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All the Best

For the first time since 2019, the South Florida PBA hosted its one-of-a-kind Law Enforcement Awards Gala. And oh what a night it was. More than 1,100 people came to Trump Doral to honor the best of the best in South Florida law enforcement and elected officials, leaders and supporters who make sure members have everything they need to do their jobs. Presenting the Officers of the Year and Officer of the Year runners-up and finalists to the Rookie of the Year, Corrections Officer of the Year and Arnie F. Felton Investigative awards culminated in a night of memorable moments, riveting speeches backing the blue and an unforgettable celebration.

The 16-page special report on the Law Enforcement Awards Gala begins on page 20



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INSIDE STORIES



The Honor of Police Week



Police Memorial Days in South Florida

THE PRES SAYS

All The Best



**STEADMAN
STAHL**

We wanted to put on a show at our Law Enforcement Awards Gala on May 21. A really big show. We went above and beyond our expectations to present an unprecedented tribute to the best of the best of South Florida members for an evening that became more and more illustrious with each passing minute.

There are always glitches that sometimes people don't notice. But everybody who kept track said, "We didn't have any." When the video was supposed to roll, the video rolled. When people were called up to the stage, they came to the stage right on cue. When the food was to be served, the food was served.

Hard to believe everything went according to plan when we had 1,100 people attend the Gala at Trump Doral on May 21. Actually, everything went better than planned.

In the past, we always had 600 or 700 people attending. Then, when our administration first took over, we were getting 1,000. And we thought, "Well, it can't get any bigger than this." Then we hit the 1,100 mark this year. And the reason we didn't have more is because we ran out of tables.

Not only did we have the largest crowd ever in the history of the Gala, but we also had the largest honor guard presentation ever done with the exception of the police memorials. We had 30 honor guard members with their agency flags march in together. When we reached out to the honor guard members at all the agencies we represent through retired Miami-Dade Honor Guard Commander Marco DeRosa, we received the type of response that let us know we were in for a really incredible, incredible evening.

We had people attend you wouldn't normally see, including many sponsors buying full tables and making the Gala possible. We had local organizations that have stepped up that probably wouldn't normally have attended these events. It was great to see so many people from the outside the law enforcement community participating.

And it was especially great to see so many elected officials there. I think we had just about every judge from the county there. We had members of Congress there. We had U.S. senators there. We had state representatives and the lieutenant governor. The governor would have been there if he hadn't had a prior arrangement he couldn't break away from.

But for the first time for us here locally, every single one of our county commissioners – all 13 of them plus the mayor – participated. I don't want to just say "participated." They contributed to making this a great event.

And then a 99-year-old U.S. Marine who fought in World War II and came all the way from Pennsylvania just elevated things above and beyond. After I saw a couple videos of Corporal Roland Scaranci, I thought, "This guy is going to be great." And he shows up in uniform that fit him like when he served with the Marine forces in the Pacific Theater.

Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez, our special guest who along with Senator Marco Rubio made a speech that knocked it out of the park, was sitting next to me and she asked, "Can I meet Corporal Scaranci?" So I take her back to meet him, and she says to him, "I'm not the governor but I am the lieutenant governor. And I want to thank you." And he's freaking out.

Then I go back to the table, and Miami-Dade Mayor Danielle Levine Cava is there and says, "I have to meet him." So I'm like, "C'mon." And then Congressman Carlos Gimenez, our old mayor, said he wants to do something special for Corporal Scaranci. I asked, "What?" And he said, "I don't know, but something at the U.S. Capitol."

And by that time we were just getting warmed up.

The main event, of course, was honoring our law enforcement award winners. The group this year was above and beyond the best of the best. And that's a tribute to how much great work our members dedicated themselves to in 2021.

One of the most difficult jobs we have is picking from so many great examples of the best of the best from law enforcement in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. There are so many worthy recipients that picking two or three is extremely difficult.

We celebrated them, but what struck me on that night was the humbleness of the officers who received these awards. It's an incredible feeling that they're just so modest. They don't consider what they do to be heroic, when clearly they do heroic work.

I think what we strive for at PBA is to really take our work to a grander level. We're more than just the people that actually do the job. We know what we do. Every officer who puts on that uniform and their family members know what they do.

We're very lucky in this community to have such support. When you look around the country

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Senator Marco Rubio made the keynote speech.



Special guest Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Núñez was one of several elected officials who spoke about her unconditional support for law enforcement.



All 13 Miami-Dade County Commissioners participated, and South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl honored Rebeca Sosa (left) and Commission Chair Jose "Pepe" Diaz, who are retiring at the end of their terms this year.

STAHL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

and you see all the civil disorder, we are very lucky to not have to worry about elected officials who are not standing with their police departments. We don't have that here in South Florida.

The way our elected officials supported the Gala reinforces one of our greatest luxuries. I can't think of any government in any town where we represent officers and work with, or any elected officials that I work with locally, who are not extremely supportive of what we do day in and day out. They make sure that we have the equipment, the tools, the hiring, and anything else we need to do the type of work we honored at the Gala.

The proof is in the pudding. Something has happened right here in Miami-Dade County to confirm the commitment our elected officials have for law enforcement. The commission along with the mayor created a Law Enforcement Appreciation Day.

Not only just making it a day but making it a paid county holiday. That hasn't been done anywhere in the country. In fact, I got calls from other organizations asking how we made that happen.

It's all about having that working relationship. We all see the same end zone. How we get there is what makes a difference. I think it's going to start spreading. We're already in negotiations with a city that wants to do the same thing – a law enforcement appreciation day that is not just a coffee day but a paid holiday.

So with everything going on and coming out of COVID, to have 1,100 people just enjoy themselves makes you feel the camaraderie. Supporting, standing ovations when these officers are getting their awards recognizing them, people dancing and singing along – it was a real celebration.

Before I became president, a lot of people would leave the Gala after the awards. When the show would end, they would leave. But you see they stayed this year. They danced. They celebrated.

It took a lot of effort by a lot of people to put this Gala together. I'm not sure anybody will really know what we went through to make sure everything rolled when it was supposed to roll, and everything was served when it was supposed to be served.

Here is a funny story about one of the glitches you never saw. We were done with our preparations at 5 p.m., which left me just enough time to get dressed. I go to put on my rented tuxedo. They had given me a shirt which was about 10 sizes too small. It is now 5:15. The event starts at 5:30 and I've got no shirt.

I jumped in the car and ran over to Men's Warehouse. There's a long line there, but I told them I'm in the middle of an event right now that's going on as we're speaking. I need the shirt. He starts ripping open a bag. Soon, I was walking back into that event.

Some people will never know that before the Gala, we had a little curveball thrown at us. Senator Rubio, who was our keynote speaker, was holding a press conference outside the ballroom at Trump Dorland, where the Florida PBA announced its endorsement for his reelection.

So you're getting ready for a Gala with 1,100 people coming in, and 30 minutes before, they ask, "Can you join us at a press conference?" Why not?

It's funny because we're talking about how we do something different next year. It's an event that I'm certainly proud of from start to finish. But I'm not quite sure how we outdo this year.

At some point, we will step back and take a look. But we have a year to worry about that. Right now, it's refreshing to know that we had all our state reps, our lieutenant governor, Senator Rubio, congressmen and our local elected officials there to thank us for what we do.

When this board of directors ran for office, we campaigned on a platform of making a difference and making the place better than what we found it. I think we have certainly taken it to that level, and the Gala was another night when we saw that in a big way.

I feel good about our future. I think where this organization is going is only going to get bigger and better.

Steadman Stahl, President
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Honoring officers past and present



DAVID
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During May, we celebrated several special events, including Mother's Day, Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day. In addition, as proclaimed by President John F. Kennedy, May 15 is National Peace Officers Memorial Day, a day that is intended to pay tribute to the brave local, state and federal peace officers who have died in the line of duty.

As you know, each year at Tropical Park, we pay tribute to our local law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty. This year's Law Enforcement Memorial was on May 5 and again was a beautiful, meaningful event to remember our fallen. So many people helped to make this event a great success, and I would like to thank the Police Memorial Planning Committee.

On Saturday, May 21, the PBA hosted the Law Enforcement Awards Gala at the Trump Resort. As our last pre-COVID gala was in May 2019, it was great to be able to finally get back together. We had a record-breaking, sold-out crowd of more than 1,100 people, including many law-enforcement officers and their family and friends. They were joined by many mem-

bers of our community, politicians and judges, all there to honor and pay tribute to the men and women of Miami-Dade and Monroe counties who are brave enough to wear the badge while going out every day to protect and serve our community. I would like to congratulate all the winners, including the Officers of the Year — Doral Officers Daniel Vilarchao, Johnny Beutelus and Raffaello Cervera. There are truly so many good men and women out there, working hard every day, who deserve recognition, but unfortunately we can't name them all. Please just know that your dedication and hard work are truly appreciated and acknowledged.

As the gala chairperson, I would like to thank all those who assisted in making this year's gala a great success: Steadman Stahl, Nizam Ishmael, Kim Gregson, Linda Carta, Sonia Castro, Margarita Rivera-Vasquez, Barbie Cappe, Jenny Delgado, Kathy Mills, Maritza Landa, Video Production's Lizeth Carrera and John Tormey, the Honor Guard and Honor Guard Coordinator Marco DeRosa and our emcee, Calvin Hughes.

As always, please stay safe. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 305-593-0044 or dg@sflpba.org.

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Media and the public listening in on the police radio frequency



NIZAM "ISH" ISHMAEL
VICE
PRESIDENT

Would you believe that if you are the media and you want access to a police radio, all you have to do is make the request with Miami-Dade County's Information Technology Department (ITD)? This is a huge officer safety issue, and I will explain.

In 2015, the Miami-Dade Police Director at that time did not have the backbone to stand up to the various media outlets and deny them access to listen to our police radio system HQ frequency. This one bad decision has led to thousands of privileged information transmissions being heard by those not authorized. Since this decision was made, media outlets have had the

ability to purchase a radio, have it programmed by ITD and listen in on the HQ-U frequency.

The media outlets that I have uncovered that monitor our HQ radio frequency are CBS, NBC Universal, Univision, WPLG Channel 10, WSVN Channel 7, and Reliable News Media, which is an independent freelance photographer. WSVN Channel 7 has two portable radios and one desktop. As a result of this, the media often shows up on your scenes before you have it secure. Many frequencies being used today are unencrypted; however, Miami-Dade has the ability to transition over to all frequencies being fully encrypted but has not done so.

The media can purchase radios from Harris Corporation (our current provider) or from another vendor. These radios will then be programmed for free by Miami-Dade County ITD and will only receive MDPD HQ frequency without the ability to transmit. These radios may have encryption capabilities, since MDPD may decide to go to an encryption system in the future.

Here is another kicker: Broadcastify is the radio communications industry's largest platform for streaming live audio for public safety communications. Anyone with a smartphone can download the app and can subscribe to Broadcastify. For \$30 annually, you can listen to our unencrypted frequencies and even have access to 365 days of recorded archives for all live streams. This is how radio broadcasts are being played instantaneously on the news. In the past, you would have to do a public records request to obtain the transmissions.

Even the criminal element constantly listens to our unencrypted frequencies from this app. Anyone can also purchase a radio scanner and learn to program it on a website such as Radio Reference. Recently, while executing a warrant, detectives came across a subject in the house that was actively listening to the South District's frequency. This is extremely dangerous for our officers and detectives out in the field.

Do you ever wonder why, when working a perimeter-search, sensitive scene, the dispatcher always works off frequencies PDTAC 4 or PDTAC 5? It is because these two frequencies are encrypted, so the media and public cannot listen to us.

More issues

When ITD programmed the radios for the media, they did not have them sign a memorandum of understanding indicating the uses for the radio. There are criminals all around us, including some who work in the media industry. What happens if the radio is given to someone who has bad intentions and is out there committing crimes while listening to our HQ frequency? ITD does not even conduct periodic audits of the radios to determine if they are still in possession of the person or media group to which it was issued. No background checks are being conducted.

Recently, we all completed the mandatory Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) Security Awareness Training and passed the CJIS certification test. This mandate is set from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. All law enforcement agencies have the obligation to protect such information — names, driver's license numbers, vehicle registration information, date of birth and criminal justice information, which are sometimes broadcasted over police radios. Some units have laptops that they can use to can query a subject from the field, but there are many tactical situations in dealing with subjects when this is not feasible, and you must perform these checks over the radio. We are so short on dispatchers that often frequencies are being patched and INFO frequency is not open for subject checks. Not to mention that victims' information is being broadcasted along with the exact locations of sexual offenses. Because of this, we are not able to protect victims' information.

The director at that time was all for transparency and public trust. But at what cost — violating CJIS mandates and putting officers at risk? The cops on the street already have some people out there to deal with who regularly video record encounters between law enforcement and the public. They claim they want to hold officers accountable. The officers are already wearing body cameras. And do not even get me started on the sovereign citizens or the scumbags who just want to challenge the police.

How do we solve this?

MDPD needs to make the decision to transition to a fully encrypted radio system. The mechanism is already in place; all they must do is flip the switch. Yes, it is that easy. When this occurs, no one with a radio scanner or app will be able to listen to any broadcasts on our police radio system, thereby providing you safety as well as securing CJIS and victims of crime information. Regarding the media that have radios which were programmed by ITD, they still will have the capability to listen to our encrypted HQ frequency, as ITD programmed their radios with this functionality. Yes, ITD programmed their radios for encryption — you cannot make this stuff up! ITD can "kill" the broadcasting, remotely as they have the "keys"

to that specific radio. Or they can simply have all the radios that they programmed brought in immediately to remove this functionality.

Be kind to our dispatchers

While on the topic of police radios, I would like to remind everyone who uses a radio to be kind to our dispatchers. They have an exceedingly difficult job and have a record-high number of vacancies, leading them to work many double shifts. They have families who need them, and we as officers also need them. We could not do what we need to do if they are not working at their console, looking out for all our needs. We all need to be reminded of the following procedures that will assist our dispatchers:

- Use your CAD to check in, especially since the air traffic is heavier around shift change time.
- On routine incidents, use your CAD to show arrival.
- Do not assume the dispatcher knows your location.
- When taking a traffic stop, say your unit number and 19. Wait for the dispatcher to acknowledge, then proceed with your QTH then tag. If no tag, then give the vehicle description (remember that they are typing).
- Do not just key your mic and say "air clear"; always say your unit number first.
- When requesting a case, say the signal, then the QTH. The dispatcher types in that order. Please do not say "from 152/highway QSK with a 14 case." That is backwards.

- Clear your signals prior to requesting another one. Do not make the dispatcher have to ask the status of your previous call.
- When conducting a subject check, always state last name, then first and DOB. They do not run subjects from a DL, so you still need to give the complete subject info.
- Dispatchers rotate on the various booths every day, so don't assume that the same dispatcher is assigned the same district or frequency all the time.

We need to keep all our officers and detectives safe on the streets, and this will be a step in the right direction. The members of the public, including the news media, will have to go back and rely on law enforcement agencies' discretion in releasing public safety matters.

I hope all the moms had a wonderful Mother's Day, and to all the dads, hope you enjoy Father's Day. For all of you who are having difficulty in conceiving and becoming parents, remember that 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 or at 305-593-0044.

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Motivation and morale



JERMAINE
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One of the most fundamental problems in the field of law enforcement has always been how to increase employee productivity. Far too often, managers approach this need by trying to pressure employees into working under more strenuous conditions and fearing the consequences of not meeting objectives. The problem with this methodology is that it contradicts several key factors of employee productivity and overall well-being. Generating increased productivity and stimulating individual motivation are constant processes that leaders in any career field can always improve. The profession of law enforcement

is no different.

In Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, he proposed that motivation is the result of a person's attempt at fulfilling five basic needs. At the bottom of this list are basic essentials, such as food, water and shelter. After obtaining these necessities, people look for safety, security and a sense of belonging. Individuals seek praise and recognition for a job well done that is related to a quest for improved self-esteem. This is followed by a desire for self-actualization or the potential to grow professionally. When properly used by management, praise can be an effective motivator in our department.

As an organization, we are currently facing an extremely challenging time, tackling new and unique challenges every single day. At this juncture, many of our members are experiencing high stress levels and going beyond healthy levels of positive stress, thereby killing their motivation and productivity. There is a perception that most people would be happy just to have a job during times when companies are laying off employees every day. Some might also think that employment would be enough to motivate employees to high levels. However, research suggest that employment alone doesn't seem to motivate employees, especially top performers. You still stand the risk of losing them to your competitors. That's why managers and supervisors need to think about key motivators during both good and bad times to keep the best employees on board.

In 2004, Gallup conducted a worldwide research project,

surveying more than four million employees about the importance of praise and recognition. The company concluded that employees who receive regular praise are more productive, engaged and more likely to stay with their organization than those who do not. The survey results also indicated that employees who are praised receive higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers and even enjoy better health than employees who are not.

Morale refers to the overall satisfaction you get from your job, including your colleagues, superiors, the environment and the organization in general. This mental condition determines your attitude at work. High morale is characterized by confidence, discipline and enthusiasm. High morale can lead to improved employee engagement, better teamwork and greater commitment, as well as a sense of belongingness to the organization, quicker conflict resolution and a healthier and safer environment for everyone. Employers have an obligation to provide a working environment that is safe, and they also have a responsibility to see that their employees are satisfied workers who have a genuine interest in their own success as well as their organization's success. Without this level of interest, employees show symptoms of low morale, which can destroy an organization's success. Employee morale is a trickle-down effect of the employment relationship that is manageable from higher levels in the organization, according to human factors psychologist Nicole Fink in an article on the subject. Low morale is preventable, provided employers take the steps necessary to maintain communication in every aspect of the employment relationship.

Employee morale and motivation remain a central concern for our organization, which has led to the highest turnover rates I have ever witnessed. Motivation and morale go hand in hand. Low morale is one of the most significant reasons behind employees' discontentment and poor job performance. This eventually results in absenteeism and high turnover rates. Employees with high morale stay motivated and work toward the organization's goals. In other words, high morale makes it easier to motivate employees and improve their performance.

Please feel free to contact me at lawson@dcppa.org or at 305-593-0044.

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Use your tools – the BWC should be your friend



ANDREW
AXELRAD
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We were justifiably afraid of it at first: a body-worn camera that is intended to record virtually every work interaction. We dealt with the learning curve of remembering to turn it on (and off) when required, and many, many officers would forget. I used to equate it to when seatbelts became mandatory, and you had to consciously remember to put them on when you got in the car. Now, for most of us, it is muscle memory. The BWC will become that as well, if it hasn't already.

However the BWC is more than just a piece of equipment to turn on and off; to upload and tag; to dock at the end of your shift. It should also be something you routinely review prior to writing reports where there is BWC footage. We are seeing more and more incidents of administrative action being taken when the BWC footage seems to differ from the police report, and defense and civil attorneys using those real or perceived inaccuracies in an attempt to discredit.

If you are a Miami-Dade County officer, Director George Perez has made any issue of misrepresentation or falsification

2022 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, 2022**. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

BAL HARBOR PD	1
HOMESTEAD CORRECTIONS	1
HOMESTEAD PD	1
KEY WEST PD	1
MIAMI-DADE CORRECTIONS	
Association	1
TGK(MHTC)	1
TOTAL	2
MIAMI-DADE POLICE	4
MIAMI GARDENS	5
MCSO (DEP SHERIFF)	1
NORTH BAY VILLAGE	1
NORTH MIAMI	2
OPA LOCKA	4
SWEETWATER	3
TOTAL GRIEVANCES	26

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SCAN FOR VIDEO

a priority, and while we certainly do not condone any type of intentional misrepresentation or falsification, it is the unintentional we must be concerned about. We all know that our brains are sometimes fickle, sometimes remembering something, or playing an incident back differently from the way it actually occurred.

Years ago, I responded to a police shooting where the subject vehicle traveled past a group of officers who were finishing an unrelated call. Someone in the vehicle began firing in the direction of the officers (and ultimately it was determined their focus was on a domino game next door). One officer recalled the vehicle traveling from north to south. He was adamant. Another officer recalled the vehicle traveling south to north. He was equally adamant. Certainly, neither was intentionally falsifying or misrepresenting anything.

The takeaway here is simple. Make a habit of reviewing your BWC prior to writing your report. Better yet, draft the report based upon your recollection, then review the BWC to make sure that the details match and your brains aren't playing tricks on you. Make whatever tweaks you need to based on the BWC before finalizing the report. Additionally, if there is a substantive detail that aided in providing you with the probable cause to arrest that is not captured on the BWC, make an effort to note that in your report. This will make it far more difficult for a defense attorney to make something out of nothing.

When used to its full extent, the BWC should not be your enemy, but your friend.

A void that will never be filled



SERGEANT
KENNETH
HORGAN
POAT
ASSISTANCE
COMMITTEE
CHAIRPERSON

We will never forget. Even as the last article was written, we discovered there were two more, totaling an unprecedented 14 law enforcement officers lost in the line of duty last year. Each name inscribed on the wall. Each honored for the sacrifice they made for their community. On May 5, the 41st Annual Law Enforcement Officers Memorial was held at Tropical Park. In front of the officers' families, each was honored, and we pledged to them, "We will never forget."

This pledge is not an easy task. Life goes on for us all. There are baseball games to attend. There is school with the kids. The calls for service never stop, and we must answer them all. But the families of an officer lost are never the same. There is a void that will never be filled. It is our duty to make sure we find a way to remind them that they are not forgotten.

The children of every one of these officers will receive a card

and a gift on their birthday and at Christmas until they turn 18. At the age of 18, they will receive a check to help prepare them for college. They will then be eligible for grants through the POAT Educational Program. These small gifts pale in comparison to their loss. But it is one way we can let them know — we will never forget.

A huge thank you to everyone who came out to assist in preparing the site. Without your help, there is no way we would be able to put the Memorial event together. From polishing granite, to mowing, mulching, setting up tents, chairs, and so much more, your willingness to assist is much appreciated.

Remember, when shopping on Amazon, you can have a percentage of the purchase amount donated to POAT by shopping at www.smile.amazon.com and registering Police Officer Assistance Trust as your charity of choice. Then, continue to shop on www.smile.amazon.com. Every little bit helps, so sign up today.

Thanks for your support, and stay safe.



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Alex Alvarez

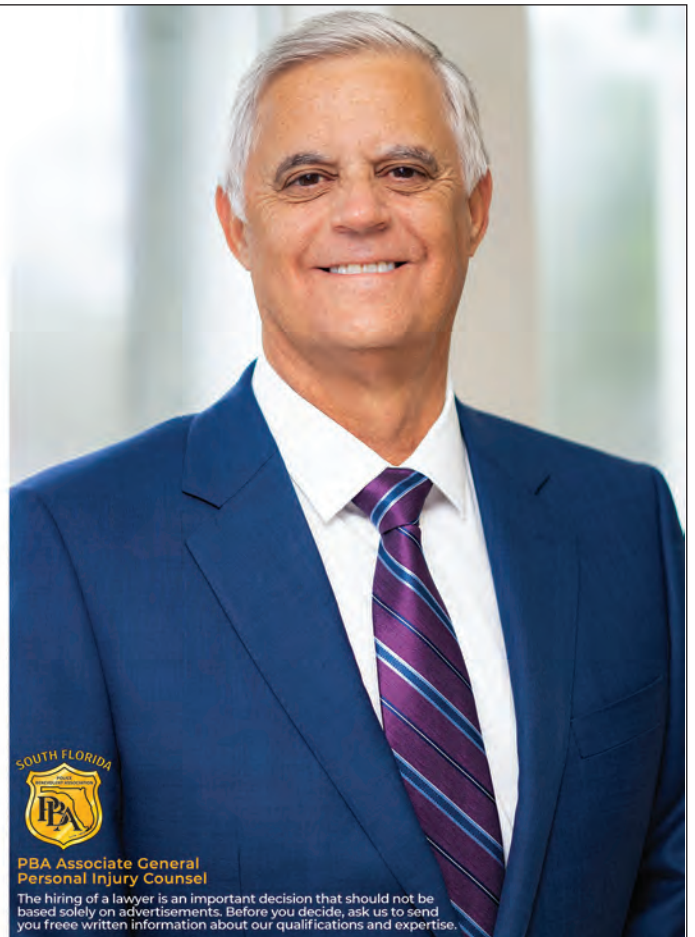
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The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely on advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and expertise.

Reunion recap: Great golf, a cool cruise and funds raised



JOHN FRALEY
RPOC
PRESIDENT

It's official! On April 23, Dennis Bambach retired as the president of our organization. Dennis served our group in a professional manner as a friend to all, as well as being a great leader. In a touching moment, Dennis retired from his position and, in accordance with our bylaws, I took the position as president. Maggie Bambach removed the presidential nametag from Dennis' shirt and turned to me to place the nametag on my shirt. This gesture made it official, to the approval of those in attendance. I appointed Jerry Rudoff as vice president and Tim Hoffman as sergeant-at-arms.

The attendance at this year's reunion was far greater than I had expected. It was obvious that this was the best RPOC event since before the pandemic. We were ready to party, and it showed. The golf tournament went very well, and the lunch cruise was exceptional, thanks to Reba Miller. The hotel lobby is in the process of being renovated, but the hotel staff were exceptional, and there was little inconvenience to our attendees, other than the noise and the fact that the hotel restaurant was closed.

It takes an enormous amount of work to put the reunion together. The RPOC board, past President Dennis Bambach, me as the previous vice president, Treasurer Ed Spisak, Secretary Barry Savage and Sergeant-at-Arms Jerry Rudoff worked well together and are looking forward to the reunions in May 2023, 2024 and beyond. These people have worked hard over the past decade or so and are to be commended for their effort and dedication.

I am the golf coordinator for the reunion and will remain in that position until we can get a volunteer to take over. The event was successful: We had 24 golfers, and everyone won some prize money. Chris Bimonte was the first-place winner. Jim Montgomery and Jon Propst won closest to the pin.

Special thanks to the following individuals:

Kathy Rivers for her dedication and talent. Kathy made all our nametags. I know it took many hours to prepare the materials, put them together and distribute them at our check-in table. Many in attendance noted that the nametags were extremely helpful in putting names to faces.

Jon Propst for his assistance in putting the golf event together and help in setting up the hospitality room and taking it down Saturday evening.

David Alvarez for his photographic talent and skills. Not only did he take pictures at the event and the golf tournament, but he also prepared a video collage of members who have passed on. It was a moving tribute to those who came before us. David also distributed DVDs of past reunions. He put many hours into his work and is to be commended.

Patty Savage worked tirelessly, along with Barry, in setting up our shirt sales and the other items on display. Patty managed our sales inventory, kept great books and facilitated our 50/50 raffle drawings. Barry was also instrumental in locating a new

vendor for our shirts. The new shirts are very nice and were a hit with the membership.

Finally, Maggie Bambach and Penny Spisak worked extremely hard while serving as our bartenders. They were professional in the management of the bar and raised more than \$750, which was added to the Otis Chambers Scholarship and the RPOC Love Fund. These ladies are special, they are dedicated to our cause and they were a major part of the success of this reunion.

Here are reports from our officers:

Jerry Rudoff, Vice President, Transformational Information Officer: The RPOC reunion and other events are open to both retired and active LEOs.

So with the reunion over (by the way, it was fantastic; look for pictures to be posted on our private Facebook page and on our website) and with our new president in place (congratulations, John Fraley), where do we go from here? Those of you who have taken advantage of and participate in our social media — such as our private, members-only Facebook group and our very user-friendly website, where you can always obtain up-to-date information or have your questions answered — know that we're just a click away.

Speaking of the reunion, our new president, John, was engaging everyone regarding their thoughts, and the point was made over and over that one does not have to be retired to attend RPOC events and the reunion. It is an opportunity to see old friends and reunite with them, as well as make new friends. But the looming question for a while now has been how active are you in assisting your RPOC's ability to grow and sustain itself for future generations of retirees to follow? As we are all aware, we have not had a monthly luncheon or Christmas party now for a couple of years, and with our new sergeant-at-arms on board, we know that will change soon (congratulations to Tim Hoffman, who has assumed that position). Who has some new and fun ideas on a venue and is willing to give an hour or so a week to assist?

Do you have pictures of when you were in the academy or working on the streets of Miami-Dade County, whether we were called the Grove Patrol, PSD, Metro Dade or Miami-Dade? Would you like to see these pictures, along with your colleagues and a write-up indicating who, what, where and when, on our social media? If so, send us what you have and be featured for all to see. If you are you a former bookkeeper or accountant and would like to keep your skills sharp and at the same time volunteer a couple of hours a week via your computer or conference call, then let our treasurer, Ed Spisak, know, as your involvement would be welcome. And what about you techies out there, would you be interested in assisting to moderate our social media or work with our webmaster to ensure we maintain the latest technology and that our information and data are always current and up to date? What we're saying here is that if there is a job or task you'd be interested in doing, let us know and we'll ensure your interests are made a reality.

Ed Spisak, Treasurer: All I can say is, wow! The reunion was such a great success! It was so good to see all our "old" friends

and meet new ones. It was all talk and catch-up. In speaking to several new members, they either said "I had so much fun talking to everyone" or "I wasn't told about the RPOC when I retired" or comments to that effect. Now that they know about the RPOC, several said, "Next year I will be back, bringing more friends." So, members, it's looking very good for next year.

Now to the financial side of the reunion. Our members were so generous in donating money to be divided between the Love Fund, Members Assistance and the Otis Chambers Scholarship fund. Most of the golfers gave all of their winnings (\$515). When the members were getting drinks from our bartenders, Maggie Bambach and Penny Spisak, they filled up the tip jar several times to the tune of \$750. Highly generous were the winners of the 50/50 raffles, who donated approximately half of the total collected of \$1,423 for the benefit of MA and OCSE.

We now must remind members that 156 people have not yet paid their dues for this year. Those members will have received second notices by the time this "HEAT" issue is out and will have until the end of May to pay their dues. If not, regrettably, they will be removed from the roster, ending their receipt of RPOC communications, notices of events, access to the RPOC Facebook page and further issues of "HEAT."

A note from Penny: When the doors of the hospitality room opened on Thursday and through to breakfast on Sunday, words cannot express how happy Maggie and I were to see the familiar smiling faces and exchange greetings with friends for the first time since the last reunion. Thanks to everyone who made our jobs easier and to those who offered help. The board did a fantastic job of buying all the refreshments and setting up our hospitality room. Can't wait for next year to do it again!

Reba Miller, Chaplain: "Laughter is like music ... Friends are one of the exquisite joys of life ... Coming together to celebrate the life well lived is a privilege ... Honoring the passing of that life is a true gift of giving." – Anonymous

We would like to honor and recognize our beloved warriors who have passed away for their service, love and commitment to their profession and their brothers and sisters in law enforcement.

- Sergeant Robert "Bob" W. Hoelscher, April 2022
- Sergeant Joseph "Joe" Ruffo, April 2022
- Sergeant Robert "Bob" York, March 2022
- Dispatcher Marjorie "Marge" Evelyn Tulp, April 2022

We send our love and condolences to their police families and friends.

Special wishes for healing and complete restoration of health to our following members: Ed Brown, Cookie Coleman, Stan Cochran, Andy Dixon, Linda Sims-Mayer, Jim McClain, Tim Pieper, Penny Spisak and Bill Van Riper.

Wishing each and every one of our members a special thank-you for coming together and celebrating the 31st annual reunion of the Retired Police Officers Council. Your support, enthusiasm and excitement truly made this an amazing event. I am honored to work with such a wonderful and dedicated group of individuals, your board and their spouses, who worked so hard to bring this event together. Thanks also to Kathy Rivers and John Propst for their time, skills and dedication, year after year.

Outstanding thank-yous to all the golfers who participated in Friday's golf matches, won cash prizes and promptly donated them back to the Love Fund and the scholarship fund.

Compliments to all the wonderful sailors aboard the "Barbara Lee" paddle wheeler out of the Sanford Harbor. Special recognition for Patricia Hernandez Bimonte for her fine job of assisting the captain in piloting our ship along the St. John's River.

And lastly, a heartfelt thanks to our official photographer and retired Officer David Alvarez and his lovely wife, Donna, for compiling the special-tribute CD of our friends and family who passed away during the chaos, pain and isolation of the past two-year period.

Dennis Bambach, Past President: I would like to express my utmost appreciation for the opportunity to represent the RPOC membership as president for the past 10 years. It has been a very memorable part of my life, having the opportunity to meet so many new friends and stay in touch with old friends. Thanks to all of you for the support and kindness you have shown me. I will continue to be part of the RPOC in my new role. Looking forward to seeing all of you next year at the reunion, if not before.

Welcome new members: Roslyn Buckner, MDPD; Ariel Rodriguez, MDPD; James Murray, MDPD; Eduardo Garcia, MDPD; Donna Colon, MDPD; Randall Houk, MDPD; Lawrence Stevens, MDPD; Mildred Hasmo, MDPD; Calvin (Pete) Andreu, MDPD.

Welcome reinstated members: Vandall Anderson, MDCR, Fred Fabian, MDPD.



South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl and the Board of Directors cordially invite you to the Annual

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Thursday, September 29, 2022 @ 10am

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For more information, contact Robin Pinkard at the PBA: (786) 298-0426



Congrats to retired members

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



Annabel Lee
Miami-Dade Police Department



Ariel Rodriguez
Miami-Dade Police Department



Barbara Barrett & Gary Rubens
Florida City Police Department



Candido Ramos
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation



Dexter Fletcher
Miami-Dade Police Department



Dwight Snyder
Sunny Isles Beach
Police Department



Elise Dillard
Miami-Dade Police Department



Jorge Herrera
Miami-Dade Police Department



Jorge Interian
Miami-Dade Police Department



Joseph Schmidt
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation Department



Lee Cowart
Miami-Dade Police Department



Marie Cador
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation



Mayra Rodriguez
Miami-Dade
Police Department



Michael Grandinetti
Sunny Isles Beach
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This celebration of law enforcement's fearlessness, relentlessness and goodness throughout Miami-Dade and Monroe counties hit an unexpected and emotional crescendo when retired U.S. Marine Corporal Roland Scaranci stood in front of the crowd packed into the ballroom at Trump Doral on May 21. The 99-year-old Marine, who came from Philadelphia for this occasion, expressed his love for the people of Florida, endorsed Ron DeSantis for president and blew enough kisses for each of the 1,100 people in the room to get one of their own.

And then he pulled out a harmonica.

And then he played "God Bless America."

And then the 1,100 who came for the Law Enforcement Awards Gala sang along; one thundering chorus of "Stand beside her. And guide her."

And then "Gala" was not nearly momentous to describe what the night had become.

The celebration that rocked late into the night included a laser-light show, Netflix-caliber videos showcasing the awesomeness of South Florida law enforcement and its supporters in the political and business communities and a heart-racing soundtrack that authenticated the event. All of which accompanied a series of thank-you notes to PBA members from a who's who of elected officials, topped by Senator Marco Rubio and Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Núñez.

"Thank you all so much for allowing me to be here and celebrate the South Florida PBA and our men and women in law enforcement," Núñez declared as



A combined honor guard featuring more than 30 agencies the South Florida PBA represents posted colors for the Law Enforcement Awards Gala.

she began remarks filled with as much blue as the special lighting casting a triumphant hue through the ballroom. As the lieutenant governor walked up to the stage, the song "Simply the Best" played, which was meant to be a tribute to the DeSantis administration.

But she quickly shined that right back on law enforcement with a message from the governor, who just could not get out of a prior engagement, or he would have been there.

"On behalf of Governor Ron DeSantis – he sends his regards – we are proud to stand with law enforcement," she continued. "The governor and I have strived to deliver on our promises to always,



The South Florida PBA invited 99-year-old retired U.S. Marine Corporal Roland Scaranci to attend the Law Enforcement Awards Gala. After greeting the crowd, Corporal Scaranci played "God Bless America" on the harmonica.

always support our men and women in blue. You will never have to wonder if we will ever back down. You have our backs, and we have yours."

The praise for law enforcement reverberated with every speaker who stepped up to the podium, beginning with Local 10 News anchor Calvin Hughes, who emceed the affair. And of course, it was a night to present awards, a run of recognition accentuating the comments from Miami-Dade Mayor Danielle Levine Cava, who extolled, "Your expertise and professionalism are on display every day. We've increased pay because this is one



The PBA presented Senator Marco Rubio (second from left) with a hand-crafted wooden blue-line flag, which he accepted with Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Núñez at his side.

of the safest places in the country thanks to you.”

Illustrious work being celebrated included ending a threat from a man firing on three of the PBA's finest, members running into a burning house for a heroic rescue, defusing incidents of those intent on killing themselves and others, responding to citizens in distress – while off duty – and on and on. As the awards prepared to honor those who tracked down the scum who murdered a young girl and a rookie member who saved no fewer than three citizens in his first year on the job, South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl submitted the message that truly defined the Gala.

“Look around this room,” Stahl implored. “Here are the people who serve every day. They are the people who respond to the 911 calls for your help. They are the dispatchers. And the corrections officers who keep the bad guys behind bars where they belong. Thank you to our law enforcement officers out there who are standing strong. We will continue to fight the good fight and represent you with pride.”

The Gala featured one high note after another, enough to make it play like a law enforcement version of the Oscars or the Grammys. The event began with the combined honor guard representing more than 30 agencies the PBA represents marching in while bagpipers belted out “The Halls of Montezuma,” giving the Gala a salute second only to a police memorial.

Some of the standing ovations appreciated just being back together, which perhaps explains why this Gala attracted its largest attendance ever. Twice as much, almost, as the number that used to come before this PBA administration elevated the event.

Bringing back one of the major aspects of the tribute also made it a night to remember. Honor guard members escorted family members of fallen officers to the front of the room, where they received the Rhett McGregor Memorial Award. It is one of the great rituals of the Gala to remember all fallen officers in honor of Rhett, the first known law enforcement officer in Dade County to be lost in the line of duty.

And then when Senator Rubio stepped up to the microphone, a rush came over the crowd. He jumped on the gratitude bandwagon, but as Rubio has proven since the days when the PBA first endorsed him as a candidate for city commissioner in West Miami, his unconditional support extends to a deeper level.

“After a while, the gratitude gets a little numbing, but I want you to understand how deeply we mean it,” Rubio announced. “Look, it’s easy for us to pass a law. But a law means nothing if someone’s not willing to go out and enforce it. And that begins when someone with a uniform on has to pull up to that scene and they have no idea what they’re about to confront. And we should thank God every single night that we have men and women in this county who are willing to do that work.”

Rubio went on to take on all the irritants to law enforcement. He derided the television experts who break down video of an officer making a life-or-death decision in a millisecond like it is an NFL instant replay review. He said he proposed to members of Congress who wanted to pass a law to make it easier to sue police officers that there should also be a law that makes it easier to sue your member of Congress if you don’t like a law.

And as for all those who speak about overpolicing and defunding, Rubio said



County Commission Chair Pepe Diaz called all the Marines in the room to join him in presenting a key to the city to Corporal Scaranci.

he always responds, “They made a movie about what happens if you do that. ‘It’s called ‘The Purge.’ Because that’s what society would look like.”

A couple of PBA members hit Rubio with a “right back atcha” by presenting him with a hand-crafted, wooden blue-line flag adorned with the union logo on the upper left and the moniker “Defender of Freedom” at the bottom. Of course, a Gala like this had to include some momentous parting gifts, and the best one yet was about to come.

Jose “Pepe” Diaz, chair of the county commission, took his turn at the podium, representing all 13 commissioners who participated. In his final term on the commission, Diaz began his thank-you note by reporting that when the commission came up with the idea for the recent Law Enforcement Appreciation Day in Miami-Dade County, the commission voted 13-0 to ordain it a paid holiday.

“You are our sentinels,” Diaz added. “And all we can do is say thank you for everything you do for us. We will be the strongest law enforcement-supporting people that you will ever find.”

He culminated his appearance by asking all the other marines in the room to join Corporal Scaranci on stage. A Marine himself, Diaz huddled with group and presented Scaranci with a gold key to the city.

As the moment reinforced the words Scaranci had offered earlier – “We have the greatest country in the world. You are the greatest people I have ever met” – the Gala confirmed the overwhelming feeling about the appreciation of law enforcement: Thank God they are there to be the ones who stand beside her and guide her through the night with a light from above.

To read all about the Law Enforcement Award Winners, turn the page...

LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARDS GALA

Left to right holding awards, Doral Officers Daniel Vilarchao, Johnny Beutelus and Raffaello Cervera are honored as South Florida PBA 2021 Officers of the Year.



Fighting the Good Fight

When a subject with a gun started a prolonged gunfight, these Doral officers refused to back down

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Doral FTO Johnny Beutelus and his trainee, Officer Raffaello Cervera, decided to take a lunch break on Friday, Oct. 22, 2021. Driving on 107th Avenue approaching 25th Street, they saw two cars pass them going about 120 miles per hour.

They quickly realized, “Those are the cars.”

An extraordinary and courageous response ensued, culminating in a gun fight exhibiting the bravery and fortitude worthy of honoring Beutelus, Cervera and Officer Daniel Vilarchao as the 2021 South Florida PBA Officers of the Year. It was an incident that left Beutelus shot in the shoulder and bleeding, but still fighting. It was Cervera’s second week out of the academy. It was a situation that escalated between a subject and victim that was almost too fantastic to be an episode of “Cops.”

“When it happened, I was like, ‘This really happened?’” Cervera confided. “It happened so quickly; you don’t have time to think. You’re just in ‘go’ mode.”

When the video played on the big screens to both sides of the stage at the Law Enforcement Awards Gala, it was better than an episode of “Cops.” Multi-

ple ovations erupted from the crowd, reinforcing the outcome and helping these officers relive the best parts of the ordeal.

“I started having flashbacks, so it was kind of emotional for me,” Beutelus disclosed. “I remember each moment of everything that happened from when it started until it ended while I was in the hospital. All I was thinking about was my son. And my dad brought him to me. And I was able to go home.”

Check out what these officers were up against.

That morning, the subject arrived at the electric supply company where he worked, located in the city of Sweetwater. He began to argue with coworkers, and the situation quickly escalated as the subject became more aggressive and hostile.

Earlier that morning, the subject made several threats to his supervisor via text messages. The subject found his supervisor in his office and suddenly began to strike him until he became unconscious. During the attack, the subject made continuous verbal threats that he would kill him and reportedly possessed a handgun.

This drew the attention of the victim, an innocent bystander who was conducting business at the location. The victim attempted to leave but found his truck

blocked in by the subject’s BMW. As the subject exited the business, he turned his attention to the victim and in a rage began to pound his fists on his truck. In fear, the victim did everything he could to escape the situation, striking the subject’s BMW with his truck in order to get away. A chase ensued.

The reckless chase continued into the streets of Doral during busy midday traffic. The situation continued to escalate as the subject rammed his vehicle into the victim’s truck on at least two occasions. The subject then began firing at the victim’s truck from his moving vehicle as they traveled eastbound on NW 25th Street.

Beutelus and Cervera heard the description of the subject’s vehicle come over the radio. When they saw it whip past them, they started following. Cautiously.

“I said, ‘Just follow them from a distance,’” Beutelus explained. “I didn’t want to get into a crash.”

Vilarchao also saw the two vehicles pass him and made a U-turn right in front of Beutelus and Cervera to join the pursuit. The subject lost control of his BMW and crashed into a tree at the intersection of NW 25th Street and 92nd Avenue. He saw the officers approaching.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARDS GALA



Officers of the Year
 Detective Johnny Beutelus
 Officer Raffaello Cervera
 Officer Daniel Vilarchao
 Doral Police Department

"Before we even got out of the car, I see the guy present a firearm through his driver's window and the gunfight started," Vilarchao described. "It's kind of a blur at that point. I'm shooting from inside the car, so I can't really see much."

Some of the subject's rounds went through Officer Vilarchao's front windshield and at least one struck his laptop, which was inches from him. Standing on the hood of the car, the subject held a tactical advantage. This, however, did not deter Vilarchao.

"From the point where we're in the academy, we're trained to not quit. Ever," continued Vilarchao, who took some glass fragments in his face and suffered several lacerations that were still healing by the night of the Gala. "There's a saying, 'Hesitation kills.' If you hesitate or freeze in the moment, it will cost you your life. So I think you have to have the mindset that you've got to be quick on your feet and you've got to be faster than any kind of threat or subject you encounter."

Beutelus and Cervera were positioned directly behind Vilarchao's vehicle during the confrontation. They returned fire, and Beutelus moved in.

"We made eye contact," he detailed. "I was trying to fire another round, but I heard a click sound. So I maneuvered and ran to my left. That's when I dropped to the ground. When I got up, I noticed I had been shot. My body went into shock. I started crawling toward the car, where I could get some cover. Rafael and Daniel were taking care of business while I was trying to get some cover."

How badly was Beutelus hit? Cervera's first concern was for his FTO.

Doral Officer Andrew Aguilera had responded by then. He assessed the wounds to Beutelus and transported him to Jackson Memorial Hospital.



From left, Doral Officers Daniel Vilarchao, Johnny Beutelus and Raffaello Cervera.

In the meantime, the subject had fled into a nearby building. The situation was further aggravated by the number of people going about their daily routine during the busy lunch-hour rush.

Vilarchao exited his vehicle and saw the subject running out of an alley between the building he was in and the one next to it. The second round of gunfire occurred.

"And that's when we saw the subject drop," Vilarchao confirmed.

Even with the video replay, much of that afternoon is still a blur. For Cervera, it was certainly a system shock of on-the-job training. But he realized he learned a very important lesson that day.

"Always got to be on your toes," he related. "Never get complacent. People think that it's chill, but at any moment stuff can pop off. So always got to be on your toes."

At the Law Enforcement Awards Gala, none of the finalists for the Officers of the Year Award know who will get the honor. Standing alongside North Miami Detective Jodylyn Antoine and Miami-Dade Officers Melanie J. Ivey, Katrina Fuentes and Nelson Perez, the Doral team was

just happy to be among this distinguished group representing the best law enforcement anywhere in the country.

"It means a lot, especially because we've got a lot of officers just doing their jobs and doing astonishing work," Beutelus commented. "Winning the award means a lot, especially with these gentlemen. They did a hell of a job, and, at the end of the day, we did what we came to do and got to go back home to our families. That's the most important thing."

Vilarchao had been on the job for six months when the incident went down. But he appears to be wise beyond on his years, representing the perspective that makes South Florida Law Enforcement so dedicated.

"No matter the outcome, I think we're all winners," Vilarchao emphasized. "We're standing here alive, so whether we win or not, it doesn't matter because we got to live another day. It gives you a different outlook on life. Like I said, you're lucky to be alive, so you just enjoy life a little bit more."

Sound Thinking

When a suspect racked a bullet in his gun, a North Miami detective used consummate de-escalation techniques to prevent a tragedy

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Chhhhhiiiiittccchh. Thwvweekk.

That sound of the firearm slide being racked and a bullet falling into the chamber ready to discharge resonates with anguish, a feeling every law enforcement officer can never mistake. On Sept. 21, 2021, North Miami officers heard the gun racking and reacted into position.

"I didn't know what I was walking into at first until I heard the gun rack," Detective Jodlyn Antoine revealed. "Everyone ran for cover, and he came out with a gun in his hand. And I drew down on him."

Officer of the Year Runner-Up

Detective Jodlyn Antoine
North Miami Police Department

North Miami Police had received a call of a male subject reportedly having a mental health crisis. Upon arrival, officers made contact with the subject's wife. She reported that he had made suicidal threats and locked himself in the bathroom.

He screamed obscenities at officers. He refused to open the door. From a window, they could see the subject had blood all over his hands and clothes. Moments later, he opened the front door to his apartment and stood on the threshold brandishing a black firearm. He threatened Detective Antoine, yelling, "Put your gun away. I have a gun, too."

Antoine anticipated that the subject had every intention of firing. But his 26 years on the job enabled Antoine to rapidly index how to approach the situation.

"You know how you show a dog fear, they'll react. I didn't show him fear. I was more interested in his safety and



North Miami Detective Jodlyn Antoine, center, receives the Officer of the Year Runner-Up award.

wellbeing," Antoine recalled shortly after being honored as the 2021 Officer of the Year Runner-Up at the Law Enforcement Awards Gala. "It could have worked to my advantage. It also could have worked against me. But I took a gamble."

Antoine's experience enabled him to feel confident about avoiding a deadly encounter. Bolstered by the North Miami Police Department mission statement to "respect the sanctity of life," he engaged in some verbal judo with the suspect.

And he deflated the anxiety by finding some common ground.

"I started to agree with him, just talking to him and saying, 'I know what you're going through. It's not that serious. You can bounce back. Trust me, I've been there. Let me share my personal experience with you man. Talk to me.'"

The subject had become distraught over his marital issues. Detective Antoine related how he had overcome his



own marital issues. Humanity had suddenly become the foundation of a trust building between officer and suspect, a classic example of how law enforce-

ment is so good in these situations.

Detective Antoine shared how it progressed from there.

"When I finally got him to show me his hands, I put my gun away," he detailed. "I said, 'See, my gun is away. Let's get through this together, man.' I was really able to get in there, get into the meat and potatoes of the dialogue to get him to open to me and talk to me."

The use of de-escalation techniques just flowed through Antoine. He had soothed the suspect enough to get him to drop his gun. But he dropped it inside his apartment, slammed the door shut and barricaded himself inside.

Antoine continued the conversation. He spoke to the subject in Creole, which furthered their bond. Eventually, the suspect exited his apartment without his firearm and sat on the stoop in front. Detective Antoine walked over, sat down next to him and eventually walked him away to be taken to a mental health facility for treatment, ending

the 20-minute exchange.

But Detective Antoine was not done helping this man. Having investigated a little further, he found there was only one bullet in the gun. His only intention for use was to take his own life. His wife informed North Miami officers that he had been talking about killing himself most of the day.

Detective Antoine issued a risk protection order against the subject to help prevent any further harmful action. And he went to the hearing to appear with the subject before the judge.

Antoine said the subject asked him at that point, "If I was such a bad guy, why didn't you kill me?" And the detective responded with words that truly reinforced the sanctity of life.

"I said, 'I'm going to tell you why. For one, I'm a police officer. And two, I'm there to save lives, not take lives,'" he recalled. "And from the bottom of my heart, I am very, very happy it ended, and we both walked away. We're both

breathing. We're both alive."

So the Law Enforcement Awards Gala turned out be a celebration of life for Antoine. After being honored, he received hugs and kisses from his loved ones. And his colleagues who were there leading the standing ovation when Antoine was called up to receive his award.

The video of the incident showed Antoine exerting a steady hand that seemed to inject calm into the situation. He confided that he didn't know how it would turn out once he heard that sound of the gun racking. But Antoine knew he was ready for this moment. He has been almost his entire life.

"I've been wanting to be a cop ever since I was a little kid, about five, six years old," he shared. "And when you have something like this with this kind of outcome, you can't help but say, 'Man, I'm doing the right thing.' And it's well worth it."



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A Heroic Voice

MDPD Officer Melanie Ivey's lifesaving actions speak volumes

Miami-Dade Police Officer Melanie Ivey has heard praise for her voice before. As a renowned crooner of the national anthem who has performed at many law enforcement functions, Ivey knows how to hit the high note.

But on Jan. 11, 2021, she used her voice in a completely different capacity to save a life. Maybe a few lives.

A call had come in that night that a man with a knife was threatening to kill himself and others. Ivey joined the response to the residence.

Officer of the Year Finalist
Officer Melanie J. Ivey
Miami-Dade Police Department

Officers Stephen Baquero and Rafael Escorcía made contact with the man's girlfriend, who stated that Paul La Barrie was inside the residence, holding a knife and wanting to kill himself. La Barrie is a U.S. Army veteran who served two tours in Afghanistan for more than six years. He was battling post-traumatic stress disorder.

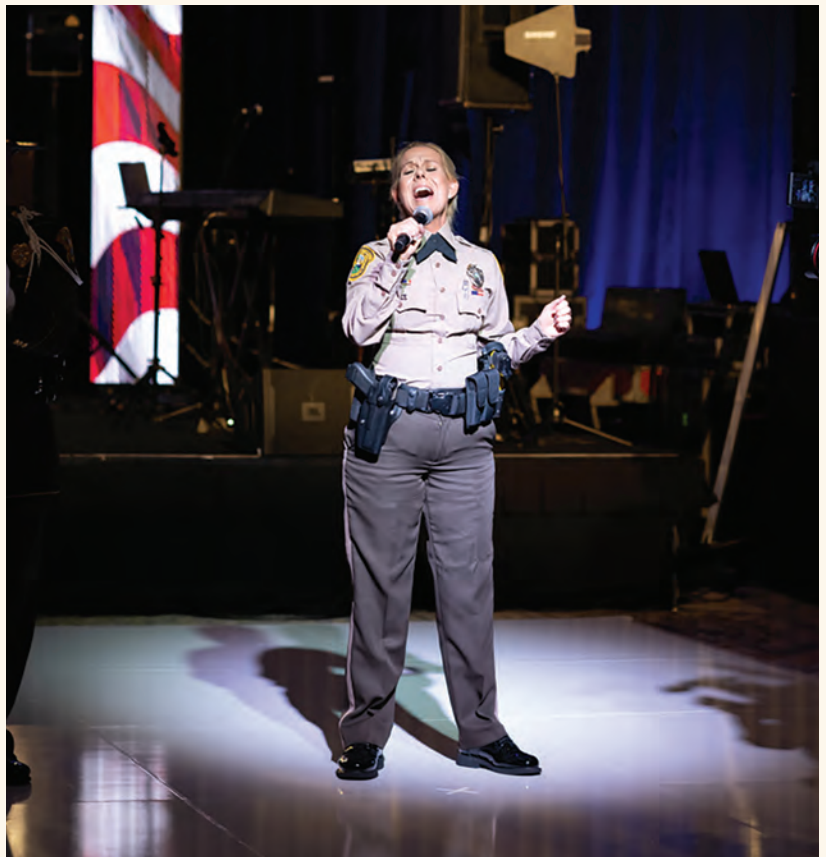
Officers Baquero and Escorcía immediately entered the residence and found La Barrie in a room with a knife in his hand, crying. He yelled, "I'm not dropping the knife. You guys do what you have to do."

Officer Ivey entered the residence and began to speak to La Barrie, building a rapport she hoped would defuse the situation. After continuous dialogue with La Barrie, Ivey convinced him to put the knife down. Her outstanding verbal skills, crisis intervention training and quick response prevented La Barrie from hurting himself or others.

As a result of Officer Ivey's efforts and the efforts of the other officers on the scene, La Barrie's life was saved. And he was able to get the help he needed.

In addition to being honored as an Officer of the Year Finalist for her efforts, Officer Ivey was awarded the Miami-Dade Police Department Exceptional Service Award and selected as Distinguished Officer of the Month for February 2021. It is this type of life-saving effort and initiative that has made her an incredible asset to the department.

There are not many officers like Ivey in MDPD or even the country. At the start of the Gala, she performed an emotional and unforgettable rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner."



Prior to being honored as an Officer of the Year Finalist, Miami-Dade Police Officer Melanie Ivey sang the national anthem.

Law Enforcement to the Rescue

MDPD officers run into the fire to save a life

When a house is on fire and somebody is trapped inside, who you gonna call? Chances are pretty good that police officers get to the scene even before firefighters. And for one woman in Miami-Dade, it's a good thing.

On March 17, 2021, at approximately 8:05 a.m., Officers Katrina Fuentes and Nelson Perez were dispatched to a residential fire. The officers were the first units to arrive on the scene. Once they arrived, the officers observed the kitchen of the residence engulfed in flames and learned that an elderly woman was trapped in the rear bedroom.

Officers Fuentes and Perez immediately ran into the residence. Once inside, the officers encountered heavy smoke and intense heat caused by the expanding fire. Despite these extremely dangerous conditions, they located the elderly woman in the rear bedroom, and without hes-

itation, they carried her out of the residence.

Due to the officers' immediate response, quick thinking and selfless actions, the life of the elderly woman was saved. Running into a burning house is, of course, the result of dedication to duty and professionalism. It is the type of commitment that results in saving a life.

Officer of the Year Finalists

Officer Katrina Fuentes

Officer Nelson Perez

Miami-Dade Police Department



MDPD Officer Katrina Fuentes, center, accepts the Officer of the Year Finalist award on behalf of her fellow officer, Nelson Perez.



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Relentless Pursuit of Justice

MDPD detectives honored for how they solved an emotional murder case

■ BY DAN CAMPANA

At times, Miami-Dade Police Detective Jessica Alvarez cried out of anger and frustration. But at the end of a painstaking two-year investigation into the murder of a 17-year-old girl, Alvarez's tears fell out of relief for her and closure for a heartbroken family.

In May 2019, Gabriela Aldana suffered a fatal gunshot wound to the head as she sat in a Miami parking lot. Alvarez, a 25-year veteran investigator with the MDPD homicide unit, caught the case and lived it from the first interview to the moment she and her partner, Sergeant Pedro Camacho Jr., told Aldana's mother about the arrests of three suspects involved in her daughter's murder.

What happened in the 22 months from the parking lot crime scene to the filing of murder charges is a tale of a relentless pursuit of justice involving a trail of witnesses and evidence that stretched across Florida all the way to Texas. For their dogged work, Alvarez and Camacho received the 2022 Arthur E. Felton Investigative Excellence Award.

"We don't do this job for these awards. We do it for the families. I'm humbled that they recognized our work, because it's a very selfless job," explained Alvarez, who has worked in the homicide bureau for 15 years.

Camacho, who joined homicide in 2015 and was recently promoted to sergeant, modestly gave Alvarez the bulk of the credit.

"She was the lead investigator. I was just a tool in her toolbox," Camacho confirmed. "She did a phenomenal job using the people that surrounded her to help her do the right thing to solve this case."

What wasn't modest was the thunderous response for Alvarez and Camacho from dozens of their fellow Miami-Dade detectives and others in the audience at the PBA Law Enforcement Awards Gala. The reaction befitted the significance of the duo's efforts to find Aldana's killer.

That search began minutes after a black Mercedes-Benz circled the parking lot of the Miracle Market Place before a Black Latin man exited the car and opened fire on a crowd that included Aldana. The man returned to the car, which quickly fled.

Alvarez immediately went to work surveying the shooting scene, prioritizing leads and delegating tasks such as a canvass of the area, reviewing any surveillance video available and conducting witness interviews. As soon as the investigation began, Alvarez faced on-scene witnesses reluctant to talk about what happened.

"In these types of cases, people don't want to talk to us. They don't want to be known as a snitch. They don't want to be known as that person who talked to the cops," she said. "At the end of the day, they need to realize someone was killed. Whether it's a teenage girl or an adult, no one needs to be killed."

Still, Alvarez was able to identify a person of interest and the Mercedes' owner, as well as information that someone with Aldana had returned fire. As the puzzle came together, using cell-



MDPD Detectives Jessica Alvarez, left, and Pedro Camacho Jr., center, accept the Arthur E. Felton Investigative Excellence Award.

Arthur E. Felton Investigative Excellence Award

Detective Jessica Alvarez
Sergeant Pedro Camacho Jr.
Miami-Dade Police Department

phone data and other evidence, Alvarez located the gun used to exchange shots with the gunman who fired on the crowd.

The case started to take shape when the Mercedes turned up in Sumter County, Florida, where the car's driver was being held on unrelated charges. The driver refused to talk, but Alvarez and Camacho pushed forward for almost a year before a call came in to report that the person of interest had been picked up in El Paso, Texas, by U.S. Border Patrol agents. That person of interest also refused to talk.

"There were many days that I leaned on many people because the frustration was just so much," Alvarez recalled. "I felt on so many days that we weren't going to close this case."

Camacho described Alvarez "bawling" during walks they'd take to talk through things when the pressure mounted from higher-ups and the girl's family.

"We're our own worst critic, right? We put pressure on ourselves, especially on cases like this where it involves a juvenile," Camacho said, adding that he always tried to calm and reassure Alvarez. "I'm like, 'It's OK, one step at a time. One thing will lead to another, and sooner or later, we're going to get this motherf---er.'"

Collaborating with the Miami-Dade Crimestoppers and Florida Sheriff's Association, Alvarez increased the reward amount for information in the case to help drive new details. Alvarez

LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARDS GALA

also coordinated media opportunities for Aldana's family to call for anyone who knew something about the shooting to come forward.

The strategy worked. In February 2021, Alvarez and Camacho identified two new possible witnesses, including one in Austin, Texas, who eventually provided key information about what happened the night of the shooting.

"They saw the family pleas in the media and realized it was time to do the right thing, and that's what they did," Alvarez said, adding that she felt like all the pieces were in place after the interview with the witness in Austin. "I told Pete, 'I think we got him.' And when we talked to the state's attorney the very same day, I literally cried, because we knew we finally had some justice. It was an incredible feeling."

In March 2021, three suspects were charged with Aldana's murder. Sharing the news of the arrests with Aldana's mother provided another emotional moment.

"That day was overwhelming in itself," Alvarez related. "We had made these arrests. As soon as we did it, Pete and I went to her house. And I cried, she cried, I think we all cried. It was incredible. It's indescribable."

Camacho's commitment to the case coincided with his wife's pregnancy. As they returned to their seats after accepting the prestigious Felton award, Alvarez thanked Camacho's wife for being supportive of his work no matter the hour or circumstances at home. For his part, Camacho just happened to be covering for someone else when the shooting took place, but he threw himself into it to give Alvarez whatever help she needed,



Jessica Alvarez and Pedro Camacho Jr. receive congratulations from members of the MDPD Homicide Bureau who attended the awards gala, including being the detective at the hospital when Aldana was brought in still clinging to life.

"We work every case as if it was our own family member that got their life taken," he reported. "(Aldana) was a pretty girl. I took a look at her in her last moment on the trauma operating room table. I saw a different Gabby, and it was not fair. She didn't deserve this. It had nothing to do with her. I guess that made it much more personal."

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Instant Impact

Pinecrest officer packs a career's worth of achievements into first year on the job

■ BY DAN CAMPANA

After a first year on the job that included memorable policing and community service, the natural question for Pinecrest Officer Sean Rios is, what do you do for an encore?

Any of Rios' Year One accomplishments likely would have stood out enough to earn him the 2022 PBA Rookie Police Officer of the Year Award. But put them together and he's seemingly reset the bar for future winners.

Rookie Police Officer of the Year
Officer Sean Rios
Village of Pinecrest

All Rios did to start his career in Pinecrest was save two lives; collect money to buy a 60-year-old woman a new bike after thieves took hers; initiate a stairwell beautification project that brought art and inspirational quotes into the Pinecrest police station for officers to see; and take first place in his age group in a 5K — he's not a regular runner, mind you — to support Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Rios called the award “unique” but showed a veteran's presence as he described it as a bit surreal to think about his award-winning body of work.

“When we're actually doing the work, when we do a job, we take each day as it is. You go day to day, so you don't think about it, you just act,” said Rios, a second-generation police officer. “I literally don't think about it until sometimes when I talk to my friends, because they ask me questions, or events like this come up. It comes to the surface ... you're like, ‘All these things actually happened.’”

Astonishingly, Rios' two life-saving moments actually happened in a three-week span. On Sept. 18, 2021, Rios responded to a vehicle on fire after a crash. He initially stabilized an injured driver by holding the person in a C-spine position and then acted quickly to help fellow officers move the driver a safe distance away from the burning vehicle.



Pinecrest Officer Sean Rios, center, receives the Rookie Officer of the Year Award from Chief Jason Cohen, right, and South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl.

Then, on Oct. 4, 2021, Rios was on his way to a call of a shooting at a McDonald's when dispatch reported a vehicle that had crashed into a lightpost and building a few blocks from the restaurant. After locating the vehicle, Rios immediately recognized the driver had suffered multiple gunshot wounds, including one that caused severe bleeding to the man's leg.

Rios and other responding officers applied pressure to the wound and used a tourniquet to prevent the man from bleeding out. An emergency department physician told Rios' supervisors that without the timely and proper use of the tourniquet, the man would have died.

That incident stands out for Rios, but in terms of self-critiques, wondering what he could have done better or differently is only natural. On the other end of the spectrum, Rios enjoyed the stairwell project at the department's station because he was able to work with art students at Palmetto Senior High School to dress up the station in a unique way.

“It was fun. You get to talk to people who are interested in law enforcement. They wanted to talk to a cop. We get to reach out to young members of the com-

munity and be able to give them insight. It was nice,” Rios said.

Pinecrest Police Chief Jason Cohen, who presented Rios with the award at the gala, highlighted his rookie officer's “skills, knowledge, willingness to help others and dedication to our village and the community.”

“Police officers can span an entire career without saving a life, and Officer Rios — only on the job 13 months — has already saved two,” Cohen wrote in nominating Rios for the award. “Officer Rios, in his first year, has made a difference at the Village of Pinecrest Police, exemplified the mission of the police department and has positively impacted his coworkers and the residents of our village.”

So all of this begs the question, what will he do for an encore?

“I guess that's for me to find out,” Rios said before acknowledging that what he's learned so far will benefit him for years to come. “I would say, to be able to act more on what I think, now that I have the tools at my disposal. ... I have more discretion and more ability to be able to do exactly what I want in negative situations.”



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Doing Her Duty

MDCR Officer Gina Mobley responds to save a life while off duty

■ BY BRITTANY KRUGEL

For any law enforcement officer, the words “off duty” don’t necessarily mean off the job. Miami Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation (MDCR) Officer Gina Mobley provided heroic evidence of how law enforcers rarely, if ever, flip the switch to off duty.

On the night of May 20, 2021, Mobley was enjoying dinner with her loved ones at an Olive Garden in Pembroke Pines. Suddenly, she heard somebody at a nearby table scream, “Does anyone know the Heimlich maneuver?” Without hesitation, Mobley sprang into action.

“I turned around and looked, and it was an older lady. She was choking on her food,” Mobley recalled. “So I got up to see if I could help.”

Corrections Officer of the Year

Gina Mobley

Miami Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation

In that moment, Mobley describes feeling the instinct to get up and help the woman. In her

role at MDCR, Mobley works in the training bureau, is a first-aid and CPR instructor and is part of the crisis intervention team. So she was able to literally practice what she teaches.

“It’s just what you train to do. Whether it’s at home or whether it’s on the street, it doesn’t matter,” she continued. “If you’re trained in that and you have a heart for the people, you’re going to react. You’re not going to just sit there and not do anything.”

Mobley was able to save the woman who was choking by giving her the Heimlich and getting the food dislodged. She made sure the woman was able to breathe until EMS arrived on scene.

Like most officers, Mobley doesn’t want the spotlight shined on her for doing her job.

But her honor materialized at the Law Enforcement Awards Gala, when she received the 2021 Correctional Officer of the Year award. Mobley’s family was on hand for the ceremony.

Linda Mobley, a former Miami-Dade corrections officer herself, says her daughter makes her proud. Gina said she had not planned to follow in her mother’s footsteps, but the tide turned when she realized she loved helping others.

“I have a passion for the people and to help,” she shared. “So it’s one of my greatest accomplishments.”

But it’s not just mom. Helping others has become a family affair. Gina’s aunt, Shirley Gibson, was an officer with Miami-Dade Police Department and went on to become the first mayor of Miami Gardens.

You could say Gina has a lot to live up to, but luckily, she’s learned from some powerhouse women.

“I tried to teach her integrity and respect and to do her job,” Linda commented. “And to do it to the best of your ability.”

As you might guess, Mobley attributes her success to carrying on the family legacy. But there’s another team member who



MDCR Officer Gina Mobley, center, received the Corrections Officer of the Year award.




A family of law enforcement, from left: Linda Mobley, Shirley Gibson, Gina Mobley and Dukens Pierre.

holds a special place in her heart: her partner, Officer Dukens Pierre.

Pierre has been on the job with MDCR for 12 years, four of those as an instructor in the training bureau. He accompanied her to the gala, and when asked to sum up Mobley’s work, he could only describe it with one word: excellent.

Excellence seems to be a theme for Gina, her family members and, most of all, her department.

“Everything that I’ve learned, that I’ve taken in, I owe it to Miami-Dade Corrections,” she said. “This award is definitely a representation of Miami-Dade Corrections. It also feels good because my family is a representation of the department. I’m glad I’m making them proud.”



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For the People

Freddy Ramirez attributes his leadership award to the men and women of the Miami-Dade Police Department

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

As Freddy Ramirez humbly expressed his thanks for being honored at the 2022 Law Enforcement Awards Gala, he didn't brag or boast or prolong his speech, citing his noteworthy accomplishments.

Instead, he credited the Fred Mass Outstanding Law Enforcement Leadership Award to the men and women of the Miami-Dade Police Department, who have stood behind him as he leads.

"I adore them, because without them, I'd be done," Ramirez said. "And that's what makes us such a great family. They're on the front lines doing a difficult job each and every day. And that's why our community loves the police in Dade County."

As the Miami-Dade interim chief public safety officer, Ramirez is well known for his hands-on leadership style, which he attributes to an integral perspective: never forgetting where he came from.

"I never act better than what I am," Ramirez reflected. "I was chosen to sit in that seat, and I respect all the men who sat in that seat. I'm not going to pretend to be anything other than myself, the guy who wears a silver badge and works alongside men and women in this community."

In his 27 years on the job, Ramirez has served at every rank, starting with patrol and including investigations, narcotics and homicide. And he was promoted to department director in 2020. Since then, Ramirez has focused on several initiatives to reduce gun violence and enhance relationships in the community.

The secret to Ramirez's leadership, he says, is following the legacy of those who have gone before him and putting himself in their shoes.

"Every time I'm in a situation, I always think back to the people who served long before me," Ramirez continued. "When times are hard, I think of how they would've handled it. And the way you handle it is, you know that you've got good people around you and they get the job done."



Although the Fred Mass award recognized his commitment to leading by example, Ramirez said receiving this award was a direct reflection of the officers in his department. Ramirez has seen how they have persevered under that pressure and led by example on how to handle the difficult challenges facing law enforcement.

"I'll never forget watching police work change and watching how our department adapts to it," Ramirez said. "And how they still do great work no matter the curveball. Whatever gets thrown on us, our green-and-white is going to show up at the door, handling the call."

Ramirez concluded his speech by thanking the officers in his department and stating how blessed he was to work alongside them.

"My people make or break me," Ramirez added. "They make me look good. And without them, we would be in big trouble."



Inside the Front Lines

Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay stands strong alongside his officers

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

On any given day, Rick Ramsay feels much more professional in the Monroe County Sheriff's Department emerald police uniform than in the suit and tie that is the uniform of the elected official. On every day, he prefers the emerald green as he stands on the front lines with his fellow officers.

And that is exactly what he does as Monroe County Sheriff. Ramsay, who is in his third term, drives a patrol vehicle with a light bar rather than an unmarked unit as part of going the extra mile to lend support to MCSO deputies.

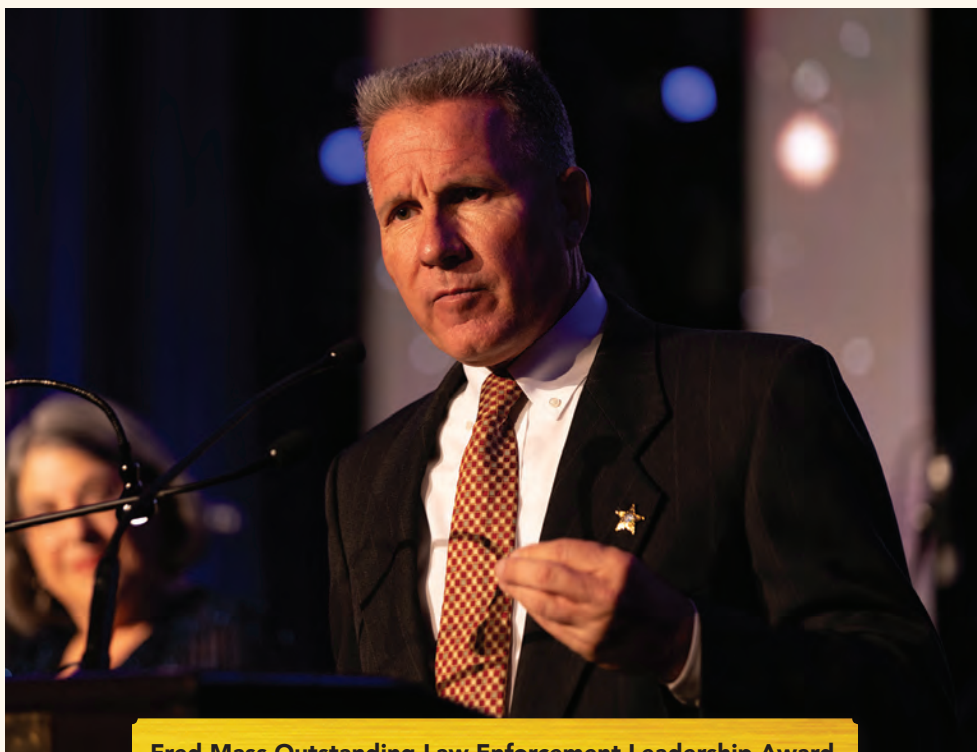
"I wear a uniform most of the time," Ramsay revealed. "I back officers up because I want them to see that I'm there for them. I still understand and know what it's like to be a cop. I haven't forgotten."

As he humbly accepted the Fred Mass Outstanding Law Enforcement Leadership Award at the PBA 2022 Law Enforcement Awards for his hands-on leadership, Ramsay reiterated that the recognition wasn't just for him. That is the same M.O. he uses when speaking to groups in the county, making sure to give credit where the credit is due.

"I always say your people make or break you and there's no I in team, and that's true here," Ramsay attested. "I'm only as good as my people, and they deserve the award. They're out there on the line, responding to calls, doing the hard work. They make me look good each and every day. I'm proud of my guys and gals."

Ramsay's law enforcement career began in 1987 on road patrol duty. He was quickly promoted through the ranks, serving in investigations, special operations, corrections and the South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. In 2012, Ramsay was elected sheriff of MCSO with overwhelming support.

Since then, Ramsay has become known as the most decorated sheriff in the history of the department. He has earned 93 commendations of merit, including a Medal of Valor for saving the life of a man who was trapped in a drainage pipe filled with lethal fumes.



Fred Mass Outstanding Law Enforcement Leadership Award
Rick Ramsay
Monroe County Sheriff

As sheriff, Ramsay emphasizes community policing and has initiated beautification projects around the community. Above all, he is proud of the work his officers have done to achieve reductions in the crime rate.

His unique leadership style lands him on the ground with his officers, traveling to various police stations and jails in the county at least once each week. Even more often if possible. He also attends trainings to offer words of encouragement and recognize jobs well done. Ramsay seeks to lead by example and put himself in his officers' shoes.

"I want them to see that I'm not sitting behind just a desk," Ramsay explained. "I always try to acknowledge that they're



the backbones, the boots on the streets. They deserve all the awards from the sheriff's office because they fight the battle every day."

Ramsay's open-door policy and down-to-earth personality enable officers to know they can go to him with any problem or issue. It is their support and hard work that he recognized when receiving the leadership award from the PBA.

And the reason why he continues to put on that uniform.

"I'm the captain of the boat," Ramsay added. "I say where I want to go, but the crew has to get me there. If they don't all row in the same direction, if one person is rowing in the wrong direction, the ship can only do a slow circle."

Great Citizen

When a local businessman saw how police officers were being treated, he decided to do something about it

■ BY ELLEN WILKOWE

When Al Eskanazy sold his insurance business in 2016, he could have been retired and “doing pleasant things” at home.

Instead, he set out on a philanthropic venture and founded Community-Police Relations (CPR) Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to uniting communities with law enforcement agencies by bringing humanity to the uniform.

Citizen of the Year Award

Al Eskanazy
CPR Foundation

Five years, 88 employees and countless acts of charity later, creating the CPR Foundation landed Eskanazy the South Florida PBA Citizen of the Year Award. The award is bestowed upon individuals who uphold the PBA's mission to promote social, charitable and educational activities among members.

As perhaps an especially telling tribute to what the CPR Foundation has accomplished, Eskanazy was nominated for the honor by the North Miami Police Department.

“In these challenging times of police-community relations, Al has proven himself to be a great citizen, whose actions, not words, show you just how special a person Al really is. And more importantly, how a citizen can play a pivotal role in community-police relations,” North Miami Police Chief Larry Juriga wrote in his letter of recommendation.

The CPR Foundation partners with local law enforcement agencies to help strengthen relationships between police and the communities they serve. Their involvement and outreach efforts have helped dismantle perceived barriers between the communities and law enforcement. “Al and CPR are the unifying force,” said Juriga.

So, how did the former insurance executive and innovator transition into the nonprofit world of community organiz-

ing and law enforcement?

Unsettled by the direction of the country and his subsequent tirades at the TV, Eskanazy reacted to a gentle nudging from his wife “to get up and do something about it.” He turned his angst into action. “Be a participant, not an observer,” she told him.

“If it weren't for my wife, Elaine Del Valle, allowing me to do this, I'd be home doing pleasant things,” he said upon receiving the award.

Eskanazy dished out equal amounts of praise to his partner, Barry Stolic, whom he credits as the reason he is “standing here representing 88 other people, all of whom would not have happened if not for my partner.”

Eskanazy grew the nonprofit one employee at a time. He wanted to create an organization that would support police with the success similar operations have had in Los Angeles and Chicago. The CPR Foundation is working in cities and towns across South Florida.

“We're on the move,” he said. “And we're on the street every day.”

The foundation organizes behind-the-scenes activities of benefit to the community, which have included but are not limited to: donating turkeys during Thanksgiving, sponsoring distribution of hot food to 400 people in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. weekend and covering the costs of ice cream for the kids who attended National Night Out. Chief Juriga further applauded Eskanazy for providing 10 tons of snow so that kids could experience snow in Miami.

“Sometimes it's the simpler ideas and gestures from Al that have made the greatest impact,” the chief said.

In operating a nonprofit, Eskanazy assures that most of the funding is distributed directly to the intended causes.

“Seventy-seven percent of all our money goes to people and communities,” he said. “The law enforcement side is a much, much smaller contingent. But we bring together people with law enforcement and humanity.”

He describes South Florida as a “liber-



Al Eskanazy, right, receives the Citizen of the Year Award from PBA President Steadman Stahl.

ty city all the time” and identifies it as a “unique community,” one that embraces a police presence as opposed to the defund-the-police movement.

Eskanazy takes the greatest pride in how the police have accepted the foundation as a partner, as have the communities it serves.

“It is our integrity that got us accepted,” he said.

He also credited this acceptance to showing the “humanity of the uniform.”

“The person inside of it is a mother or father, a sister, a brother,” he said. “And it's a very simple concept. It's very difficult to hate somebody when you break bread and get to know somebody.”

Eskanazy expressed deep gratitude for the law enforcement officers in South Florida who “every day leave their family and put themselves in harm's way for strangers,” he said. “Just call and we're there.”

It all comes down to the humanity of these bighearted people.

“We love you. We love you. We're here to serve,” he said. “We ask for nothing other than the opportunity to help where help is needed, when help is needed. I salute you all. Thank you.”

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South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl, right, and Executive Vice President David Greenwell present a Special Recognition Award to Harvey and Randi Meshel.

Lending a remarkable helping hand at Surfside

When Executive Vice President David Greenwell responded to the site of the Champlain Towers South collapse the morning after the tragedy, he brought the South Florida PBA food truck to begin a marathon run of serving those working the rescue and recovery effort. One of the first calls he received asking if support was needed came from Harvey and Randi Meshel.

Harvey and Randi have distinguished themselves through long-term and selfless volunteer work for the South Florida law enforcement community. They began contacting Greenwell several times each day to offer whatever was needed until the rescue and recovery mission was completed.

Special Recognition Award
Harvey and Randi Meshel

At first, the officers needed water, so the next day, Harvey, Randi and their team showed up in pickup trucks loaded with water. As the days passed,

their contributions increased, providing energy bars, Gatorade and iceboxes to keep the drinks cold. The iceboxes held approximately 200 bags of ice, and the Meshels made sure they were refilled daily.

Because of the large amount of supplies the Meshels were providing, Harvey brought his personal 15-foot trailer to store all the items. The actions of these two outstanding citizens exhibited during the Surfside condo collapse tragedy were above and beyond what is expected of paid personnel, let alone civilian volunteers. The assistance of this couple during such a horrific tragedy was awe-inspiring, and it helped make the daily challenges first responders faced a little more bearable.

There were many heroes and unsung heroes at the collapse day in and day out. Harvey and Randi are definitely unsung heroes who showed up, asked what was needed and then delivered. They set the standard for volunteerism at a tragedy.

"There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer," said Colonel Jimmy Doolittle, who commanded volunteer pilots for a dangerous bombing mission in Japan during World War II. Times of war and catastrophes bring out the best and worst in humans. The Surfside condo collapse was no different; it just showed that nobody has bigger hearts than Harvey and Randi.



Chief Bryan Pegues, center, the new Aventura deputy city manager, accepts a special recognition award from South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl, right, and Executive Vice President David Greenwell.

Always ready to serve

Chief Bryan Pegues retired after serving in law enforcement for more than 28 years. But when a call to serve came in 2022, Chief Pegues answered as he always has.

Pegues was there to take the deputy city manager position for the city of Aventura. And he continues to be the consummate public servant.

Chief Pegues began his law enforcement career in 1995 after earning a B.S. in criminal justice from the University of South Florida. Chief Pegues is a graduate of both the prestigious FBI National Academy and the Southern Police Institute Command Officers Development Course.

Chief Pegues was a decorated K-9 officer and rose through the ranks to sergeant in 2004, lieutenant in 2007, captain in 2012, major in 2016 and chief in 2017.

As operations division supervisor, Chief Pegues served as the City of Aventura Agency SWAT Team commander from 2004 to 2017. As the critical incident supervisor of joint teams from the City of Aventura and North Miami Beach, Chief Pegues assisted with various Miami-Dade County major incidents, including the 2010 Super Bowl operation, the 2010 Pro Bowl, hostage and barricaded subject situations, officer-involved shooting incidents and emergency preparation exercises for Aventura Hospital, Aventura Mall and the Turnberry Jewish Center.

As administrative division supervisor, Chief Pegues contributed to budget and financial projections for the entire Aventura police agency. He also served as a Field Training Officer Review Board member responsible for overseeing and maintaining the professional standards of new employees, collaborating with field training supervisors to provide guidance, support and instruction for policy, tactics, productivity, safety and effective communication between management, recruits and departmental personnel. Chief Pegues also managed intra-agency 911 personnel and implemented new technologies for improved 911 communications and response times.

Chief Pegues continues his life of service to his community as Aventura deputy city manager. Leadership, professionalism, dedication, fiscal responsibility, protection and building a stronger community to improve the quality of life for those whom he serves remain his highest priorities.

Special Recognition Award
Chief Bryan Pegues



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Remembering Together

MDCR Honor Guard joins with family members to honor department's fallen officers at National Police Week

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Sorrow and longing accompanied family members of Miami Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation (MDCR) officers who were lost in the line of duty in 2021 as they attended the Candlelight Vigil during National Police Week. The loved ones of Officers Sylvia Allen, Calyne St. Val, Terrell Jordan, David Jean-Baptiste and Alexey Aguilar joined the other 614 families who heard the names that were part of this annual Roll Call of Heroes that brought nearly 40,000 family members, friends, law enforcement officers and backers of the blue back to the National Mall in Washington D.C. on May 13.

The MDCR families defused the feeling of missing their fallen officer by leaning on each other and sharing the remembrance with the thousands there also mourning a loved one. Those mixed emotions radiated from Angela Jean-Baptiste, who oozed some love when sharing that the next day marked one year since David was laid to rest. And it would have been their 30th wedding anniversary.

"It's sad that I have to come to D.C. because I miss my husband so much," Angela expressed. "I thought I was alone. But just to come here, there's other spouses, friends, fathers and mothers in the same boat I am."

The families of the fallen MDCR officers soon found out just how much love surrounded them. One by one, they received a visit from the MDCR Honor Guard, which had come to honor its sister and brother officers.

And those few moments elevated the adoration to the point where a rush of smiles and hugs flowed forth.

"You see those smiles on their faces and it goes a long way," exclaimed Officer Karlos Ramos, the leader of the MDCR Honor Guard.

The six-person detail with Ramos included Corporal Jameelah Lee, Corporal Roosevelt Reese IV, Officer Alicia Tookes, Officer Justin Bozeman and Officer Jonathan Lingo. Dressed in their Class A white uniform tops that seemed to shine even brighter than the U.S. Capitol overlooking the National Mall, the MDCR came to the Candlelight Vigil with a distinct mission.

"At the end of the day, it's something we need to do for the families," Ramos added. "It's a sacrifice we make for them. And



Angela Jean-Baptiste with members of the MDCR Honor Guard before the Candlelight Vigil on May 13 at National Police Week in Washington D.C.



With officers from the MDCR Honor Guard are members of Officer Alexey Aguilar's family, from left daughters Viviana and Monica, wife Claudine Nodal and daughter Angelica.

fellow officers who we stood side by side with, we're there for them."

Corporal Lee shared that seeing the families feeling the support that comes at Police Week made a distinct impression on her.



MDCR Officer Sylvia Allen's daughter, Precious Barnwell (center, green) with members of the MDCR Honor Guard at National Police Week.

"You can tell they are grateful for our presence," she continued. "And that's what drives us to continue to do it."

For the MDCR Honor Guard, providing the support to the families of their fallen sister and brothers also created an opportunity to see what makes attending National Police Week so powerful. Officer Tookes attended for the first time and recognized why so many law enforcement officers call this a life-changing experience.

"It's empowering for a sad occasion that something as beautiful as this comes out of it," Tookes explained. "We are here to show support for our fallen coworkers, and it brings joy that we are here and standing strong. If you look around, we're standing strong."

The strength of the MDCR officers' families seemed to confirm how much the opportunity to remember their loved ones



Lakeisha Anderson Jordan and son Jalen with the MDCR Honor Guard at the Candlelight Vigil.

at the Candlelight Vigil meant. With her mother, daughter and son beside her, Angela Jean-Baptiste sensed what many survivors do on this night: the presence of their loved one with them.

She celebrated David as a consummate partner and friend; a devoted father who, she agreed, was telling everybody up there how he married the best woman in the world. And she recalled what made him such a dedicated officer whose integrity was renowned.

"He loved that he could be a mentor to the inmates," Angela related. "Especially the young people. He always told them, 'When you get out of there, you can better yourself. Just make sure you go to school and change your life.'"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

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Alexey Aguilar's wife, Claudia Nodal, described how being among the other survivors at the Vigil with her three daughters, Monica, Angelica and Viviana, created the feeling of family they have missed since losing Alexey on April 23, 2021. So many nights he would come home and regale his girls with stories about work.

"He would come home with jokes all the time about the crazy stuff he would see," Claudia said as a smile crept onto her face.

Viviana observed how being at the Vigil presented a chance not to just keep her father's memory alive but perpetuate the legacy of a fallen officer.

"I'm glad that he and a lot of other people get to be part of this and be remembered," she noted.

And within that remembrance, Viviana expressed the legacy that her father left for her, Monica and Angelica.

"He taught us how not to start problems because sometimes we have a hard time keeping our mouths shut," she quipped. "So he taught us how to control that."

Laquisha Anderson Jordan and her son, Jaylen, were taken with the magnificence of the tributes made to fallen officers at Police Week. She knew that Terrell was a hard worker and dedicated employee, and she proudly reported that he had just taken the sergeant's exam and was looking forward to promotion when he was lost on Sept. 29.

The Vigil apparently has a way of bringing out the best in remembrance.

"I see it as unity," Laquisha described. "I don't exactly know how to do his legacy. I think just do their job and protect."

The Vigil seemed to lift up Precious Barnwell, Sylvia Allen's daughter. That's the power of Police Week, of course. Precious



Family and friends of MDCR Officer Calyne St. Val with the MDCR Honor Guard at National Police Week.

radiated with her mother's memory, sharing how much she loved the job, loved the overtime, loved being the officer at the front scanner at TKG who greeted everybody with her bubbly personality.

"Just being that person who made you feel welcome," Precious extolled. "I want to continue to be a woman like that. She was very strong, very determined. Always happy, always positive. Not stressing over what you can't control and always, always giving her best."

With that said, Precious flashed a, well, precious smile. Certainly inspired by her mother and a tribute to the feeling that every family member and officer gets when coming to National Police Week.



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REFLECTIONS

Catching up with a renowned South Florida PBA Member

Lifesaver

Mario Gutierrez remembers the quick actions that stopped a potentially lethal explosion and earned him PBA Officer of the Year honors

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

Oct. 29, 2013 was a day Mario Gutierrez will always remember from his 27 years on the job with the Miami-Dade Police Department. An individual was attempting to blow up an underground gas tank located directly across from the Miami International Airport. Gutierrez reacted quickly.

A violent confrontation ensued and left Gutierrez severely injured in critical condition. During the battle, he was able to discharge his weapon and end the threat by killing the assailant.

Gutierrez was named as the Dade County PBA 2013 Police Officer of the Year for his heroic efforts in preventing a potentially devastating explosion and saving countless lives that day.

It was an award he had seen numerous officers receive, but Gutierrez never imagined he would be worthy of such an honor.

"It was never in my wildest dreams that I thought I was ever going to earn something like that," Gutierrez said. "And I was blown away by that because the PBA treated me top-shelf all the way. They were amazing."

Through the next few months of recovery, the PBA stood behind Gutierrez as he bounced back from multiple stab wounds.

And that support from the union is what Gutierrez remembered most.

"It's a tight-knit unit where we take care of each other in our time of need," Gutierrez said. "They took care of me, and I'll never forget that."

During the encounter on that October night, Gutierrez saw that the underground gas tanks were in the direct flight paths of the airplanes taking off. He quickly activated the emergency shut-off valve that fueled the pumps. And he confronted the individual, who was attempting to start a fire on top of the valve system.

Their interaction escalated. The subject violently began stabbing Gutierrez with a large knife in his hands, arms, chest and legs.

"He stabbed me over a dozen times before I was able to stop him," Gutierrez



Retired Miami-Dade Officer Mario Gutierrez received the Public Safety Medal of Valor in 2016 from former President Barack Obama for his efforts in stopping a potentially lethal explosion in 2013.

said. "And the department recognized what I had done. They gave me the Gold Medal of Valor, the highest award that the department can give. And they also gave me a Purple Heart for my wounds."

Due to his severe injuries, Gutierrez remained out of work for several months. But the day after the incident, PBA members organized a carwash fundraiser in his honor. The amount raised was enough to cover all of his medical expenses.

It was a testament to Gutierrez of just how strong the brotherhood truly is.

"I was able to pay my bills, still put food on the table and a roof over my head," Gutierrez explained. "And I had the PBA to thank for that."

That was not the only night Gutierrez had seen his life in danger. When he first came on the job in the mid-'90s, he found himself hanging off a ledge in an attempt to save a man from jumping off an I-95 overpass. And Gutierrez was given the Lifesaving Award for saving the man's life.

Despite the danger, Gutierrez always wanted to become a police officer. He went to the academy at 32, adding that he was excited for what lay ahead. He was a field training officer for 10 years and later joined the motors unit, where he worked until he retired in 2018.



Mario Gutierrez's Record

- Served 27 years with the Miami-Dade Police Department
- Field training officer for 10 years
- Lifesaving Award recipient
- 2016 Officer of the Year Award recipient
- Purple Heart recipient
- 2016 Public Safety Medal of Valor recipient
- PBA member since 1991

Gutierrez described joining the department as the happiest day of his life because it was like he won the lottery. He left the department decorated with honors and awards. One of the highest honors he received came in 2016, when he visited the White House to receive the Public Safety Medal of Valor. President Obama recognized Gutierrez for his actions in 2013.

He certainly left the job proud of the many honors he had received. But most important to Gutierrez was knowing he gave back to those who once stood behind him when he needed help the most.

"I chose to give back while I was in there," Gutierrez added. "I gave back to the department by training the recruits coming on to the best of my ability. And to this day, a lot of them will remember me and always reflect back."

South Florida PBA Members Honor Fallen Officers at Local Police Memorials

Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation



On May 5, Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation officers participated in the 41st Annual Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Ceremony at Tropical Park. The annual memorial pays tribute to the 165 officers who, since 1865, have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving the citizens of Miami-Dade County. Six names from MDCR were added to the memorial this year. The ceremony included lighting of the commemorative torches by the chief official of each agency that suffered losses, a riderless horse, a 21-gun salute, a multiple-helicopter flyover and a synchronized vehicle lighting exhibition.

Monroe County Sheriff's Office



Before the nation gathered in Washington D.C., for the annual Candlelight Vigil during National Police Week on May 13, officers gathered at Bayview Park in Key West for the Monroe County Sheriff's Office to honor the fallen. Lieutenant David Smith (above) spoke on behalf of the sheriff's office.

Miami-Dade Police Department



Participating in the 41st Annual Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Ceremony enabled Miami-Dade Police Department members to ensure that future generations will never forget the sacrifices by those officers who came before them and were lost in the line of duty. MDPD officers joined survivors of lost loved ones and other agencies at the memorial wall, which holds the names and tells the stories of the sacrifices by those men and women.

Key West Police Department



Key West Police Department members expressed thanks to the community for joining in honoring law enforcement men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice to keep them safe.

South Florida PBA Members Honor Fallen Officers at Local Police Memorials

North Miami Police Department



In a ceremony on May 3, North Miami members gathered to remember the lives of three beloved fallen officers: Sergeant Carl W. Mertes, Detective Sergeant Steven E. Bauer and Sergeant Lynette Hodge. North Miami participated in the tribute to let the families, friends, loved ones and colleagues of these fallen heroes know that they will never be forgotten.

Pinecrest Police Department



On May 5, Pinecrest members joined hundreds of law enforcement officers at the 41st Annual Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Monument at Tropical Park. They shared their sorrow with family members and friends of the deceased as South Miami Chief Rene Landa read each of the names of the county's 161 fallen officers.

Homestead Police Department



On May 5, Homestead officers and Explorers participated and paid tribute in the 41st Annual Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Ceremony. Members commented about how they were humbled by the annual tribute to all brothers and sisters who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the community.

Sunny Isles Police Department



Members from Sunny Isles PD joined in honoring the fallen heroes at the 41st Annual Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Ceremony at Tropical Park. It was an opportunity for Sunny Isles officers to let family members know that the bravery and service of their loved ones will never be forgotten.



Members Only Section

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

PBA members get on the caring caravan

North Miami Police Department hosts event for Autism Awareness Month

In honor of Autism Awareness Month, the North Miami Police Department hosted the first Autism Acceptance Police Caravan on April 20. Various departments across Miami-Dade County participated in the four-hour caravan ride with their vehicles wrapped to promote awareness and acceptance in the community.

North Miami officers received support from the 20 other police departments that participated with their 37 police vehicles and 50 police motorcycles.

"Our goal was to raise awareness, acceptance and emphasize the need for the understanding of those living with autism spectrum disorder," North Miami Detective Orestes Torres remarked. "Needless to say, we received tremendous support from our law enforcement partners."

Departments that took part in the caravan included members from: Miami Dade PD, Medley PD, Miami PD, Coral Gables PD, Hialeah PD, Bal Harbour PD, Bay Harbor Islands PD, Florida International University PD, Miami Gardens PD, Aventura PD, Homestead PD and Pembroke Pines PD.

Officers gathered at the North Miami Police Department for the sendoff. Various speakers recounted their personal experiences with autism and handed out informational pamphlets to the officers and residents in the community.

The caravan's first stop was the South Florida Autism Charter School in Hialeah, where officers greeted students and took pictures with them. Then they continued their route to Medley PD, Miami City Hall and Coral Gables PD. Partnering with North Miami PD, iHeart Radio broadcast the event live.

The caravan hit the finish line at Crystal Academy, a school for students with autism and developmental delays in Coral Gables. Officers hosted an Easter egg hunt for the students and handed out sensory toys.

Along the way, North Miami members also had the opportunity to present their autism outreach program, which guides law enforcement officers on how to handle encounters with individuals on the



The North Miami Police Department hosted the first Autism Acceptance Police Caravan on April 20.



Medley Police Department rode alongside 20 other police departments in the caravan.



Hialeah Police Department displayed its autism awareness-wrapped vehicle.



Officers stopped midway on their route to take a break at Miami City Hall.

autism spectrum.

"This program allows members of the community to register their family members who are living with autism spectrum disorder and provide us with information so officers can better deal with those individuals and approach with an appropriate and informed response," Torres explained.

Due to the support from police depart-



Officers first arrived at South Florida Autism Charter School in Hialeah to meet students.

ments and the community, North Miami PD is already planning next year's caravan ride.

"Because April is Autism Acceptance and Awareness Month, North Miami Police decided to make this autism awareness and acceptance caravan an annual event," Torres added. "We are hoping that more police departments join our caravan in April 2023."

The force is with Bal Harbour and North Miami officers as they celebrate their heroes

On April 23, Bal Harbour Marine Patrol officers and North Miami officers hung out with several children battling cancer at the Haulover Sandbar in Miami to celebrate Mystic Force Hero Week. The day included the marine unit taking children for a memorable boat ride.

The Mystic Force Foundation and Heroes Hangout work

with law enforcement agencies and other organizations to raise awareness about childhood cancer and raise funds for research. They honored their “heroes” during Heroes Week, April 22–May 1, which celebrates the youngest children battling cancer and grants them wishes.



MCSO and Key West officers dunk on cancer

NBA playoff basketball had nothing on the way members from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office and Key West Police Department hooped it up on April 23 at the Key West High School gym.

Raising money for Relay for Life brought teams from the two agencies together. The Dunk on Cancer contest went back and forth, with both teams hitting big shots and playing great defense. In the end, Key West PD scored a 50-46 victory. But cancer research was the big winner, with members raising \$2,000 for Relay for Life.



MDCR members display their pride for LGBTQ community

Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation (MDCR) officers joined with other agencies in the South Florida Law Enforcement LGBTQ Coalition to take part in the Miami Beach Pride Parade on April 10. MDCR LGBTQ liaisons decorated a department car with rainbow colors to show support.

On the department Facebook page, they posted, “We stand with the #LGBTQ community each and every day!”



PBA members carry the torch to support Special Olympics

On May 12, PBA members from Florida International University, North Miami and Miami Gardens laced up their sneakers to participate in the 41st Law Enforcement Torch Run in support of the Special Olympics. The Torch Run raises awareness and funds for the Special Olympics as officers carry the Flame of Hope Torch, which symbolizes courage and celebrates diversity.

Pinecrest, Miami-Dade and North Miami show off their hot wheels



On May 14, various police departments across Miami-Dade County attended the Law Enforcement Appreciation Day Police Car Show at Tropical Park in Miami. Pictured above from left, Pinecrest Police Department Captain Edison Cruz, Sergeant Mayra Oliva and Officers Jose Garcia, Shawn Towne and Danielle Ramos displayed their new yellow and blue vehicle that featured artwork in honor of childhood cancer awareness and



autism awareness.

Pinecrest PD joined Miami-Dade Police Department, which displayed a red, white and blue vehicle with the slogan “Support our Troops.” The North Miami Police Department also participated with a vehicle showing brightly colored superhero artwork.

Sunny Isles Beach officers put mettle in the pedal

In an effort to prioritize bike-riding safety, Sunny Isles Beach officers hosted a helmet giveaway on April 26. By the end of the event, officers had given away more than 100 bike helmets to children and families in the community.

On May 13, the community celebrated Bike to School Day. In partnership with Norman S. Edelcup/Sunny Isles Beach K-8 school, officers escorted children riding their bikes to school.



Miami-Dade members bring honor to National Police Week

The Miami-Dade Honor Guard returned to Washington, D.C., for National Police Week. On May 13, members served as escorts to family members of fallen officers at the annual Candlelight Vigil at the National Mall.

Joining their law enforcement brothers and sisters from across the country, the members of the Miami-Dade Honor Guard were among the 40,000 people who came to the Vigil to never forget the service and sacrifice of those who gave their lives while serving their communities.



Miami-Dade detective honored as officer of the year



On April 28, Miami-Dade Detective Jeffrey Richman of the Professional Compliance Bureau was honored as the 2021 Officer of the Year at the Miami-Dade Chiefs' Dinner.

Medley PD names its officers of the year



On May 4, Medley Police Department officers were honored and awarded for their outstanding work. The award-winning officers are, from left: Officer Deglys Chavarria, who was honored as 2021 Officer of the Year; Communications Officer Angela Arango, who was recognized as the 2021 Civilian Employee of the Year; Officer Yoel Guerra, who was honored with the 2021 Chief's Award; and Officer Gonzalo Garcia, who was named Officer of the Bid.

Homestead detective honored as woman of the year

Along with celebrating and recognizing many women and organizations in the community, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) in Homestead hosted a celebratory brunch on May 16. Homestead Detective Jennifer Roa was honored as the GFWC 2022 Woman of the Year.

Miami-Dade civilian of the year honored at chiefs' dinner



During the Miami-Dade Chiefs' Dinner on April 28, MDPD Latent Fingerprint Examiner Julio Betancourt was honored as the 2021 Civilian of the Year and received the Gold Medal of Valor Award.

Key West officers recognized for their lifesaving



For their heroic efforts on Feb. 23 responding to a call of an elderly man who had a heart attack, Key West Officers Andrea Bernatova and Thomas Haynie were honored with a department Lifesaving Award on April 28 during an award ceremony hosted by the Grand Key Resort. When they responded, Bernatova and Haynie quickly began to resuscitate the man until he was rushed to the hospital, where he regained a pulse.





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Social Security: Your “did you know?” checklist



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Claiming Social Security can feel like a straightforward process, but in reality, there are lots of pitfalls to avoid and advantages to take. Here is a short cheat sheet of some important points to consider. Remember, don't take your Social Security benefits without consulting a certified financial planner.

Divorced spouses can claim their ex-spouse's Social Security. This does not in any way compromise or diminish anyone's benefits. As a matter of fact, if you claim your ex-spouse's benefit, they will probably never know unless you tell them. You have to have been married for at least 10 years, divorced for two (in case you remarry them!), and you lose the benefit if you remarry.

A lower-income spouse may be eligible to claim the benefit of the higher-earning spouse. There are many caveats here, but for some it may make work. First, the lower-earning spouse must be 62 years old and both parties must already be taking Social Security benefits. If their own benefit is less than half of their spouse's, they be eligible for a “top off.”

8 percent annual increase? Yes! If you delay your Social Security benefit to full retirement age at 70, it would mean a 32 percent increase over your benefit at age 66 (plus some months, depending on your date of birth). That is an annual 8 percent increase, which is a substantial amount for the period of time. If you are in good health and there is longevity in your family, you should

consider delaying as long as possible.

Social Security benefits are taxed over certain levels. If you file jointly and you earn more than \$44K per year, up to 85 percent of your benefit is taxable. If you file singly and you earn more than \$34K per year, up to 85 percent of your benefit may be taxable.

Social Security benefits get reduced when you earn money. If you are under full retirement age for the entire year, the IRS will deduct \$1 from your benefit payments for every \$2 you earn above the annual limit. For 2022, that limit is \$19,560.

What does a widow or widower get? A surviving spouse will receive the higher of either their benefit or that of their spouse, but not both. This process is usually automatic once the death certificate is filed and processed.

Waiting until 70 to claim is great — but that's it. There is no benefit to waiting any later than 70 years old. Your benefits do not increase or accumulate any further. Social Security will pay back up to six months of benefits, so if you wait until age 75 to claim, you'll have missed 4.5 years of benefits.

Nicolás Valdés-Fauli is the founder and CEO of Thin Blue Line Financial (www.tblfinancial.com). Call or text 917-428-9629 or email nvf@tblfinancial.com. Nicolás has served the LEO community in South Florida for 20 years and is dedicated to helping his clients make sound decisions before and during retirement. He is an expert in all matters related to the FRS, deferred compensation and local municipal retirement plans.



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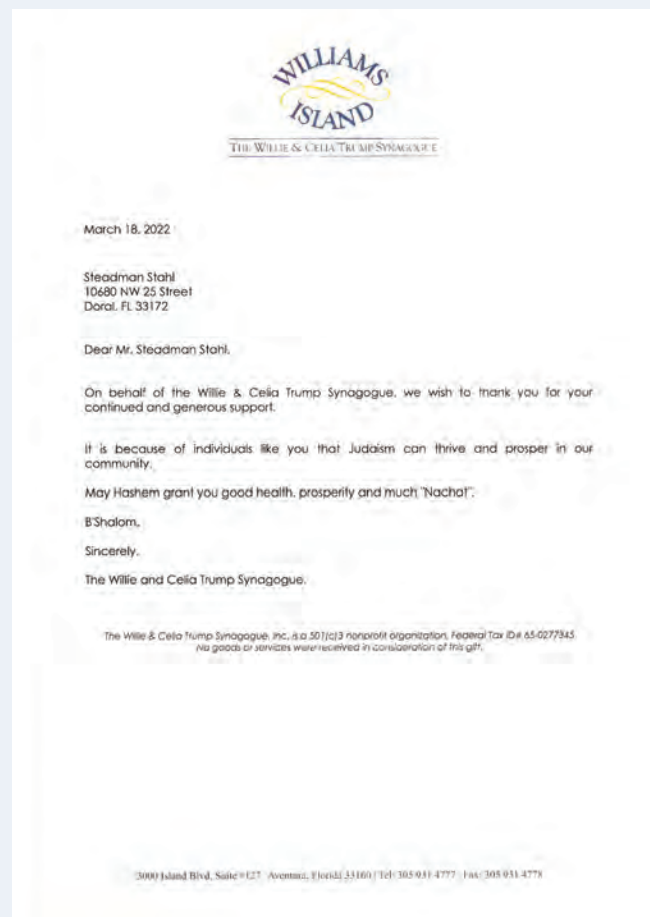
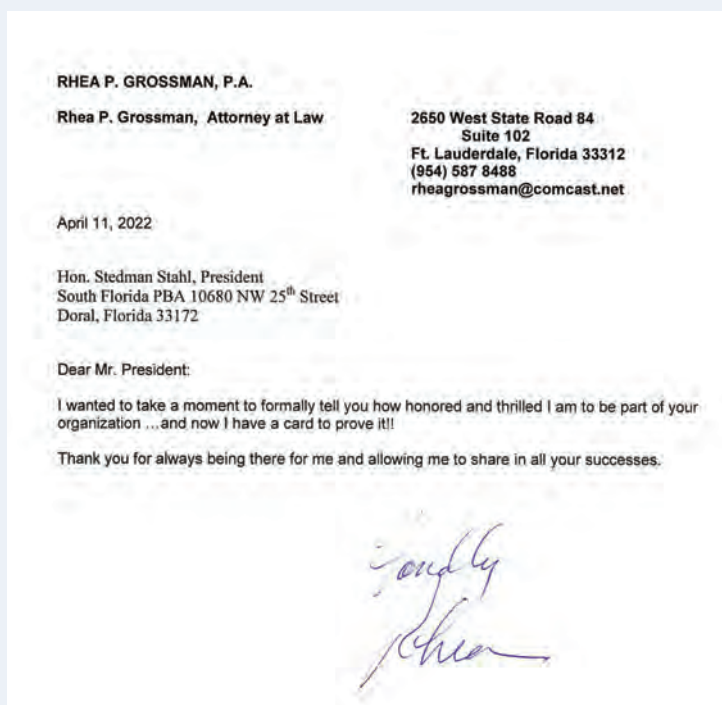
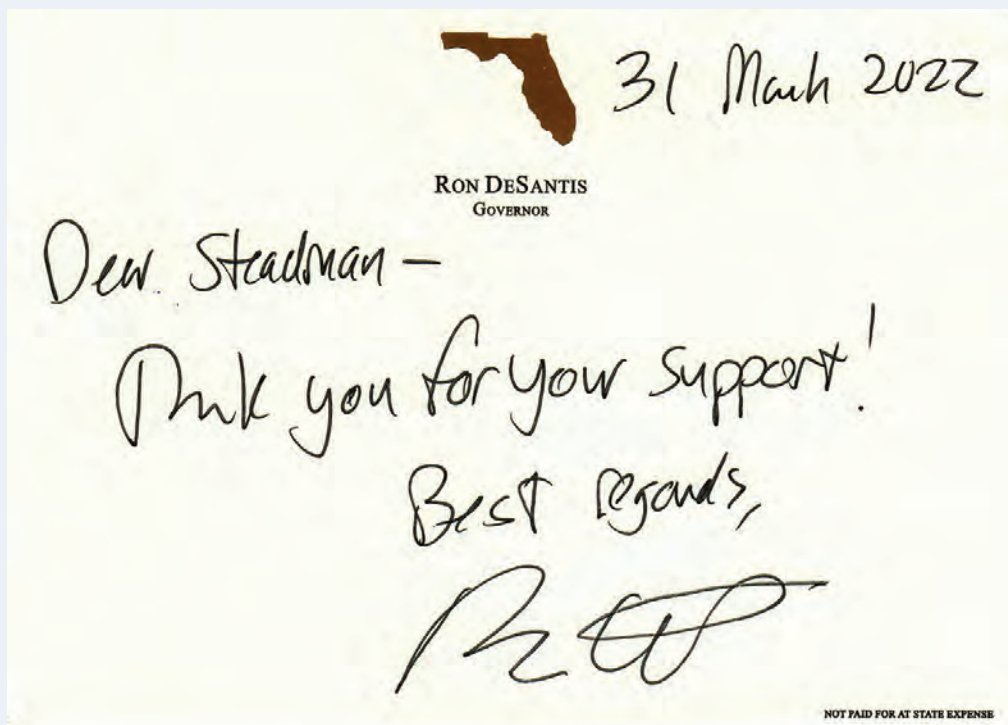
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Thank-You Notes TO THE PBA



Dear Steadman and the entire
PBA Family,

During this difficult time
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there for Harry & I. We learn
how much family & friends
really mean to us.

I thank you so much for
all your support, sympathy
and generosity in our time of
sorrow.

Sincerely,
Bette Wright
&
Family



Nizam Ishmael

From: Lily C [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, April 10, 2022 5:45 PM
To: Nizam Ishmael
Subject: Busway Memory

Dear Mr. Ishmael,

I recently read your "Busted on the busway" segment from the *Heat*, and I wanted to reach out. I'm Lily Calderon, Officer Roberto Calderon's daughter. I wanted to thank you for remembering my father and for having his street dedication signs reinstated. It means very much that you not only noticed his sign was gone, but that you and the county had two put up to replace it. I was very young when my father died, but his life gave me mine in many ways. I keep a picture of him, my mother, and my brother and I when we were barely toddlers on my desk, along with a plaque of his badge.

I'm glad that even nearly 23 years later, my dad is still in people's memories. Thank you again for your kind consideration, and thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Lily Calderon



Miami-Dade Police Department Director's Office



April 7, 2022

Mr. Steadman Stahl, President
South Florida Police Benevolent Association
10680 NW 25 Street
Doral, Florida 33172

Dear Mr. Stahl:

Thank you for your recent letter commending members of our Department for their professionalism and dedication to duty, during the American Lung Association Fight for Air Walk Event.

We are always pleased to receive letters relative to the efforts of our personnel, especially when it pertains to their job performance. We appreciate the time you have taken to bring this to our attention. The employees will be apprised of your comments and a copy of your letter will be placed in their personnel files.

If we may be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

George A. Perez
Interim Director

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April 22, 2022

Mr. Steadman Stahl
Dade County Police Benevolent Association, Inc.
10680 NW 25 Street, Suite #300
Miami, FL 33172

Dear Mr. Stahl,

The support received from the Dade County Police Benevolent Association and assistance from the Miami-Dade Police Department Bomb Squad in assembling the beeping eggs makes every Easter very special for our Miami Lighthouse Academy students.

We look forward to continuing the tradition with you each and every Easter. On behalf of all of our early learners who are the beneficiaries of your generosity, please accept my heartfelt thanks.

Gratefully,

Virginia A. Jack
President and Chief Executive Officer

P.S. Approximately 9,000 charities are evaluated each year by Charity Navigator with less than 1% achieving a perfect overall score of 100. Miami Lighthouse is among the elite 106 that have attained this score. We have also received 13 consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible.

As a 501(c)(3) charity, we have a responsibility to notify you that this letter is the official acknowledgment of your gift. Also, we are required to certify that you received no goods or services in consideration of this contribution. Therefore, the full amount of your gift is tax-deductible.

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