, remember it is never too late to change. As a supervisor, you must always conduct self-assessment.

I hope all the moms had a wonderful Mother's Day, and to all the dads, I hope you enjoy Father's Day. For all of you who are having difficulty conceiving and becoming parents, remember, God has not forgotten you. He could never forget you; God made you and he cares about every detail of your life. You might conceive next month, you might have children through adoption or fostering, or you might find that God has something different in store for your life and marriage. Whatever the future holds for your family, you can trust God that the future is good.

Please feel free to contact me at [ish@sflpba.org](mailto:ish@sflpba.org) or 305-593-0044.



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# An emotional homecoming



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I want to start by expressing how proud I am of our law enforcement community. It seems like everyone is stepping up and doing things for others. I know it is not unusual for our community to do this, but there are extra efforts out there, and they do not go unnoticed. In addition, setting the norm where people help serves as an example to others and encourages them to help as well.

Recently, one of our members was involved in a serious accident that changed his life. What is unique about generosity in times of crisis is that we are more inclined to help those in need. On Feb. 28 of this year, Officer Kedson Julmiste was involved in a car accident that left him paralyzed. He was on his way to work when a driver made an illegal U-turn, which resulted in a head-on collision. Officer Julmiste was a model employee who cared very much for his fellow officers. He was always willing to offer a word of encouragement to his coworkers when they were going through difficult situations. Every single person I spoke with, from coworkers to friends and family, had nothing but great things to say about Officer Julmiste. On April 13, family, friends and colleagues gathered with us from the PBA to welcome him home after a lengthy stay in the hospital. Even though it was a very emotional time for me, I was very elated for the outpouring of support that Officer Julmiste received. The response of support was overwhelming, yet nothing more than what he deserves. Officer Julmiste became a member of the Miami-Dade Correction and Rehabilitation Department on Jan. 21, 2019. As a law enforcement officer, Officer Julmiste has dedicated his life to helping others. Now others are coming to his aid.

*To Officer Kedson Julmiste: Even though the accident robbed you of the opportunity to fulfill your dreams and aspirations as a correctional officer, you will always be a part of our MDCR family. The PBA will always be your home away from home. The PBA and the Board of Directors have decided to declare April 13 "Officer Julmiste Day." On that day each year, the PBA, in association with the Public Affairs Bureau, will come up with festivities to commemorate your welcome-home celebration and to allow your fellow coworkers and well-wishers to gather in celebration with you and your family. I can remember vividly our first telephone conversation while you were in the hospital. You were so cheerful and uplifting, and you assured me that you were a man of faith and God has your back. Honestly, I do not think I would be able to cope. Your resilience is like no other. Resilience not only helps you get through difficult circumstances, but it also empowers you to grow and even improve your life along the way. There are many aspects of your life you can control, modify and grow with. That is the role of resilience. Sometimes things happen beyond your control, and that can knock the wind out of your sail, but a positive mindset is an important coping skill when dealing with adversity. People who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives commonly experience emo-*



Jalesha Exum accepts a retirement plaque on behalf of her late father, Sergeant James Exum.

*tional pain and stress. And you are no different. I pray that through God, you will find the strength needed to continue coping. I just want you to know that winners are not people who never fail, but people who never quit. As author Maya Angelo once said in an interview, "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated."*

With a spirit of gratitude, I would like to use this opportunity to thank every single person who showed up to welcome him home. I would like to thank all the generous donors and everyone who stopped by to offer words of encouragement and prayers. To all the people who dedicated their time to walk their communities on foot to raise money for this great cause, I cannot thank you enough. I would also like to use this opportunity to acknowledge a few people who played an integral role in making his homecoming a huge success:

- Dominique Moody and her team from the Public Affairs Bureau, for their role in helping to coordinate the event. This would not have been possible without her input and ideas.
- The Police Officers Assistance Trust (POAT), for stepping up to assist when called upon.
- Sergeant L. Gilliard, for his continued support, encouragement and guidance during Officer Julmiste's most dif-



ficult and challenging times. Sergeant Gilliard was also instrumental in setting up the Go Fund Me page to raise money for Officer Julmiste's medical expenses.

- Sonia Castro, for all her hard work behind the scenes to help us put this event together.
- All the officers of the Miami Dade Police Department who took time from their busy work schedules to come out to support a great cause.
- The Julmiste family, for their warm reception and for accepting us in their home with open arms.
- President Steadman Stahl, for his willingness and unwavering support to a great cause and for always being there for our members.
- Director Junior for his vision, guidance, encouragement and support.

There is a positive change occurring. The continued support and attention given toward Officer Julmiste are an indication of positive change. More and more people are demonstrating acts of kindness to care for our community. There seems to be a genuine understanding that we are all in this together, and that humanity is the one thing that can help us through hardships and adversity. Now that we are becoming more loving and kinder to one another, let us continue to be the first to take care of our own. I want to encourage our members to support the Police Officer Assistance Trust (POAT). Every dollar that is donated goes towards the support of an officer in some form of hardship.

The Police Officer Assistance Trust was established by the MDPD to support their officers in time of hardships. However, even though it was set up to assist police, they have never refused to aid an officer of MDCR. Since I became the sergeant-at-arms, I have called on them on numerous occasions to assist officers, and they have never refused to assist when warranted. It is only fair for us to start contributing, because none of us would like to be in a position where our contributions are been given to a member who has not contributed. It is a wise investment, because you never know when you are going to have to call on the POAT for help.

#### COVID strikes again

The COVID-19 virus has continued to be the biggest threat to the health and safety of our department. Between the months of April and May, our department suffered the loss of two great officers. In April, Officer Alexey Aguilar became the third casualty, and Officer David Jean-Baptiste was the fourth casualty shortly afterward in May. Both men were the patriarchs of their families. Even though decreasing positivity rates and cases in many areas indicates that the tide is beginning to turn, we must remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent exposure to the virus. Officer Aguilar served MDCR in commendable fashion for six years, and Officer Jean-Baptiste for a little over two decades. I had the opportunity to work with both officers: Officer Aguilar while assigned to the Mental Health Treatment Center, and Officer Jean-Baptiste while assigned to Pre-Trial Detention Center. Both officers were exemplary employees who were hardworking, respectful, honest and reliable. On behalf of the PBA and the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our warmest condolences to the Aguilar and Jean-Baptiste families. I would like to send thoughts of peace and courage to both families in their time of grief. I know it is going to be tough coping without the patriarchs of both fam-



From left, Captain A. Yeber, Employee of the Month recipients Officers Lane and L. Johnson and Lieutenant J. Smith.

ilies, but we will be here to offer support through all of this. May the memories of Officer Alexey Aguilar and Officer David Jean-Baptiste bring both families peace and comfort.

In closing, even though COVID-19 cases are decreasing, we must remain vigilant and steadfast in our efforts to prevent exposure to the virus.

Please feel free to contact me at [lawson@sflpba.org](mailto:lawson@sflpba.org) or at 305-593-0044.

The advertisement features a dark background with three police officers in uniform. The officer in the center is looking down, while the others are looking towards the camera. Below them is a logo for 'PHOENIX RISING LIFE COACHING' with a colorful phoenix graphic. The text reads: 'Stress Management, Nutrition, and Health/Wellness for First Responders. PhoenixRisingLifeCoaching.Com'. At the bottom left is a black and white photo of a smiling woman, Marlene Madruga. To the right of the photo is her contact information: 'Contact: Marlene Madruga, Retired Sergeant, Miami-Dade Corrections, 305-487-3338, or PhoenixRisingLifeCoaching@yahoo.com'.



# Collective bargaining,

## Part 2: Impasse



ANDREW  
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GENERAL  
COUNSEL

In the last issue of *the Heat*, we went through the collective bargaining process, but what happens when the parties are still too far apart to get to an agreement? The law requires the parties to negotiate in good faith (regardless of whether either party *really* believes the other is negotiating in good faith), and when an agreement is still out of reach, either party can declare an impasse. The declaration of impasse itself is very straightforward, as set forth in Florida Statute 447.403, which states: "If, after a reasonable period of negotiation concerning the terms and conditions of employment to be incorporated in

a collective bargaining agreement, a dispute exists between a public employer and a bargaining agent, an impasse shall be deemed to have occurred when one of the parties so declares in writing to the other party and to the commission," which is the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC).

The impasse hearing itself is much like an informal trial or arbitration. The judge is called a special magistrate and is selected by a list that PERC keeps of qualified people to serve as special magistrates. The issues that are at issue (where an agreement could not be reached) are presented by the parties, along with witness testimony to the extent necessary. When necessary, the PBA engages forensic accountants who can take a deep dive into the employer's books in an effort to show that what is being requested (which typically has an economic cost) is reasonable.

The statutes are specific as to what the special magistrate takes into consideration in rendering their decision, such as comparisons with other law enforcement officers in similar (or comparable) cities, hazards of employment, the interest and welfare of the public (which includes the employees themselves) and of course, the availability of funds.

Not surprisingly, employers often cry poor, when in reality there is plenty of money available for their own special projects. Our often-used statement is that that there is no problem with the availability of funds, but with the allocation of funds.

After presenting all the evidence and briefing our position in writing, we ultimately get a decision from the special magistrate. However, and this is a big however, the special magistrate's decision is only a recommendation and is not binding on the parties. It is not until the recommendation is brought before the elected officials on the city or county commission that they, the commissioners, impose what they believe is in the best interest of everyone. Hardly a perfect system, but it is the system we live with.

As with collective bargaining, there is a great deal of strategy that comes into play, and it is not so secret that our power

### 2021 PENDING GRIEVANCES

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of **April 30, 2021**. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

#### DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

HIALEAH	1
HOMESTEAD CORRECTIONS	1
HOMESTEAD PD	1
M-D CORRECTIONS	
ASSOCIATION	1
TGK	2
TGK(MHTC)	1
MWDC	1
PTDC	1
TOTAL	6
M-D POLICE	2
MIAMI GARDENS	4
MCSO (DEP SHERIFF)	1
NORTH BAY VILLAGE	1
NORTH MIAMI	1
OPA LOCKA	2
SWEETWATER	1
<b>TOTAL GRIEVANCES</b>	<b>21</b>

in the negotiation and impasse process derives a great deal from politics, and specifically, being involved in the political process in the election of local officials. The reason for that is obvious — those are the ones who make the final decision regarding impasse and, in a perfect world, have given direction to their bargaining team to do the right thing for the employees from the beginning, avoiding the necessity of impasse.

This, along with last issue's article, only scratches the surface of the process involved in bargaining and impasse. What is important to remember is that you have by far the most experienced team at the PBA to guide you through the process when it happens. The total years of experience is by far more than any other union in Florida. We will always fight for getting you the very best that we can. We know that money isn't endless, but we also know well that there is no higher priority for the allocation of funds than public safety.



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# Scholarships, support and saying thanks



DENNIS  
BAMBACH  
RPOC  
PRESIDENT

Hallelujah, there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel. I don't know how bright that light will be, but let's keep our fingers crossed for the best. I hope that all of you who wanted to receive the COVID-19 vaccination have been able to get one. It will be a blessing to be able to return to some sort of normalcy in our lives.

I would like to again remind our membership that this is an election year for the RPOC. If you are interested in running for office, please contact anyone on the board or send a letter to the following address: Retired Police Officers Council, P.O. Box 570790, Miami, FL 33257-0790. Our bylaws

set a limit for the president of three terms. My final term will be up this year. Running this organization is a joint effort of all board members, so please consider joining us on the board.

Here are reports from some of our board members:

**Ed Spisak, treasurer:** Members, we just want to thank the 55 percent of those who have paid their late dues. The board is always disappointed when it becomes necessary to delete members who were previously in good standing. Our organization is still strong, thanks to the support of all who renew each year and those retired LEOs who join as new members.

**John Fraley, vice president:** The Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund will present scholarships to five individuals this year for the fall semester in 2021. The five students presented applications that demonstrated their desire to continue their studies and pursue the next level of their education. The applications were reviewed by Paul Rittenhouse, Ph.D., a professor of international political studies at Florida International University. Dr. Rittenhouse advised that all applicants clearly set goals and objectives in their pursuit of higher education. The five scholarships will be given to the following individuals:

- **Tori Bevan**, granddaughter of retired member Steven Frazer, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship for continued studies at Chatham University in Pittsburgh. Tori will major in the medical field, with the goal of becoming a physician assistant.
- **Nicole King**, granddaughter of retired member Richard Magaldi, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship for continued studies at the University of Central Florida. Nicole is a third-year student, majoring in marketing.
- **Brooke Woodburn**, granddaughter of retired member Delbert Woodburn Jr., has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship for continued studies at the University of Central Florida, majoring in integrated business.
- **Taylor Woodburn**, granddaughter of retired member Delbert Woodburn Jr., has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship for continued studies at Broward College, majoring in business management, integrated business.
- **Russell Young**, grandson of retired member John Fraley, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship for continued studies at Mississippi State University, majoring in biomedical engineering.

**Jerry Rudoff, sergeant at arms/information officer:** How can I not sound like a broken record! As COVID continues to occupy our minds and activities, why is it just as important, if not more, that you stay and remain connected to the RPOC "info grapevine line" once retired? Certainly, many of us, once retired,

wish to leave our past life behind, but that doesn't mean to forget about the many friends and relationships you acquired on the job. That doesn't mean not being able to be kept up to date on the latest happenings in the LE community you just left. That doesn't mean not having access to private social media groups and your very own website so that you can receive correct and accurate information, such as retirees' annual qualification shoots as well as dates, times and places for monthly luncheons and our yearly reunions.

Whether you belong to other social/fraternal or professional LE groups such as the Progressive Officers Association, the Hispanic Police Officers Association, International Police Association, Shomrim Society, Police Officers Assistance Trust, ASME, PBA, FOP or worked LE for the federal government or a myriad of others, the Retired Police Officers Council (RPOC) and its resources are there to offer the commonality to bring us all together and to remind us why we all made the choice early on in our lives to become law enforcement officers.

We offer to you all the exclusive use of our private social media and our monthly e-newsletters. Do you have some old pictures you'd like to share? Do you have copies of old newsletters from your respective departments you'd like to share? Are you getting together with other retirees for reunions, lunches, etc. and you'd like to have the information coordinated? Well, we are here to do that — among the many other things we can assist you with. Do you have ideas on things you'd like to engage in, or would you like to be more engaged with the RPOC organization? You can communicate directly with board members by going to [www.rocpba.org](http://www.rocpba.org) and clicking on the "Contact Us" tab, where you can leave a message. We guarantee a 100 percent response rate. Try it, you'll like it!

**Reba Miller, chaplain:** Reaching out with special prayers, support and condolences to all our friends and families following the homegoing of our beloved brethren:

- Kenneth "Ken" Buzzi, April 2021
- William "Bill" Cegelis, April 2021
- Maynor F. "Frank" Harrell, March 2021
- Gary McCrimmon, August 2020
- Robert "Bob" Rossman, April 2021
- Peter G. Newman, March 2021

Always remember, your presence is a present to the world. Each of us is truly one of a kind. Make each day count.

We have lost a number of members in the last few months. Unfortunately, since Maggie and I moved out of South Florida to Dunnellon, I have not been able to attend all their services or celebrations, but other board members were in attendance. I personally deeply felt all the losses. I did get to attend Bill Cegelis's celebration, and it was quite heartwarming to see how many of our members were in attendance.

To that thought, many of the members I talked to were quite anxious to get back to normal and attend our annual reunions. As of this writing, it is a definite go for April 2022. Please make plans to attend and get together with old friends again. Further information will be published in upcoming newsletters.

We would like to welcome the following new members: Marcelene Hudziak, MDPD; Raymond Sipple Jr., MDPD; Kennedy Rosario, MDPD; Kerensa Smith, MDPD; Joseph Fleres, Coral Gables; reinstated: John Thomas, MDPD.



# A memorial no amount of rain could dampen



SERGEANT  
KENNETH  
HORGAN  
POAT  
ASSISTANCE  
COMMITTEE  
CHAIRPERSON

We were finally able to have an event! And what an event it was. On May 6, we held our 40th Annual Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony at Tropical Park. We gathered to remember all of the officers who gave their lives serving the Miami-Dade County community. We gathered to let their families know we will never forget them.

In February, it was decided we would find a way to hold this most important event. All of the planning, preparations and ordering were done. The Honor Guard put in countless hours of rehearsal. Special thanks to everyone who came out and helped. The site looked amazing thanks to all of you.

We were ready for the families to arrive and honor them. And then it started to rain. And rain. And just

when you thought it couldn't rain anymore, it continued to rain even harder. When the rain finally stopped, the ceremony continued. The officers, whose names were engraved on that wall were honored.

- Shirley Fagan, Miami Beach Police Department
- Steven G. Greco, Miccosukee Police Department
- Jairo Bravo, Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation
- Aubrey Travis Johnson Jr., Miami Police Department

Sadly, we have four more names that will be added to the wall next year. But I know this: No matter what, those officers and their families will be honored at the 41st Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers Memorial on Thursday, May 5, 2022, at Tropical Park.

If you or someone you know is in need of assistance, refer to our website at [poat.org](http://poat.org) or call the office at 305-594-6662.



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# PBA is in the game on pension protection and other issues

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

So as halftime comes with the conclusion of the 2021 legislative session, let's check the score regarding the Florida PBA's agenda. The session that ran through March and April is only the first half of the time the union has to work on issues to protect members and improve benefits and working conditions.

The second-half clock for 2021 starts ticking in the fall, when interim committee meetings start and the important issues for the 2022 session will be targeted. The pandemic tripped up the game plan somewhat for the first half, but the PBA has great faith that its defensive posture has put some points on the board, so to speak.

"I think we came out of the session unscathed," comments Florida PBA Executive Director Matt Puckett.

His assessment that the PBA came out of the recently concluded session with some momentum is based on allaying the State Senate's continued desire to hit public employee pensions and the lack of consideration of any police reform legislation. And in this year, that is a victory.

"We just focused on the pension being the big thing and not having anything bad happen with police reform," Puckett continues. "Overall, we'll look at it and say it was one of those years that hopefully we don't face again. But no one will be hurt as a result of this session."

With regard to the pension, the PBA lobby spent much of the session executing some basic blocking and tackling. Working with Senate President Wilton Simpson, who first proposed public employee pension reform eight years ago, they discussed how to improve it rather than rolling it back. Such action exemplifies how the PBA continues to grow as a prominent presence and voice in state government.

Upon further review of the 2021 session interim committee meetings in January, Puckett joined with the president of the state's firefighters association to meet with Simpson and current pension bill sponsor Senator Ray Rodrigues of Lee County. They discussed a plan to study changes that would keep the pension healthy, including extending Drop by three years, allowing FRS members enrolled in the investment plan one more chance to go back to the pension plan and the option to retire and lock in at 25 years.

"For the new folks, he wants to see pensions go away, but he also understands that for certain public-sector jobs like law enforcement, corrections, probation officers, firefighters, the pension is something that really is of value to keep an employee there," Puckett notes. "It's not an easy job, and having a pension is a big deal."

Another proposed hybrid deal would give members the 3 percent pension multiplier for the first 20 years on the job. If they keep working beyond 20 years, they could go into a new investment plan and put 10 percent of salary into it, which employers would match. And you would get a guaranteed 60 percent of the highest five years of salary when reaching age 60.

The House did not go along with the plan, so it's being stud-

ied further. And that may lead to a discussion about changing the nature of the pension system completely.

"There needs to be a real structural discussion about whether we continue to have this gigantic FRS system with teachers and police and other workers all in one system, or do we go to a state-run retirement system just for first responders or special-risk employees?" Puckett says. "I think that's something that we're going to have to think about if we want to keep the pension."

Perhaps the biggest play the PBA made during the session was to increase its political capital with the executive branch and the state legislature, especially the members of the Senate and House that made up the freshmen class. Florida PBA President John Kazanjian has been leading a formidable statewide entourage of charters and chapters presidents in gaining presence with Governor Ron DeSantis, Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez, Attorney General Ashley Moody and CFO Jimmy Patronis.

That led to the PBA being recognized as the prominent law enforcement labor union when the governor signed HB1, the anti-riot legislation, in April. Additionally, Puckett notes that many legislators were elected this past November by running a pro-law enforcement campaign.

Speaker Chris Sprowls, whose father is a retired NYPD officer and PBA member, has always been an advocate for the police, as has Simpson. Puckett added that newly elected Representative John Snyder, the son of Martin County Sheriff William Snyder, has become a staunch ally, along with Representatives David Borrero and Alex Rizo, who represent Miami and other parts of south Florida, and Representative Linda Chaney from St. Pete, who took out an incumbent by running a very pro law-enforcement campaign.

"I think there are a lot of folks who are true believers and have a very strong desire to protect law enforcement and corrections," Puckett praises. "We have some very strong relationships and have built up a lot of political capital. And over time, we have grown to understand when you can spend it."

One place he doesn't anticipate spending it is on blocking and tackling any attempts to pass legislation that would take qualified immunity away from law enforcement in Florida. Though other states have passed such legislation, there are no points on the board for it in Florida.

"It has zero traction with Florida's legislature," Puckett confirms. "The speaker, the Senate president, they would never agree to it. Ashley Moody would fight it. The governor would fight it. I don't even know if the Democratic party would do it."

There was one significant scoring play to speak of: The governor's ability to keep the economy going amid the pandemic has created some funding which, combined with the \$10 billion in federal stimulus money the state is getting, will fuel a bonus check coming to all law enforcement officers.

It might not be a big score, but it's significant.

"That's a win," Puckett declares. "And again, it shows how much the governor and the state like law enforcement."



# The Pembroke Pines Police Department is **HIRING!**



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\*Relocation Reimbursement applies if you must relocate from your residence that is over 100 miles from the Pembroke Pines Police Department as measured by Mapquest.

The City of Pembroke Pines is located in southwest Broward County, Florida, near Ft. Lauderdale and Miami. Pembroke Pines is home to over 170,000 residents. The City's 28 superior parks & lush landscaping enhances the City's natural beauty and South Florida charm. Pembroke Pines was named "2014's Best City of Hispanic Entrepreneurs" by WalletHub, and was ranked by Money Magazine as #32 in the "Top 50 Best Places to Live of 2014" as well as being the only Florida city on that list.

The Pembroke Pines Police Department is an Equal Employment Opportunity Provider and Employer.



# ***Congrats to retired members***

The South Florida PBA is proud to honor retired members who have put in long hours and outstanding service to their departments and communities. Join us in honoring these great members and exceptional public servants as they celebrate their retirement.



**Carlos Alvarez,  
Doral Police Department**



**Marine Patrol Officer  
Joe Garcia**



**RID Officer Sally Glasel**



**Sergeant William  
"2 Bills" Williams**



**Danny Hurtado,  
Miami-Dade Police Department**



**Hector Llevat and Ariel Artime,  
Miami-Dade Police Department**



**Maria Robainas,  
Miami-Dade Police Department**



**Victor Mederos, Miami-Dade Corrections  
and Rehabilitation Department**



**Officer Anthony Rodriguez,  
Miami-Dade Police Department**



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MDCR Officer Kedson Julmiste hugs his daughter Olivia for the first time in six weeks as fellow PBA members welcome him home on April 13.



# One Day at a Time

**Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation Officer Kedson Julmiste will not rest until he recovers from catastrophic car accident**

■ BY ROSEMARY AN

Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation Officer Kedson Julmiste squeezed his 5-year-old daughter Olivia tight as soon as he wheeled off the transportation bus from the hospital to his house on April 13. It was the first time in more than a month that he was able to hug her.

On Feb. 28, Julmiste was involved in a horrific accident that left him paralyzed from the chest down. During the grueling six weeks of therapy and rehabilitation, Julmiste had moments where he wanted to give up. But he didn't. He was determined to heal so he could return home to Olivia.

"She hugged me and said, 'Daddy, I missed you,'" Julmiste

remarked. "It hit a deeper part of my heart to know that she felt the pain of my absence. I held her and she cried."

Julmiste, 31, was welcomed home by his family, friends and colleagues, who praised his return and encouraged him to keep pushing through recovery.

It was not just a celebration of completing therapy and returning home. This was a celebration of life, and more life to come. And for Julmiste, it is not going to be enough to learn how to adapt to the new lifestyle in a wheelchair. He's going to learn how to get out of it.

"I'm going to walk again," Julmiste declared. "When? I don't

CONTINUED ON 22



know. But I am going to take everything one day at a time.”

### No way I should have made it

Julmiste woke up at 5 a.m. on Feb. 28. He had to leave the house at 6 a.m. to arrive at work by 7 a.m. for the start of his shift. He stepped into his black 2017 Nissan Rogue to take the same safe route to the Metro West Detention Center. It was supposed to be just like any other day of work.

Then he blacked out.

The next thing he remembered was being in and out of consciousness at the scene of the accident.

“I remember talking to my friend and my sister,” Julmiste recalled. “I also remember someone was stapling my head, which put me back to being conscious because it hurt so bad.”

Through the police report, Julmiste learned that a drunk driver had made an illegal U-turn and hit him head-on. The impact occurred as Julmiste swerved right to get out of the way. Then he hit a light pole.

“A couple of years ago, a bunch of kids driving a car hit the same light pole,” Julmiste remarked. “Their car exploded, and they passed away. But by the grace of God, I was able to make it.”

Responders at the scene had to force open both front doors of the vehicle to rescue him. The car’s engine and two front wheels were gone. Julmiste was found in the passenger seat.

“I know my purpose is to be here,” Julmiste noted. “Because truth be told, there’s no way I should’ve made it.”

The next thing he knew, Julmiste was headed to an operating room for the first time in his life. Ryder Trauma Center Jackson Memorial doctors touched Julmiste and asked if he could feel it. He said no. He couldn’t feel anything. He was told that there was damage to his spine, causing paralysis from the chest down.

“I spent at least two days in a room by myself,” Julmiste mentioned. “And I’m like, ‘God, I’m in this predicament. I can’t feel my legs, this can’t be real. But what’s next?’”

Physical therapy was next. The first exercise was to see how long he could endure the pain of sitting on a chair.

“They would lift me up by this machine in the ceiling and it would put me on this chair,” Julmiste described. “They said, ‘You can sit in there for as long as you can take the pain.’”

Julmiste sat in the chair for at least two or three hours. For the next few days, Julmiste kept it up. Doctors kept telling him that he was improving.

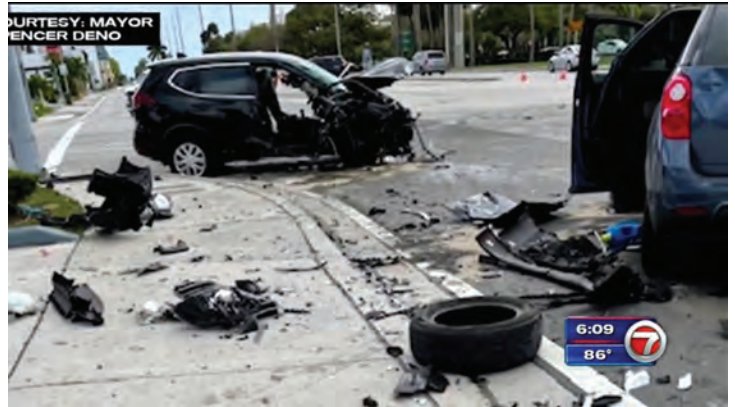
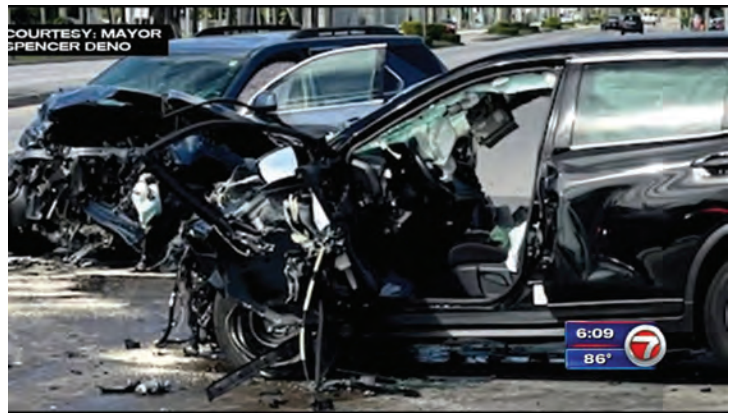
“But what I would tell them was, ‘Even though I’m physically improving, the healing in my body still hurts and that’s not improving,’” Julmiste recalled. “I came to a place where I’m like, ‘OK, God, you got me here this far. I didn’t die, why am I here?’”

Julmiste was transferred to the last phase: therapy. At that unit, he was told, “The last step is on your way out.”

### I pushed through the pain

Julmiste completed therapy at the Ryder Trauma Center and arrived at the Memorial Rehabilitation Institute at Memorial Regional Hospital South to continue his rehabilitation. At that point, he was able to move, but with difficulty.

“I could move, but it was very painful,” Julmiste relayed. “I pushed through the pain. It hurt so bad, but I knew I had to get up. I had to progress, because me crying, trying to figure out why I’m here and why I’m going through this, wasn’t going to help me.”



Photos of the catastrophic car accident on Feb. 28 show the front tires and engine of his vehicle were ripped off.

He learned how to pull his pants up. He learned how to bathe himself. He learned how to sit down in his wheelchair and push himself — physically and mentally.

“It wasn’t easy,” Julmiste confessed. “There were some good days, there were some bad days. But I wanted therapy literally every single day. There wasn’t a day off.”

On a good day, Julmiste’s pain medication would work well. He’d be able to talk to his daughter, brother and sister to get a boost of motivation. He would show them his progress over FaceTime.

But on a bad day, the pain medication wouldn’t work as well, putting Julmiste in extra pain. He would undergo such stress on his body that he’d miss a FaceTime with Olivia.

He also dealt with autonomic dysreflexia, common in people with spinal cord injuries. It’s a sudden onset of excessively high blood pressure, and it meant his shoes and clothes couldn’t be on too tight, or else he’d get tired quickly or sweat excessively.

“The hardest moment is when during therapy I would have to stop and breathe,” Julmiste admitted. “I would have to get a cup of ice to eat to calm me down. It was at those breaking points where I felt like, ‘You know what? I can’t go on anymore. I don’t want to do this anymore.’ And my blood pressure and heart rate would be too high, and I would have to stop therapy there and go back to my room.”

Julmiste explained that the difficulties were because there was a delay in his brain signals to the rest of his body.

“My body [was] still adjusting to itself,” he continued. “My nerves are going bad. My brain signal will tell my body what to do, and my body wouldn’t know how to do it. It would drive my body crazy, and that’s why I had those feelings. I hated those feelings.”

Still, Julmiste refused to stay in bed. So much so that his



nurse and doctor acknowledged his resilience.

"[They] were telling me, 'Look, man, some people in your predicament would just lay down there like they're dead or whatever, but you push forward,'" Julmiste remembered. "And I'm like, 'Of course,' because I see myself moving. I see myself still being happy to my family. I can't just stop here. Life doesn't stop here."

### **My faith had to increase**

Julmiste spent 100 percent of his energy on rehabilitation. He credits that to his vast support system.

His sister Trarmile Julmiste took care of hospital bills and looked after Olivia every weekend. His brother, Harry Louis, tried to see him every single day.

"There have been some very tough, painful times that no one will be able to see other than [Harry]," Kedson noted. "And Trarmile is my go-to person. I call her, text her, when I'm [feeling] down and I can't keep it together."

Olivia's mom, Aaleah Downs, helped to explain the accident to their daughter. They share custody of Olivia, but Downs also allowed their daughter to spend time with Julmiste's family in his absence. Olivia tried to be the best a 5-year-old can be.

"Explaining that to a 5-year-old was tough," Julmiste relayed. "She would say, 'Well, Dad, I'm sorry this happened to you. It's my fault.' And her mom pitched in to help me explain that it's not her fault."

The officer knows that his paralysis was life-altering for all his family members. Trarmile turned her attention to anything she could do for Kedson. Harry focused on spending quality time with him. And some were still so numb from the news of the accident that it was hard to see Julmiste in person.

But Julmiste believes it proved the power of family in adversity.

"Some of my family went through a lot of stress that I didn't know of," he mentioned. "But I appreciate all of it. It was always the five siblings, my mom and my dad. We always stuck together. And even after this, we came closer together as a family."

Julmiste is also grateful to colleagues for showing him what it means to be part of a law enforcement family and take care of each other's six. MDCR Hospital Services Unit Sergeant Leviticus Gilliard helped Julmiste see family members when he needed it. And Julmiste believes God may have placed Lieutenant Jermaine Lawson, the South Florida PBA treasurer, there to help push him forward.

He is grateful to God for listening to his prayers on the darkest days. And for giving him the strength to carry on.

"I would never think that I'd be the person to almost touch death," Julmiste remarked. "But in this time my faith had to increase. Whatever God allows, whatever the blessing and whatever he wants to use me for, I'll allow it."

Of course, he is grateful to all those who donated on GoFundMe and the Police Officer Assistance Trust.

"There were so many individuals who supported me," Julmiste noted. "I wish I could just thank each and every one of them who just sacrificed, whether it's money, time or gifts."

Julmiste deemed himself to be blessed. What he didn't know at the time was that there would be many more blessings to come.

### **He keeps going**

MDCR Community Affairs Unit Administrative Officer III Dominique Moody, a civilian employee, had never met Jul-



As he returns home, Kedson Julmiste greets reporters who came out to cover his story.

miste in person. But when she heard of his accident, she wanted to support one of her own. So she reached out to Julmiste's sister, Lawson and Gilliard to come up with a plan.

Because of the pandemic, Julmiste was unable to see many visitors. He had told Lawson that he missed seeing his friends at MDCR.

"[Julmiste] let Lieutenant Lawson know, 'Hey, I really wish I could see my coworkers again, my friends, I really missed them,'" Moody explained. "And it touched [Lawson's] heart."

Lawson planted the idea of a homecoming celebration, so Julmiste's friends and family could see him after completing rehabilitation.

"We started planning, and the idea just grew from there," Moody mentioned. "From that one conversation he had with Lawson, it just kept growing more wings."

The homecoming team reached out to the media, hoping the story would gain traction from local news. They wanted to help Julmiste's family raise more money, because the doctor appointments weren't going to stop once he got home. He would need funds for his ongoing treatment and care.

"It took a lot of time, energy and effort," Moody noted. "But it made me very proud and happy to be able to help one of our own. Because although [the accident] impacted him emo-

CONTINUED ON 24





MDCR officers and PBA members share some pizza with Kedson at his homecoming party.

**ONE** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

tionally, physically and I'm sure spiritually, he keeps going."

On April 13, Julmiste got off the vehicle that brought him to his house in Miami. Reporters crowded around him, trying to record the officer's words as he hugged his daughter for the first time in six weeks.

"I said everything that was in my mind and in my heart," Julmiste recalled. "I told them everything that I went through."

The officer was showered with encouraging words, flowers and handwritten cards from members of MDCR, the PBA, POAT and the Miami-Dade PD. MDCR Director Daniel Junior was one of the first to welcome Julmiste home.

"We take that oath to protect each other and watch each other's six," Junior told reporters. "That's a lifetime oath."

And Moody got the chance to meet Julmiste in person. She mentioned that seeing the officer's strength was a life-altering experience of its own.

"He told me that seeing how many people are supporting him encourages him to keep moving," Moody described. "The icing on the cake for me is to know that the job that God blessed me with is really a blessing to others. And I told him, 'You're basically a hero because what you have taken on voluntarily would definitely break a lot of people.'"

Julmiste was happy enough just to be able to have physical contact with his daughter again. And the overwhelming support from his family, friends and coworkers blew him away.

"I realized that Corrections is not just Corrections," Julmiste

remarked. "It's a brotherhood. They made me feel secure in that: 'You're not going to be alone in this and that we're going to support you. Whatever you need, we're going to be there for you.'"

### She ran to hug her father

While Julmiste was getting accustomed to life in a wheelchair at home, Moody was already planning the next surprise with MDPD Northside District Officer Tammy Chevalier.

Moody and Chevalier wanted to surprise Olivia for her sixth birthday by showing up at her school. They assembled some of Julmiste's closest colleagues from MDCR, officers of MDPD and the PBA. Of course, Julmiste was the main act of the surprise.

"Six years old is a big milestone," Moody noted. "What she's going through, seeing her father's change, it can't be easy for her. So not only did we want to make sure we did something nice for Officer Julmiste and encourage him, but we also want to encourage his daughter as well, especially at that young age."

On April 30, they arrived at the Seminole Elementary School cafeteria. They set up pizza, cupcakes and little goodies to celebrate Olivia's day.

She had no idea why her class was cut short that day. She only knew that her class would be going to the cafeteria. Her classmates entered the cafeteria first and were seated. Then, Olivia made her entrance.

"She ran to hug her father and all the kids were excited for her," Moody recalled. "It was the cutest. She held her father very tight, and it's because she's crazy about her dad and she loves him."

Surprise events aside, Julmiste is shocked at the amount of continued support from his colleagues.

"Even to this day they make sure I have everything I need," Julmiste mentioned. "I still get text messages from officers who don't even know me and send me things. They said they'd be there for me on the day I came home, and still carry it out."

Moody continues to visit Julmiste's family and speaks with them multiple times a week. She has visited Julmiste's house to see some of the progress in making the bathroom and kitchen ADA-compliant, which was made possible by the help of the PBA and POAT.

Moody also mentioned that the flurry of support for Julmiste is because he was someone who touched people's hearts.


"He obviously touched a lot of people and their hearts, and he continues to do so today," Moody relayed. "So we'll do everything we can at Corrections to continue to help him the best way that we can, because this is not the end."

With his family, colleagues and faith by his side, Julmiste can focus on continuing to improve. He must learn how to maneuver in a wheelchair by himself before he can move on to activities like driving or spending time with his daughter like he used to.

Julmiste finds solace in the fact that he has a massive support system that will push him to his highest goal — getting rid of the wheelchair and walking without it.

"I know I'm not going to be in this journey by myself," Julmiste announced. "But one thing is for sure, whatever it takes, I want to heal. I want to walk again."





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# SUPER MOMS

## A Mother's Day–inspired tribute to officers who do double duty

■ BY KAREN JENKINS

The combination of motherhood and working full time at the Key West Police Department is an intricate dance of priorities for Gabriella Kouri.

The 25-year-old law enforcement officer adores her career — which she shares with her husband, David Kouri, who also works for Key West — and has two children who help fill every day. Her daughters, Ella Rose and Leia Grace, are 6 and 2, respectively.

“I would say the biggest challenge for sure is scheduling, but aside from scheduling, I just feel like this job kind of consumes a lot of our time,” confirmed Kouri, who works a 6 a.m.–to-6 p.m. shift while her husband works nights. “We can’t really commit to a sport because our schedules don’t really allow. So for me, that’s the biggest hurdle to get over, just because I am a very involved parent. The fact that I can’t involve her in something outside that we can commit to is very mentally challenging for me.”

According to the National Institute of Justice, women make up more than half of the U.S. population but fewer than 13 percent of sworn law enforcement officers. Pile on the responsibilities that come with being a mom, and women on the job face staggering additional challenges.

That’s why, in honor of Mother’s Day, it’s vital that we shine a spotlight on the South Florida PBA members who perform the two most important jobs in the world — motherhood and law enforcement.

“I love seeing working moms, especially in this career,” Kouri affirmed. “It’s tough, but it’s doable, and kids are amazing. They change your life in ways that



North Miami Officer Rocio Torres with her 8-month-old and 3-year-old sons.

you didn’t know were possible.”

Kouri, who has been on the job since 2017, wakes up at 5 a.m. to be at work by 6. Her husband keeps the girls at home while she’s gone, often exhausted from his shift the night before. Because their 2-year-old daughter doesn’t attend day care, it’s all hands on deck for 12 hours.

“My husband sacrifices a lot of sleep,” Kouri praised. “He stays home with her and then still comes in to work at night.”

In order for David to get to Key West on time, Kouri has to get off around 5:30 p.m. so that they can merge and the children aren’t left unattended. Some days, if Kouri has to work overtime, David will drop the children off at Kouri’s mother’s house around 4 p.m. — every minute is

a complicated and calculated waltz of putting the children’s needs first.

“I do not know how people have kids without family around, because without my own mom being able to help out with my kids, we wouldn’t be able to do it,” Kouri explained. “I’ll typically stay at my mom’s house that night [if the kids are there]. It’s easier to not have to put my kids in a police car and drive them home.”

Katrina Gregorisch understands the priorities Kouri balances, although she experiences them from the other side of the radio. Gregorisch has worked at the Miami-Dade Police Department’s Communications Bureau as a 911 tele-

CONTINUED ON 28



communicator for the past 19 years and has two sons, ages 15 and 10. She has had to figure out how to balance family obligations for the majority of her career.

"There comes a time where you run out of time," she expressed. "Every time I would leave, it would take away time. And that's hard, because your job is expecting you to be there, because they need people. You get torn, but you kind of always choose your family."

Gregorisch also manages the stress of having nearly two decades of experience talking to people at the worst point of their lives.

Too often, she's had mothers on the phone who have left their babies unattended in the bathtub. She's gotten calls about children being abducted from their bus stops. She knows the tragedy of an unconscious child who needs CPR. To combat these situations, she exercises extra caution with her own children.

"You're more cautious as to what you allow your kids to do or who you allow them to go with, because you never know what'll be another incident," she shared. "After a rough day at work, we all just have to get the pieces back up together and put ourselves back together before we get home, because we have our kids watching. It's one of those things where you have to be right for them."

While Gregorisch's sons are older, she remembers the unbelievable challenges of the early years. They're challenges that Rocio Torres, a law enforcement officer of eight years in North Miami, is currently navigating with an 8-month-old son and a 3-year-old son.

Torres and her husband, Orestes Torres, are both detectives for the same department. As Torres cares for an infant, calls in the middle of the night have gotten especially difficult to navigate.

"A high-priority case where we're both getting called out, I would have to call my mom or someone to be like, 'Hey I need help,'" she shared. "I know a lot of regular-schedule moms are really picky about their kids' schedules, like when bedtime is, when they wake up, how many hours they have to eat. Unfortunately, we just can't have a routine like that, so we kind of just roll with the punches."

Torres works until 6 p.m., and by the time she gets home, it's close to 7 p.m. She rushes to feed her sons, bathe them and put them to bed, no matter how difficult her day at work has been. On the days that she's working, that's the only



Gabriella Kouri and her husband, David, with their children.

time she is able to see her children.

"Once you have kids, you realize like, 'OK, this is more important to me now to be home,'" she explained. "And before you have children, there's things that you just don't understand. Like you can empathize with victims or with complainants, but you don't really understand certain things until you become a parent yourself. So I think that definitely being a mom has made me a more compassionate law enforcement officer."

Torres is proud to come in the door in uniform at the end of the day as an example of public service. She said it's rewarding to be bringing up two boys while simultaneously working as a law enforcement officer.

"My favorite part about being a mom

is watching your children grow into their own people with their own values and instilling those morals in them," she relayed. "My favorite part of being in law enforcement is when you can make a difference in somebody's life. It's kind of the same goal."

Kouri feels the same pride walking into the house in uniform. Her 6-year-old daughter has told her she wants to be a police officer when she gets older, and Kouri knows that her example helped create those aspirations. For Kouri, that makes the balancing act worth the many challenges.

"It's not easy is all I can say, but definitely rewarding," Kouri shared. "My daughters look up to me in a way that it just makes me so proud to do what I do."





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A woman with long blonde hair is seen from behind, sitting at a large, curved desk in a call center. She is looking at several computer monitors. The desk is cluttered with various items including a keyboard, a mouse, a water bottle, a telephone, and some papers. In the background, other workers are visible at their desks, also equipped with multiple monitors. The overall atmosphere is busy and professional.

# True Calling

Miami-Dade Police Department Communications Bureau is a vital part of a first response

■ BY STACEY MCEVOY

Katrina Gregorisch, 19 years on the job, is one of the first reassuring voices the public might hear when they dial 911. It is the work of Miami-Dade Police Department Police Complaint Officers (PCOs) and dispatchers that begins the chain of command to keep the public safe with a timely and successful response to a call.

Gregorisch — and so many others who work in the Miami-Dade Communications Bureau — bring a passion to the work that makes it more than a job. Answering the calls is truly a calling to these women and men who are the first to respond to an emergency.

“My stepmother is a retired sergeant and my father, who passed away last year, was a retired lieutenant,” said Gregorisch. “Growing up, it always piqued my interest to listen to that girl on the other side of my daddy’s radio. She was telling him what to do. I wanted to be that girl. Then, when I got here, I realized there was another side to a 911 operator. I opted to help as many people as I could in a day, and that’s what I do and love — that’s what my family loves. It’s in the blood.”

A look into the call-taking and dispatch world shows that policing starts with the Communications Bureau. It’s the heartbeat of the police department, and it’s a well-oiled machine in a controlled chaotic environment.

Located in a large warehouse, the Communications Bureau consists of PCOs, also known as call takers, who answer 911 calls directly from the public, and dispatchers, who communicate with police officers to send them out on calls to service the unincorporated area of Miami-Dade County and 29 municipalities. With a staff of 170, it is the busiest 911 call center in the southeastern U.S.

As calls come in, PCOs fill out computer screens with the address, phone number and incident details. Next, they send it to dispatch, where the call, based on the address, gets routed

through the computer to the correct district dispatcher, who dispatches available units to respond.

“Sometimes the situation changes when the officers get there, but I have to send it as what I hear because it’s on the tape line,” said Gregorisch, referring to the captured recording that will be available for pulling if necessary.

Work stations are overwhelming to look at. PCOs go back and forth between five computer screens that serve different purposes. Screens show what calls are in the dispatch booth, which includes fire and fire rescue calls, internet mapping, the phone system — one for entering call information and one that allows internet access to provide additional information.

Like many of her colleagues, Gregorisch has multiple certifications to handle whatever might be thrown at her during a shift. Her arsenal includes first responder training and crisis and suicide intervention. She is also certified in emergency medical dispatch protocols and CPR. PCOs have to know how to properly code a medical situation or other incident so the department can let officers know what equipment to bring.

And everything happens at lightning speed.

“At that point, we dispatch the police officers to the calls of service according to priority. Of course, injuries or potential-for-injury calls are dispatched first, followed by nonemergencies that are called ‘routines,’ like car accidents that have no injuries, or car break-ins,” said Damien Colson, a Miami-Dade Police Department dispatcher who works the 2 p.m.–10 p.m. shift, historically the busiest shift, with about 15 other dispatchers, not including supervisors. The other two shifts are split between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

A dispatcher’s role has a dual purpose, as explained by Colson, who has been in this role for 16 years. Obviously, dispatchers help save lives by supporting officers, but Colson was quick to point out that officer safety is a major priority.

“Officer safety is number one,” said Colson with great em-





phasis. Colson said that each time he picks up a call, he is thinking first and foremost about the safety of the officers who will respond to it.

"I want to give the officers as much information as possible so when they respond, they know exactly what they're looking for," he continued. "A guy might have broken into a house wearing a red shirt and black pants and he might have a weapon in his hand. Does he have a car? What was the last direction of travel? It's a must that I tell the officer everything I know so that the officer is prepared. I'm making sure that once they get there, I'm doing everything in my power to assist and give them all the tools needed to handle that call so that at the end of the day, they can go home."

Besides the multitasking skills, excellence under pressure and thick skin required of dispatchers to handle prioritizing and dispatching multiple calls simultaneously, Colson pointed out the softer qualities necessary to do the job.

"You need to have patience and understanding. You never know what you're going to get on the radio," he described. "Some calls can be weird. I'll get a call and say to myself, 'They're really



going to go to this? Because a lady can't reach her lightbulb?' I just take a deep breath. Life experience helps to be able to deal with everything that comes in — could be heart attacks, kids being injured, drownings. Not everybody can deal with that."

A harrowing call Colson dispatched, involving a sinking boat with five on board including children at North Bay Village near Miami Beach, brought back vivid memories.

"I was like, 'OK, here we go,'" he recalled. "I had to coordinate more than one marine patrol unit and an aviation patrol unit, and people's phones were dying, it was getting dark and all I had to work with was coordinates. It lasted for a good 15 to 20 minutes, but they eventually found them and everyone was fine."

Colson said the most rewarding part of his job is knowing that what the Communications Bureau does makes a difference.

"If an officer gets there in time to save a life, help an elderly person or find a missing kid, then I know I'm helping give the public a sense of relief," he emphasized. "Even though the officer is doing the actual work, I'm giving that person the information that he or she needs to do the job. That makes me feel good at the end of the day."

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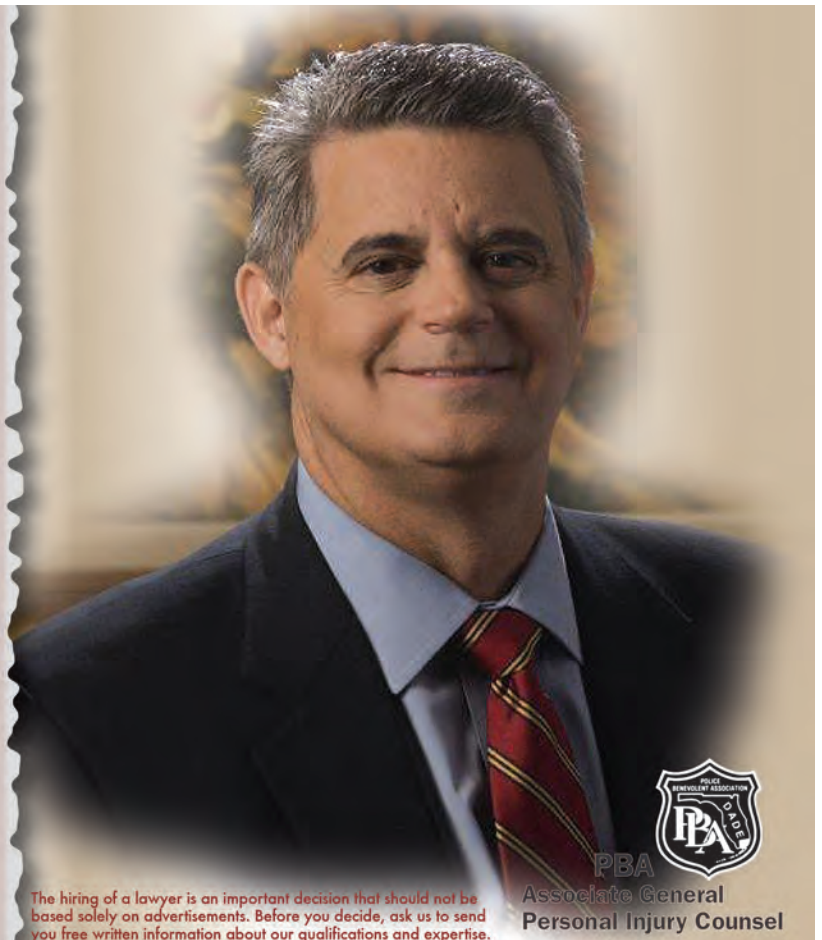
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# Disability Dilemma

## Healthcare benefit for Miami-Dade members who retire with line-of-duty disability pension...if they can find it

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

The face of the criminal pointing the gun at him keeps showing up in the middle of the night. He had to shoot him, or he would have become a line of duty death. And now the post-traumatic stress has piled up to intolerable levels. Not to mention the physical pain that resulted from wrestling the scumbag before he pulled his gun.

So this veteran MDPD officer has to face the painful decision of taking a disability retirement. FRS, of course, requires two physicians and Miami-Dade County to sign off, and the prospects of working again – any job – are non-existent.

So the middle-of-the night thoughts now include thinking about how to put enough food on the table. And how will he pay the mortgage? How will he cover the cost of health insurance for his wife and three beautiful children?

“I’ve had officers come to me and say, ‘How can I put that on my wife and kids?’” shares Paul Kelley, the noted attorney who represents law enforcement officers throughout the state seeking disability retirements, worker’s compensation for injuries incurred on the job and the growing number who are eligible for benefits under provisions of the Florida Heart and Lung bill. But the situation gets worse than that.

“I’ve actually had guys go, ‘Man, I thought about committing suicide, but making it look like an accident so my family can get the insurance,’” Kelley reveals.

Sadly, some Miami-Dade officers are being victimized to an even more tragic degree than just have to face a disability retirement. Section 2-56.27.1 of the Miami-Dade County Code of Ordinances includes a service-connected disability program.

According to article IV, if physicians verify that an employee is no longer able to perform his or her job and to retire out as part of that, the officer would get a continuation of healthcare benefits. This benefit becomes even more valuable because some of the parameters to qualify for the line-of-duty disability require that officers are not able to work any job, even being the person in front of Walmart who asks patrons, “Do you need a shopping cart?”

But for Miami-Dade employees, acquiring that continuation of healthcare benefits can be like playing a shell game. Kelley, who can be considered the dean of Florida attorneys specializing in the Heart/Lung bill, the recently passed legislation to provide law enforcement officers benefits for issues related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and many other cases – the latest being those related to COVID – has been able to uncover this coverage the county should be making available.

“What is happening is that people will get the line-of-duty disability pension, and then they find out later about this provision through the Miami-Dade Code of Ordinances and make application for it,” Kelley explains. “And what Mi-

ami-Dade says is, ‘Sorry, you have to make the application before you actually retire.’ So even though you qualify, they say they don’t have to give it to you.”

If you think that sounds dirty, you are not alone. Kelley has asked the county, which is supposed to notify employees of this option. He initially heard that it was a collective bargaining matter, and the South Florida PBA is supposed to inform members. But it’s in the code of ordinances, not the collective bargaining agreement.

Kelley actually came upon the ordinance and the benefit when he was working on another case. So it’s not unfathomable that the county could be indirectly hiding the benefit from employees. What should be happening is that when officers are getting ready to retire, they see benefits specialist who should be explaining this benefit, along with others like COBRA.

“They have been processed and down the road they find out about it, so the county says, ‘Oh, that wasn’t our requirement,’” Kelley adds. “That’s number one. And number two, they say ‘We didn’t know you were line of duty. If we had known, we would have told you about it.’”

Which, of course, makes no sense because the employer has to sign off on the line of duty disability, so there’s no way they wouldn’t know. Could this be misinformation coming from the county or flat-out lies?

“When you’re retired and have coverage for your entire family, it’s a big benefit,” Kelley confirms. “Maybe because of the cost of it is why they are not telling people about it.”

If the risks of the job continue to increase due to mass shootings, protests and other types of violent events, more and more officers are going to be seeking line-of-duty disability pensions. Add to that those who are falling victim to PTSD, and this continuation of healthcare becomes a very formidable issue.

Certainly, Kelley is a more than credible source to understand how much this means to PBA members. He comes from a law enforcement family, His great-grandfather served as sheriff of Walton County on the Emerald Coast. His dad and his brother were both on the job.

“That’s why I do what I do, because I saw them serving and protecting others for years, and no one was serving or protecting them.” he details. “What’s happening to them here with this benefit is immoral. It’s written into the statute, and they are entitled to it. The agencies are not acting in good faith to provide the benefits that have been put in there for a reason.”



# And Social Justice For All

**St. Thomas Institute for Ethical Leadership offers PBA members a chance to lead communities to improving trust**

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

St. Thomas University professor Dr. Tony Andonero applies some analytics and a vast career teaching leadership development to the question of how to improve social justice. His academic expertise and experience provide a nonblaming, nonjudgmental perspective to the challenge of creating systems that will be more inclusive and more representative of the communities that public safety serves.

The problem statement the public servants and the stakeholders share leads Dr. Andonero to hypothesize that the social commentary saturating all communication indicates people are starved for ethical leadership. More simply put, the trust between the residents and those who serve them needs to become more reliable to create a more, well, trustworthy relationship.

A new partnership between St. Thomas University and the South Florida PBA has its sights set on getting law enforcement officers connected with faculty members, corporate professionals and members of the community to facilitate an interdisciplinary approach to building trust. The Institute for Ethical Leadership is up and running at St. Thomas, offering unprecedented educational opportunities to grow the expertise to reduce the maelstrom surrounding a perceived lack of trust and, consequently, social justice.

“One of the most important things about serving the community is listening to them so you can learn from them, and then you can walk with them in an effort to change. I think there are few organizations that know our community better than law enforcement,” Dr. Andonero explains. “And so it made perfect sense for us to align with the South Florida PBA to create a space where we can learn all the critical theories and tangible ways to create new systems that will be more inclusive and more representative of the communities that we serve.”

The institute is offering PBA members a 20 percent tuition discount for any of three degree programs: Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy. Combined with employer tuition reimbursements, the Institute for Ethical Leadership could be the ticket for PBA members to get the critical tools for career enhancement and advancement.

For example, as part of the mission to serve more populations within the context of ethical leadership, members will get a chance to work on application-based projects that can maximize impact on their agencies. These replace exams and lengthy papers that make education seem so arduous.

South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl is serving on the institute's Community Advisory Council to ensure that the needs and concerns of members are considered in planning and implementing the academic curriculum. The program also includes nationally acclaimed faculty like Dr. Andonero, who

has a Ph.D. in leadership development from Texas A&M University and spent much of his career as a professor of organizational leadership at Gonzaga University before serving for six years as a professor of leadership education at the University of Florida.



The doctoral program at St. Thomas will eventually include a specialization in criminal justice because that is a critical component to restoring justice to communities that residents want. But after launching the institute in the fall of 2020, some productive information has already surfaced.

“The data we are collecting demonstrates that people are building trust, forming relationships within organizations, looking at strategic ways to maximize organizational performance and creating more inclusive environments within the workplace,” Dr. Andonero comments.

“And so because data is becoming available at such a rapid pace, it makes sense that we talk to the people who best understand what’s going on in our communities – law enforcement – so we can create a foundation that we can all move forward together.”

PBA members who come into the institute will have access to a learning experience like they have never known. Dr. Andonero details this using the analogy of climbing a mountain. For some mountains, the park ranger will say goodbye and good luck and off you go. Climbing others can require the use of a Sherpa you pay to carry your pack up.

The institute approach, however, is to offer a guide who will walk step by step with students.

“It starts with an understanding of yourself. What are the barriers that prevent you from listening and learning, that prevent you from seeing your value, your own self-worth?” Dr. Andonero adds. “And then that creates a foundation for how you can work in teams, work with each other, establish relationships and understand how to speak and practice integrity within your organization. And then how does that connect it to the community so we can really practice social change for our complex world.”

If things manifest according to plan, members will be part of a think tank as much as a classroom. That will feature a Special Topics opportunity in which anytime a student has an idea for a project, something they want to work on or just a burning question, that can be turned into a three-credit course to walk through the topic with a faculty member.

“We know every single piece of what people want to learn isn’t always covered in the courses we offer,” Dr. Andonero reasons. “And so we want to create really nice opportunities for students to do these really neat things, work on projects for their organizations. And it’s super fun because there are tangible results.”



# 'Somebody you could always count on'

Peter Newman gave so much to PBA members and fellow corrections officers

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Peter Newman left his beloved fellow PBA members a parting gift.

When they gathered in the South Florida PBA Hall to honor Newman after he passed away on March 26, members who attended found Newman had been saving a bevy of \$2 bills to give them. When he met members he did not know, the PBA's chaplain emeritus was renowned for giving them a \$2 bill and a card with a picture of St. Michael, the patron saint of law enforcement officers.

During a 30-year career on the job and the past 13 years of retirement, Newman gifted thousands in \$2 bills. It was a signature of his generosity, devotion to his fellow Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation officers and unconditional support for PBA members, and the faith of a man who lived every day to help his sisters and brothers.

"If there was anything that we needed, he was always one of the first ones to volunteer," praised South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl, who added how proud he was to call Newman his friend. "His love of the profession never wavered. Peter was somebody you could always count on."

In April 1976, Newman began a career as a correctional officer that included many assignments: housekeeper, booking desk, courts, transportation, training bureau supervisor, firearms instructor, operations, supervisor of Ward-D at Jackson Memorial Hospital and shift commander at the Women's Detention Center. He was eventually appointed to the board of directors of the Dade County Police Benevolent Association and President Nelson Perry asked if he would be willing to serve as chaplain.

"I did not feel that I was qualified," Newman said at the time. "But he assured me that all I would have to do is open the meeting with a short prayer. This began the happiest 18 years of my life."

Even though he retired from MDCR in 2006, Newman never retired from the PBA.

"A lot of guys when they retire, they move on and enjoy their retirement," Stahl commented. "Peter stayed very ac-



tive with the PBA. There's probably only a handful of guys who I can say have done that."

In 2002, Newman started a Blue Mass. He initially drove around to every police station to tell officers about his idea. That's the way he did things. The mass has become an annual tradition.

Newman had a way that made a good first and last impression on his fellow law enforcement officers. Armando Quinoa, a retired MDCR division chief, remembers coming on the job with Newman

nearly 40 years ago.

"Peter was an officer and a gentleman," Quinoa shared. "From the very beginning, I was always impressed with his appearance and how he conducted himself. His uniform was always super, super clean. As I got to know Peter more and got to know him through the PBA, I learned about all the things he was doing for the officers."

Quinoa admired how when a member suffered an accident or a tragedy, like losing a home in a fire, Newman would be the first to step up with support and a donation. Funds would come forward and Newman would be behind it. He never wanted any of that money back.

"There are so many things he did people just don't know about because he never asked for any special thanks or anything like that," Quinoa confirmed.

Newman lived his role as chaplain as much as possible. Later in his career and throughout his retirement, he would visit those who were ill in the hospital or at their homes. Quinoa had the opportunity to accompany Newman on those visits and noticed how a few hours with him would make an ailing member feel much better.

Many of the benefits corrections officers enjoy are due to Newman's advocacy as a union rep. Quinoa recalls one of the greatest impacts Newman's presence made.

In 2007, Quinoa was a division chief





Members of the Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation honor guard honor Newman by showcasing the \$2 bills and St. Michael's cards he was noted for giving to everybody he met.

and assigned to help reduce the amount of overtime being worked in the jail. The county was putting pressure on the department, and Quinoa took on the role as overtime coordinator.

He and Newman visited every facility and spoke with officers on every shift – even the midnight shifts – to do a staffing review and determine what adjustments and cuts could be made without compromising safety. The department wound up saving \$2 million as a result of that effort. And there was not a single grievance filed charging a shortage of staff.

“Peter was the one who sold it to the membership,” Quinoa said. “I was trying to make the cuts and Peter was trying to make sure that there was safety for the officers. He was always, always looking out for the officers.”

Perhaps that's why getting a \$2 bill and St. Michael's card from Newman was

such a badge of honor. Quinoa revealed that he keeps the first \$2 bill and card he received from Newman in a special spot where he put his badge when he retired.

Those \$2 bills were like breadcrumbs leaving a trail of Newman's impact. He visited departments in Europe and gave them \$2 bills and St. Michael's cards. He did the same thing to the Colombia police department when he visited South America, and that made such an impression that when Newman passed, Colombian officers honored him with a presentation.

Newman exuded an infectious generosity. Stahl's birthday is Feb. 13, and on that day Newman would make a \$1,300 donation to the PBA Love Fund.

So when the PBA gathered for its memorial service, there was so much to include in the tribute. Members put together a display that featured pictures of

him with officers and more smiles than can ever be counted. The display also included an old *Heat* story in which Newman wrote about his endeavor to spread the \$2 bills.

As a final tribute, officers, including the MDCR honor guard, held up \$2 bills in photos. There is no doubt that this tradition will be passed on, because Newman's legacy will have a lasting effect on South Florida PBA members and the profession.

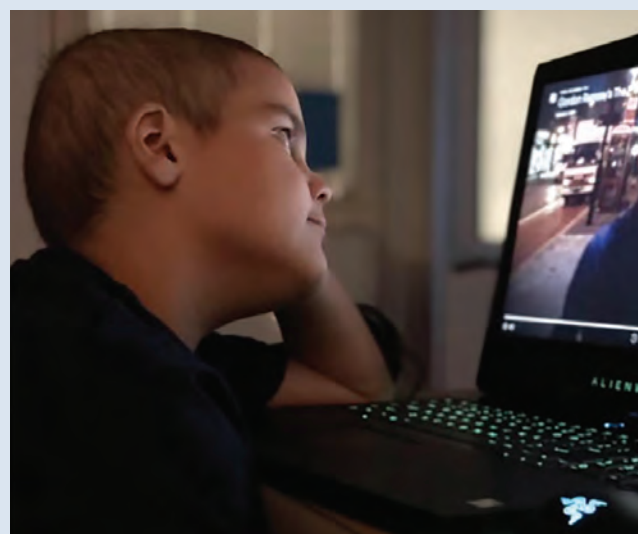
“He will always be remembered because he was the fellow who gave you the \$2 bill,” Quinoa toasted. “And he was always very respectful and professional to everybody. That was worth everything to me in the world because of the way he treated people. He was always a gentleman.”

## Jake lived life to the fullest

Miami-Dade PD Narcotics Lieutenant Chris Casiano and Midwest PD Officer Cindy Casiano lost their 11-year-old son Jake, who passed away on May 8 after courageously battling cancer for more than three years.

Jake is remembered as a smart, funny, lovable and strong child who lived his life to the fullest. He would light up a room. He touched hearts everywhere he went. He taught others about unconditional love, hope and faith.

The funeral services for Jake were held on May 12 at the Caballero Funeral Home in Miami. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Police Officer Assistance Trust (POAT) in the name of Jake Casiano are requested.





# Heroic Rescue

## El Portal PD officer saves woman whose car plunged into a canal

■ BY ROSEMARY AN

El Portal PD Officer Angel Lopez was off duty and on his way home on April 11, just like any given Tuesday afternoon.

He would get on Interstate 95 north. Then he would call his wife to see if she needed anything before heading home to West Kendall.

As he was heading northbound, Lopez noticed traffic backed up in the southbound lanes toward the bridge over the C-7 canal.

"People were getting out of their cars," Lopez described. "So I turned on my emergency lights, went against traffic and I got up to where the bridge begins. And people are yelling, 'There's a car in the water, somebody in the car.' I'm thinking, 'Oh baby Jesus.'"

Sure enough, a black Chevy Cruze was sinking into the water. In that moment, he knew he had to get to the car.

Lopez jumped over the barrier and started running toward the car. Just one problem — the 30 pounds of his gun belt was slowing him down. He debated throwing the belt on the ground, but bystanders had already congregated around the canal.

Then he considered running back to his car to throw the gun belt in the trunk and retrieve his survival rope and life ring for the victim.

"By the time I would have gotten back from all that, the car would have sunk," Lopez explained. "So I snapped off my keepers, ripped off my belt and I advised on the radio what was going on."

Lopez was left with few options. In a snap decision, he asked a bystander for help.

"I go, 'Bro, I don't know who you are, you look like a nice guy, hold onto this,'" Lopez recalled. "I mean, it was either throw it on the ground and leave it completely unsecured — I don't think so. Or get it back to the car, which was not an option. The only option was to give it to him or throw it in the water."

Lopez was free to turn his attention to the victim, Sabrina Anderson, stuck in the car. But this was not your average canal. There was no embankment. Instead, it was going to be almost a straight line down to the water.

Fortunately, the car was reasonably close to the canal bank. But the rear bumper was already three feet into the water. Anderson



Aerial shots of the scene of the incident shows El Portal Officer Angel Lopez and fire rescue rescuing a woman whose car had crashed into the C-7 Canal. asked for help from the window.

"I put a foot on a pipe, a knee on the bumper, reached around and grabbed [Anderson] by the arm to yank her out of the window," Lopez remembered. "And then another guy was there who, I don't know how or when he made it down there, but he gave me a hand with her."

Lopez sat Anderson down and kept her calm until fire rescue arrived. The rescue team lowered a backboard for the officer to strap the woman onto. Then, four firemen pulled her up to safety and lowered a ladder for the officer to climb out of the canal.

And just like that, Lopez had rescued a woman from a canal and headed home. He learned that he was hailed as a hero on television, and he started to receive media requests for interviews. But he believes the

rescue was not unique compared to the calls that officers respond to regularly.

"It really was no big deal, because look at the things [officers] do on a daily basis," Lopez explained. "Thank God it wasn't one of those things where the car was in the middle of the canal, because then it could have gotten ugly. I appreciate the commendation, but I was just doing my job."

And Lopez emphasized that he couldn't have done the job alone. In a high-stress situation like this one, he appreciated that bystanders, like the man who held his gun belt and the man who went into the canal, wanted to help.

"I don't even know their names," Lopez remarked. "It's always good to see at least one of the 50 people who were looking say, 'Hey, let me step up and try to help this guy.' And we got [Anderson] out of there."



# Go Fish

## Florida Keys PBA hosting Dolphin Fishing Tournament in June

If you love fishing, competition and prizes, you will not regret participating in the Florida Keys PBA Dolphin Tournament June 25 to June 27.

Participants will be going for mahi mahi, or common dolphinfish, to see who can reel in the single largest fish. There will be first-to fourth-place winners for that category. There will also be prizes for junior angler (16 years old and under), female angler and PBA member.

The prize pool is progressive and could range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 depending on how many people participate in the tournament. So, more boats means more prize money. The tournament is just-one-catch — you can win only one cate-

gory for one fish.

The remaining proceeds will be donated to the Key West PD Love Fund and Autism Society of the Keys, a nonprofit organization that helps families affected by autism.

"With COVID happening and nonprofits struggling, we wanted to kick-start donations," explained Key West PD Officer Frank Betz, the PBA representative who organized the event. "What we're doing is just a drop in the bucket, but it's at least a drop in the bucket."

Participants will also have the option to take advantage of special room rates and stay at the resort for the two-day event.

### Florida Keys PBA Dolphin Tournament

June 25–June 27

Oceans Edge Resort & Marina, Key West

\$450 per boat until June 1,  
\$550 until June 25

More information:

Go to [keysdolphintournament.com](http://keysdolphintournament.com)  
or contact Frank Betz at  
[keysbadolphintournament@gmail.com](mailto:keysbadolphintournament@gmail.com)

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# Members Only Section

Celebrating South Florida PBA members and the way they serve every day

## North Miami PD makes five-year-old boy's dream come true

When North Miami PD Chief Larry Juriga learned about Jeremiah Valera, a five-year-old who is battling stage four neuroblastoma cancer and dreams of becoming a police officer, he wanted to help make the boy's dream a reality.

Juriga mentioned the idea of swearing in Valera as a police officer with his department, and the officers immediately went to work. He and several officers headed to a uniform store and bought the smallest uniform they could find. They had Valera's name, along with a badge, embroidered onto the tiny uniform. Then the officers created a unique oath just for the child.

"We wanted to make it extra special for him," Juriga said. "It was a really great team effort, everybody running around those last couple of days to make it extra special."

And on Valera's fifth birthday, March 20, Juriga swore in the youngest North Miami police officer in the department's history. Valera put on his new uniform — the short-sleeve top looked like a long-sleeve on the tiny boy — and replied "I do," loud and clear as Juriga read his oath.

He was joined by his new colleagues, family and members of the Mystic Force Foundation, an organization that works to keep children battling cancer as happy as possible while they go through their treatments.

"It was amazing," Juriga said. "People weren't directed to be there, but they were told about our officers and staff members. And members of the community were told about the swearing-in ceremony, and they all showed up on their own. So it was fantastic just to see the number of people who were interested in encouraging Jeremiah."

As part of the ceremony, Valera was also given the opportunity to ride on one of the officer's horses, just so he could feel the strength of a big horse underneath him. He was also gifted a Spider-Man themed motorcycle to ride between two of his new colleagues.

This was not Valera's first interaction with North Miami PD. At the Mystic Force Foundation's Gold Ribbon parade in September 2020, North Miami PD led just about every single department in Miami-Dade County in a parade along the top floor of a parking garage that was in view of all the patient rooms in the hospital. Valera was one of the children watching the parade, cheering them on through his window.

"Oh my God, it breaks your heart but makes you so happy at the same time," said Silvia Vanni, cofounder of the Mystic Force Foundation, who met Valera after the parade. "[Valera and his mom] were so grateful to see all of us out there and to see all the support for them."

Vanni, who started the Mystic Force Foundation with her husband in 2008 after the couple lost their own young son to a neuroblastoma in 2011, has been working with North Miami PD for years. When Vanni asked the chief to wrap one of their police cars





in gold for childhood cancer awareness month many Septembers ago, Juriga made it happen.

The car was never unwrapped — the department became the first to have a permanent designated childhood cancer police car. And any time the Mystic Force Foundation has an event at their Heroes Hangout Childhood Cancer Haven, the first and only in the country, Juriga shows up with the car and takes the children for rides.

“That department just goes above and beyond for our kids battling cancer,” Vanni noted. “There’s never been a time that I have called Chief Juriga and asked him to do something that he has said ‘no’ to. It’s always instantly ‘yes, when and where?’”

Juriga mentioned that he does it for the children and their families, but it is also extremely rewarding for the officers to be a part of making a child happy. And there was nothing better than seeing the look on Valera’s face as Juriga swore him in.

“He wasn’t real wordy, but he was very, very appreciative in his words,” Juriga recalled. “It was a lot of ‘Thank you, I love you.’ But his actions were just as appreciative. You see a real big officer standing by and he would reach up and grab the officer’s hand or come over and hug your leg.”

The newest North Miami PD officer continued his birthday celebration at the Heroes Hangout Childhood Cancer Haven after the experience of a lifetime. When he was readmitted to the hospital for immunotherapy, he couldn’t wait to tell his nurses his new title.

“The first thing he said to the nurses is, ‘I’m a policeman now,’” Vanni mentioned. “[When I see him] I just know the first thing he’s going to say to me is that he wants to go see his friends, his colleagues.”

Valera currently has what’s called NED, meaning no evidence of disease at this moment. But he has to continue treatment to prevent relapse and needs to remain NED for five consecutive



years before he is considered cancer-free and in remission.

“The treatments that he goes through are just so debilitating,” Vanni expressed. “It’s so difficult, but to see him smile and be happy — there’s nothing better than that.”

Vanni and Juriga hope to see the young boy become cancer-free and go back to North Miami PD for a lifelong career, the same way they feel about all the other children battling cancer who want to become police officers. And if not, at least they gave the child a memory to cherish forever.

“We’ve had so many experiences with [children] and do everything we can to make their days bright, encourage them and give them extra strength,” Juriga said. “We hope it will empower them to beat this terrible disease so that they can live long, healthy lives and hopefully become a police officer, if that’s their interest. But if not, we want to give them support now and let them know how much we love them and care about them and their families during a very hard time.”



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## K-9 demo for Aventura high school students

Aventura PD School Resource Officer Giordano hosted a K-9 demonstration for the students of the Don Soffer Aventura High School Police Club on March 19. Officers Chaidez and Rivas performed exercises to teach the students about their K-9 unit's mission.



## Bal Harbour PD's 2020 Officer of the Year

Bal Harbour PD Officer Richard "Ricky" Duarte was honored with the 2020 Officer of the Year Award on April 22.

## Bay Harbor Islands PD teaches kids to ride bikes safely

Bay Harbor Islands PD hosted a Bicycle Safety Rodeo and Group Ride with the Chief on April 25. The event was an annual tradition before COVID. Parents brought their children to the event to learn about safe bike riding habits and ride with the officers as well.

Bal Harbour PD, Indian Creek PD and Surfside PD participated in the event as well. Miami Bicycles and Repair donated their expertise by tuning up the participants' bikes, ensuring a safer bike ride.



## North Miami PD wishes resident a happy birthday

North Miami PD officers made a stop at the house of long-time resident Mrs. Gonzalez during their weekly bike ride on April 15 to wish her a happy 92nd birthday.



## Key West officer retires after 25 years

Key West PD Chief Sean Brandenburg swore in Officer Kevin O'Connell as sergeant on his last day of duty with the department. O'Connell is retiring after 25 years of service to the city.



## MCSO shops for single mother

Monroe County Sheriff's Office Middle Keys Sergeant Joel Slough and his team went shopping and bought groceries for a single mother on April 16. The week before, they donated a dining room table to the mother, who had been without family necessities.

## MCS joins Reelin' for a Cause

Monroe County Sheriff's Office District 1 Marine Deputy Ed Swogger participated in the first annual Reelin' for a Cause fishing tournament on April 24. All proceeds from the event, hosted by Esky Rods and Max's Angels, were donated to heart defect awareness charities.

At Ed Knight Pier on White Street, 110 children took part in the contest. The winner, Miss Lola, took home the win by landing a 43-inch nurse shark.



## South Miami officer promoted during Women's History Month

Officer Adriane Celaya was promoted to the rank of sergeant by South Miami PD on March 23. Celaya, who began at the department as a Police Explorer and worked her way up the ranks, achieved this advancement just in time for Women's History Month.





# Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation remembers the fallen

Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department Honor Guard presented a flag-folding ceremony at the Celebration of Life memorial for retired Officer Earl Marshall. The fallen officer's colleagues described him as a patient, knowledgeable and hardworking man who was always willing to help others.

On April 12, the Honor Guard members showed their appreciation for the 25-year veteran, as well as the other retirees and employees present.



## Girl Scouts show the love to their hometown heroes

Girl Scout troops have been nominating heroes for their 2020 to 2021 Cookies for Hometown Heroes project, a way for them to give thanks to the men and women who positively impact their community. Two police departments were lucky enough to be chosen.

Girl Scout Troop 809 nominated Pinecrest PD and showed their appreciation for the officers by raising funds to gift them with the celebrated Thin Mints and Trefoil cookies on March 20. Meanwhile, the officers of Miami Gardens PD were selected by Troop 1098 and enjoyed their famous Girl Scout cookies on April 14.

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## Bal Harbour PD rides for autism awareness

Bal Harbour PD participated in the City of Miami's first motorcycle ride to support autism awareness on April 18.



## Hialeah Gardens PD officers receive autism awareness training

Hialeah Gardens PD officers received autism awareness training from certified instructors and special experts like Teresa Becerra, executive director of the Autism Society of Florida, on April 30. Becerra brought in her son with autism so officers could get a better perspective of how to interact with people on the spectrum.

## Miami-Dade PD rolls out new vehicle for autism awareness

Miami-Dade PD unveiled its newly wrapped vehicle in honor of World Autism Awareness Day on April 2, with a mission to increase knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with autism.



## Miami-Dade PD pedals for autism

Miami-Dade PD officers joined public safety partners and community members to participate in the Pedal for the Cause bike ride to support and bring awareness to autism on April 18.



## Monroe County Sheriff's Office trash cleanup

With a turnout of more than 40 people, officers of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office partnered with Publix Super Market at Tradewinds Plaza to remove every piece of trash in the area on April 23.



## Miami-Dade plants a garden for Earth Day

Miami-Dade South District Neighborhood Resource Unit officers spent Earth Day at the Everglades Village Community to plant a butterfly garden with their students.



## Multiple departments team up for Collection Day

Sunny Isles Beach PD, Aventura PD, North Miami PD, Bay Harbor Islands PD and Surfside PD joined forces for a multi-agency Collection Day at Haulover Park. Residents stopped by to safely dispose of documents and prescription medications and recycle old electronics.







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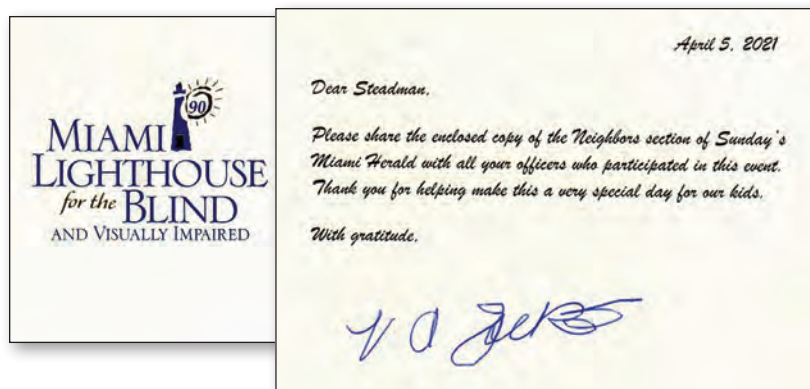
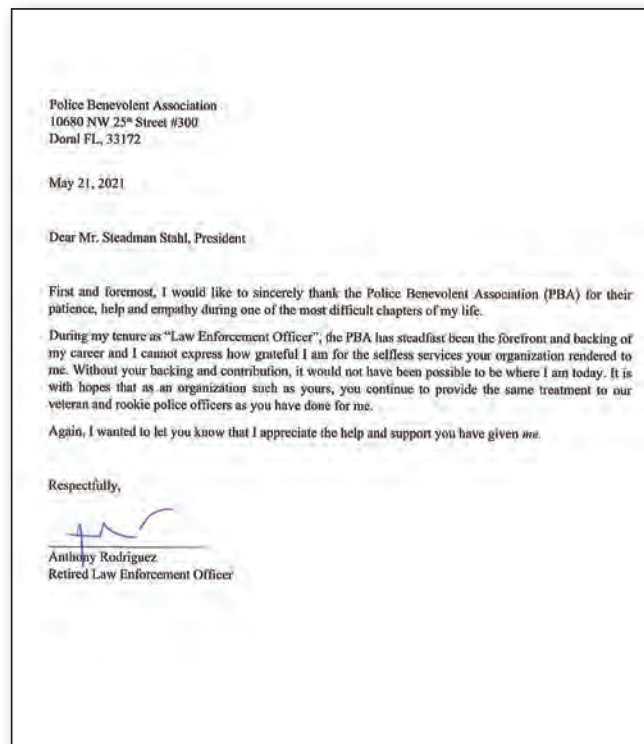
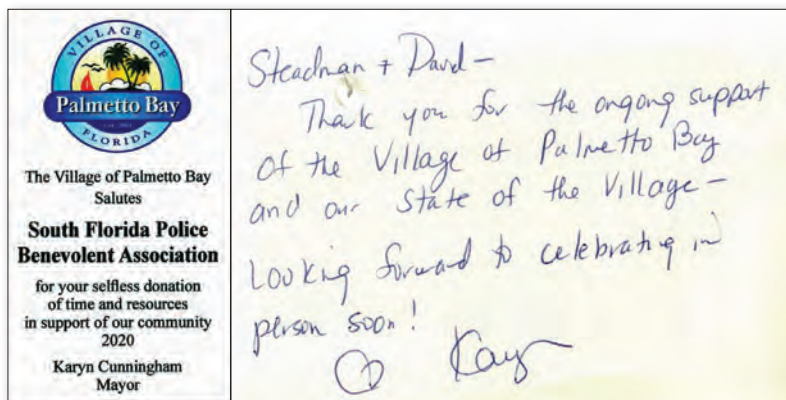
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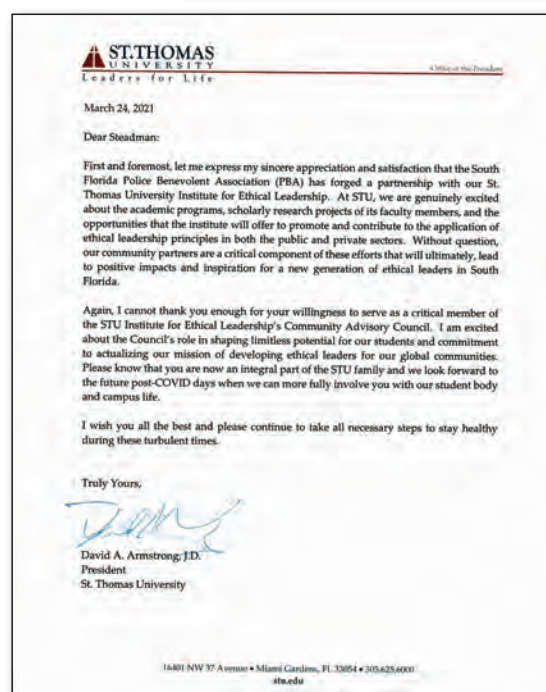
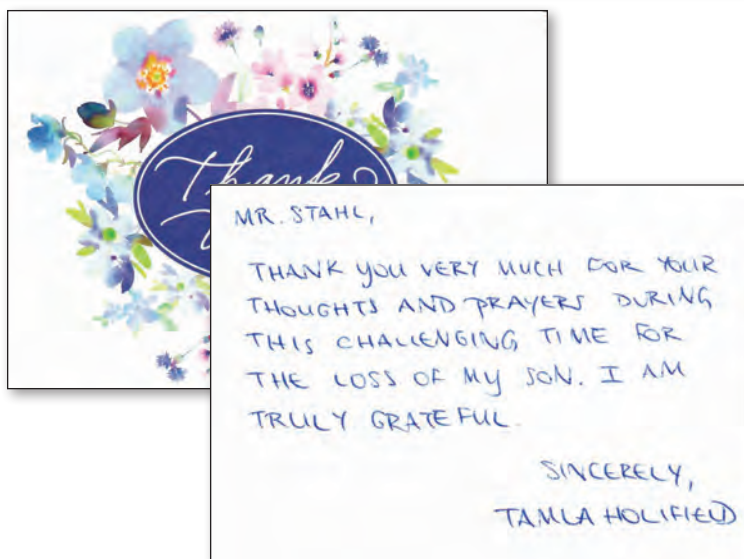
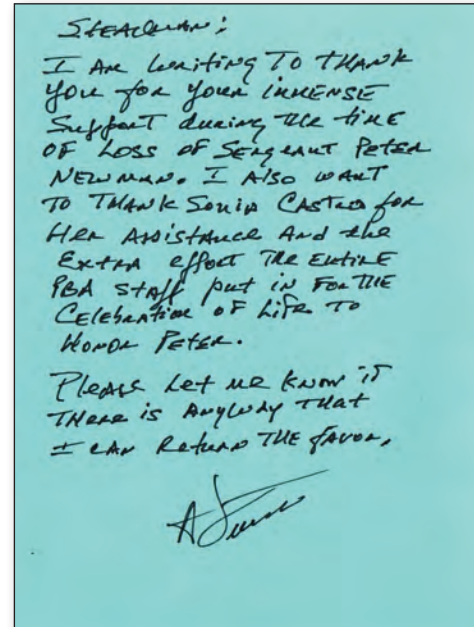
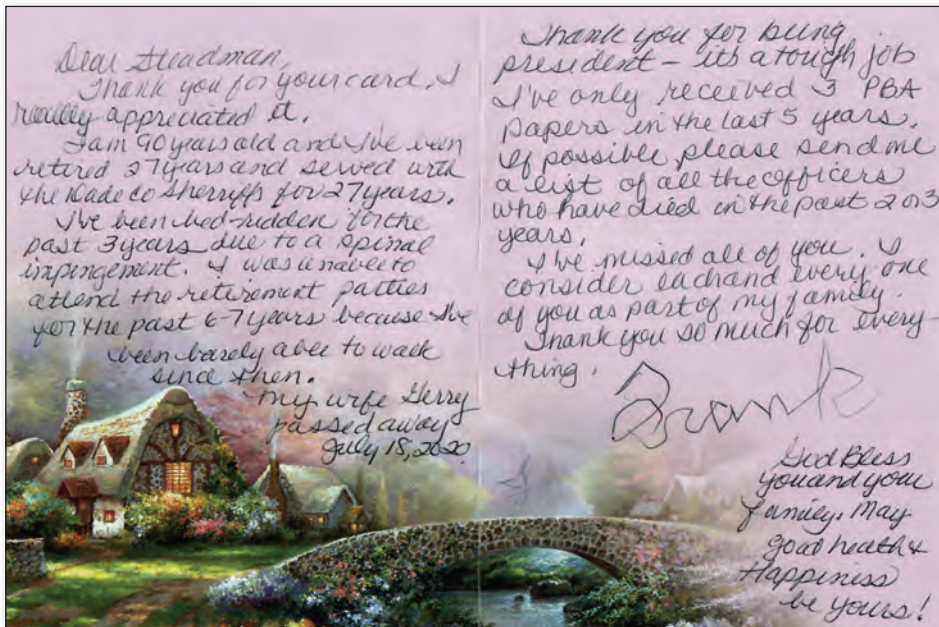
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- Did you know that **OPN** is a specialty pharmacy that caters to our first responders and **delivers your medications** directly to your home or office **at no cost**?



# Thank-You Notes TO THE PBA









# ***ARE YOU PREPARED FOR SMOOTH SAILING INTO RETIREMENT?***

**AN ONLINE SEMINAR** *for All FRS Members and Their Families*

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday each Month...**

**11:30 am on 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday**

**6:30 pm on 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday**

***Please Call US at 1-800-210-0263 or go to  
MYDFSFL.COM, EVENTS to request  
Your Invitation to our ZOOM Meeting!***

**THIS RETIREMENT & FINANCIAL STRATEGIES SEMINAR IS FOR ALL  
FRS MEMBERS, FROM THOSE JUST STARTING THEIR CAREER  
TO THOSE ABOUT TO RETIRE OR LEAVING DROP.**

**SOME OF THE TOPICS INCLUDE...**

**WHAT STRATEGIES SHOULD I CONSIDER IN MY EARLY CAREER?**

**WHAT PART WILL DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAY IN MY RETIREMENT INCOME?**

**HOW THE RETIREMENT OPTION I CHOOSE MAY HAVE LONG-TERM**

**CONSEQUENCES IN MY RETIREMENT INCOME! AND MUCH MORE....**

**ALL ATTENDEES WILL RECEIVE AN ESTIMATE OF THEIR RETIREMENT BENEFITS**

**DATABASE FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS INC.**

**HOME OFFICES: 3301 BONITA BEACH RD, SUITE 202, BONITA SPRINGS, FL 34134**

