

SOUTH FLORIDA



FOR MEMBERS ONLY

THEAT

THE VOICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Representing those brave enough, strong enough, and proud enough to wear the badge

JULY/AUGUST 2022

The Victorious Case of **JOHN SONG**

PBA's legal defense steps up to secure acquittal
for Miami-Dade officer on homicide charge



ACD Health U.S. PA

LET US BULLETPROOF YOUR HEART

DID YOU KNOW THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS...:

- ♥ Lifespan is 20 years less than the average civilian?
- ♥ Average age of a first heart attack is 49 versus 67 for the average civilian?
- ♥ Prevalence of cardiovascular disease is 170% greater?
- ♥ Chance of cardiac-related death is 30-70 times greater during a pursuit?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO...:

1

Reduce your risk of dying from an aneurysm by 65%?

2

Decrease your risk of stroke by 75%?

3

Decrease your chance of dying from a heart attack by 300%?

Schedule On-Site Cardiac Testing Today!

CONTACT US

☎ 561-635-7472

🌐 www.acdhealthus.com

📍 7900 Glades Road,
Suite 350
Boca Raton, Florida, 33434



PERFECT CHECKING

with Dolfan Rewards!

Save It! - Automatic Debit Card Savings

- Automatic transfers to your DCFCU Savings account from debit purchases.

ATM Fee Reversal

- Receive up to \$10 per month in reversed ATM Fees.

I.D. Safe Choice

- Identity Theft Recovery Service.

Free Debit Card Replacement

- Replace one (1) lost or stolen DCFCU Debit Card per year.

Free Miami Dolphins Branded Debit Card

- DCFCU Miami Dolphins debit card design at no extra charge.



Official Credit Union of the Miami Dolphins

dcfcu.org/pba • 305-471-5080



Must enroll in e-Statements, maintain a minimum daily available balance of \$25.00, conduct 15 Visa debit card or Point-of-Sale transactions per month, and receive at least \$500.00 direct deposit per month to qualify for the benefits of Perfect Checking. A \$2.00 fee will apply for any month which qualifications are not met. If qualifications are not met for three consecutive qualification cycles, the account will be un-enrolled from "Perfect Checking" and will convert to a "Secured Checking Account". All "Perfect Checking" accounts receive I.D. Safe Choice at a monthly cost of \$1.99.



COVER STORY



Page 21

The Best Defense

Nearly four years ago, Miami-Dade Officer John Song (above, left) was charged with vehicular homicide. He also faced three other counts related to the incident resulting from an early-morning pursuit of a suspect. The South Florida PBA's legal defense led by attorney David Braun (above, right) took on the case. And Braun would not rest. Finally, after a four-day trial in June, Song was acquitted. Braun and Song share exclusive insight about how this incredible journey and unmatched representation culminated with the verdict of "not guilty."

COVER PHOTO BY LINDA CARTA * COVER DESIGN BY GINA CROTCHFELT

MESSAGES FROM THE PBA

- The Pres Says**Page 5**
- Message from the Executive VP**Page 8**
- The Dish from Ish**Page 10**
- Corrections Corner**Page 11**
- South Florida PBA Legal Corner**Page 12**
- POAT News**Page 14**
- RPOC News**Page 16**
- Honoring Retired Members**Page 18**
- Reflections**Page 34**
- Members Only Section**Page 38**
- Thank-You Notes to the PBA**Page 46**

INSIDE STORIES



A Close Watch



Riding High



Main Number: 561-757-0464

Advertising: 201-880-7288

Editorial: 201-370-4082

Distribution: 201-880-7288

Email: cops@PBAHeatMagazine.com

MITCHELL KRUGEL

Publisher/Editor

mitch@PBAHeatMagazine.com

GINA CROTCHFELT

Art Director

gina@PBAHeatMagazine.com

ESTHER GONZALES

Staff Writer

esther@PBAHeatMagazine.com

CHRISTINA MELENDEZ

Administrative Assistant

christina@PBAHeatMagazine.com

KIMBERLY FLYNN

LAUREN PURCELL

Copy Editors

NIZAM "ISH" ISHMAEL

PBA Editor

ish@sflpba.org

VOLUME 40, NO. 4

The Heat is a bimonthly publication dedicated to law enforcement and criminal justice professionals operating in Miami-Dade County, Monroe County and throughout the State of Florida. ©2022 KRURAPP COMMUNICATIONS, INC. Reproduction of any part of this magazine without express written permission is prohibited. Address subscription inquiries and address changes to subs@PBAHeatMagazine.com. Reader comments and editorial submissions are welcome, but neither the Publisher (Krugapp Communications, Inc.) nor the South Florida Police Benevolent Association assumes any responsibility for the return of unsolicited material. The Publisher manages and controls all advertisement relationships and ultimately retains the right to accept or reject any advertisement. The acceptance of advertisements by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised. Neither the Publisher and the South Florida Police Benevolent Association, nor any of their officers and/or employees, make any warranty, express or implied, including the warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose, or assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product or process included in any written or submitted content or in any advertisement. The views and opinions of any advertiser or third-party article contributor do not necessarily state or reflect those of either the Publisher (Krugapp Communications, Inc.) or the South Florida Police Benevolent Association and are not used for advertising or product endorsement purposes. The Publisher and/or the South Florida Police Benevolent Association assume no financial responsibility for errors in advertisements.

The PBA is there for you when you need us most



STEADMAN
STAHL

Miami-Dade Officer John Song experienced an aspect of the PBA that makes our union so vital. Perhaps the most important attribute.

Brother Song became the target of an overzealous assistant state's attorney and a four-year investigation attempting to lock him up for vehicular homicide. He went through hell.

But he discovered how the PBA is there for members in their darkest hours. After the four-day trial, the jury came back in an hour with a "not guilty" verdict.

Here was our legal protection at its best, saving another member.

I believe that our first and foremost service or benefit that separates us from any other labor organization is our legal protection. It's by far better than anybody out there. We're the only organization that covers legal representation 100 percent from start to finish.

If a complaint comes in, it goes to the state attorney's office to see if there's anything that's criminally involved. If it's not that, then it goes to Internal Affairs. And then, if there are any moral turpitude violations that they feel occurred, it is then forwarded to the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, commonly known as CJSTC.

And we cover all of that 100 percent. Not every organization does that. If it's a disciplinary hearing or an IA complaint, we only send attorneys. We don't send out field reps like other organizations. Even if it's something administrative that you're going to get disciplined for, you're going to the hearing with a lawyer, not a field rep.

With six full-time attorneys, the PBA has a bigger legal staff than most law enforcement labor unions. As the PBA grew, we realized that if we're going to have our officers going up against attorneys representing the department or the municipality, we needed to have attorneys going up against attorneys.

It started out under our first president, Charlie Maddox, who hired one attorney. And now we have six in-house attorneys who are great at what they do. And then we have another 12 attorneys we send cases out to – John Song being one of them – that are 100 percent covered by the PBA. He experienced the benefit of having an expert criminal attorney like David Braun represent him, and that was the difference in not going to prison.

I was there for the last day of John's trial, for the verdict. And that's really what this comes down to. The days of any police officer or any member thinking that you're never going to need a lawyer are long gone. At some point in your career, you will find yourself facing an Internal Affairs investigation, a criminal prosecution or some legal battle that comes from the job. It's the nature of the job.

So when it comes to our members finding themselves being wrongly accused, overcharged or overdisciplined, we step in to level the playing field. Because we're up against a government that has unlimited resources. They'll spend money. If you don't have the legal protection that the South Florida PBA offers, you take your future into your own hands.

It goes back to us looking out for the little guys. We are the ones who are standing between government's unlimited resources and the members. We've been recognized at different functions as the ones who stand up for our officers and support personnel.

We're seeing a crisis right now of just getting officers hired. We're seeing record-level shortages within our corrections department in Miami-Dade County. You're seeing it everywhere. And again, I go back to the anti-police movement that they all said was nothing.

That situation has been created by some of these politicians across the country – not here in Florida – and it's come back on them. Now, nobody wants to work in this profession. It's a very honorable profession, and it's a shame that we've gotten ourselves into this mess through no fault of our own.

Sometimes we get in these arguments over the powerfulness of the union. Remember, we have no say in the hiring of anybody. That's all done by the sheriffs or the chiefs. We don't get to see them until they're graduating. So if there are any flaws in the systems, I think the people who are doing the hiring need to look in the mirror before they start pointing fingers.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



SOUTH FLORIDA PBA

EXECUTIVE BOARD

STEADMAN STAHL

President

DAVID GREENWELL

Executive Vice President

NIZAM "ISH" ISHMAEL

Vice President

JENNIFER VALDES

Secretary

JERMAINE LAWSON

Treasurer

ALEX MUÑOZ

Sergeant-at-Arms

ROBIN PINKARD

Chaplain

DIRECTORS

Victor Abbondandolo

Mitzie Brown

Angela Carter

Mike Clifton

Lazaro Cortes

Marcos De Rosa

Alejandro Dominguez

Marjorie Eloi

Deborah Fleites

Eduardo Gaitan

Christopher Hodges

Jorge Interian

Joseph Kelly

Al Lopez

Christine Marte

Sean McVay

Lisa Nesbitt Bell

Angel Posada

Orlando Ramos

Anthony Rodriguez

John Saavedra

Orlando Sosa, Jr.

MaryAnn Stahl

Michael Tabernero

Joel Valdes

Jody Wright

REPRESENTATIVES

Nubia Azrak

John Childress

Alkibiades Dodge

Ronald Fera

Elizabeth Fernandez

Labrance Fertilen

Katrina Fuentes

Sean Gordon

Katrina Gregorisch

Ronnie Hufnagel

Doug Melendez

Jose Nadal

Rafael "Ralph" Pagan

Frank Pajon

Julio "JP" Priede

Karlos Ramos

Christopher Rodriguez

Alberto Seda

Brett Underhill

We have great officers, and we are sometimes the subject of unwarranted complaints and prosecution. That's what the PBA is here for. That's the first thing that we're all about.

We also have the benevolent aspect of the PBA. The B in the PBA is the benevolent part. We're very active in community events, supporting local charities, local groups and officers when they find themselves in times in need. Just recently, we had a motorcycle night, and we raised a large sum of money for an officer's family that's going through very difficult and costly medical procedures.

And we also have the contract-negotiating aspect. We fight for pay and benefits for our members. I've been dealing with contracts since 1990, and never, ever have I seen a government, any government, come into a negotiation saying, "Hey, we want to start off with giving you raises."

Anybody who thinks that, I hate to tell you Santa Claus isn't real and there's no Easter Bunny. The pay increases and benefits come from having a good legal team, a good negotiations team, a strong membership, a strong voice in the community and a good working relationship with our elected officials to make sure that they put public safety out front.

We just signed a contract with the City of West Miami, and they're following Miami-Dade County in hosting a Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. They're going to give all their officers a bonus on that day. That's the first city we know of. Miami-Dade County was the first county to do it in the country.

That's the good part about negotiations, having the right people in the right places and investing. And again, we invest very heavily with our lawyers. We invest in our members to make sure that they have the best legal representation out there. And the proof is in the pudding.

Our officers are already under a lot of stress. They have to make split-second decisions. And then they are judged by people who can hit the rewind button a hundred times to see what could have happened or not happened. They'll have months or years to look at something to see what an officer had seconds to act on. And that's where you need your legal representation.

And you need the relationships with the elected officials. We have the primary election coming up on Aug. 23, and this is another opportunity to exercise the voice of our members.

Listen, elections have consequences. So we make sure that we vet and look for the best candidates to endorse, who we know will support us in our times of need.

Sometimes it's difficult. Sometimes you have multiple good candidates running for the same seat, and that's where it gets difficult. But we have a committee that looks at everything and meets with the candidates. And sometimes we can rely on a track record with them because they're the incumbent. That can guide us as to whether they've been good or bad.

As you review our endorsements for the primary on page 15, the one thing I'll say about these candidates is that if they stand with us, they can always count on us, regardless of what the polls say. We've had people that have been strong supporters of ours, and we saw in the polls they weren't doing well. But that's not the time for us to jump ship. We stick with them because they stick with us.

If you pick a candidate who wins, it makes it easy. If you pick one who loses, then you establish a relationship. And I think that we have a great record of picking winners and sticking with them.

If members do nothing more than just vote, we ask them to vote the PBA way. I've gotten to the point where I will not arm-wrestle people over what party did this or what party did that. I'm not getting tangled up in which party's better. I do believe you should vote for the person that's going to put your best interest forward. We look for that, and we take endorsements very seriously.

So when it comes time for elections, we hope our members will vote the PBA way. That's what's going to make the difference down the road. That's how you say strong and keep moving things forward. That's how you get the right ones to back you politically, so that when you have contract negotiations, you can count on them. And when you have legal issues, you know there are reputable judges on the bench.

We look for people who put public safety at the forefront. That's got to be front and center. You see people moving to Florida in droves for one reason. You have elected officials who are standing with their law enforcement officers.

So whether it's our relationships with the elected officials, our commitment to benevolence, our ability to negotiate the best contracts or our legal defense, the South Florida PBA is fully equipped to stand up for our members whenever they need us. And especially in their darkest hours.



Steadman Stahl, President
steadman@sflpba.org



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

FEAST DAY CELEBRATION OF

ST. MICHAEL

PATRON SAINT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Thursday, September 29, 2022 @ 10am

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CATHOLIC CHURCH

11691 NW 25TH ST., DORAL, FL 33172

All denominations welcome. Officers please dress in uniform.

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



THE
Florida House
EXPERIENCE

Same Great Program, New Look



FHEHealth



*Substance Abuse, Addiction,
Gambling, Mental Health
and PTSD Care*



Sometimes the Helpers Need Help

Have Drugs, Alcohol or Gambling Become Your Solution?

Since 2001, FHE Health has provided the highest quality of care to our First Responders. From medical detox through clinical outpatient support, we provide the opportunity for a better life.

888.353.6152

CALL 24/7

100% CONFIDENTIAL

FHEHealth.com



A reel nice day at the South Florida PBA Fishing Tournament



DAVID GREENWELL
EXECUTIVE
VICE
PRESIDENT

The South Florida PBA Fishing Tournament was held on Saturday, June 11 at Matheson Hammock Park Marina. We had to move it from the original date of June 4 due to a tropical storm that came through South Florida. We had 19 boats and more than 100 anglers, including Stuart Archer and Don Rhindress, who have participated in every single PBA fishing tournament since it began.

As the anglers came in to dock their boats and have their fish weighed, retired Marine Patrol Officer Paul Kuiper, who came from out of town to be our official PBA weighmaster, did a fantastic job keeping things calm and organized. While everyone waited to hear the official results, they all got a chance to hang out and socialize with friends and colleagues. A few retired guys, like IPA President Jerry Rudolph, stopped by as well to see the outcome.

The PBA would like to congratulate the following winners: First place went to Orlando Reyes, from team Edgewater Bandits, who weighed in with the heaviest dolphin at 27.05 lbs. Orlando's one fish was worth \$4,200 (\$2,000 for first place, \$1,000 for PBA member and \$1,200 for the Calcutta). Not bad for a fun day of fishing. In second place was Joe Gonzalez, whose dolphin weighed in at 20.65 lbs, and both third place and top female angler went to Yvette Guzman, whose dolphin weighed in at 17.55 lbs. In other categories, the best of three went to Al Germi (one of our biggest sponsors), who had a combined total of 21.65 lbs. The first-place winner in the Junior Division (15 and under) was Nelson Rodriguez III, of team Chasin Tails, with a dolphin weight of 4.70 lbs. In Junior second place was David Aviles of The Chopped Sauce Fishing Team, with a 4.60-lb dolphin, and the third-place Junior dolphin was Madison Ponce from team Slingin Bait, with a 4.20 lb dolphin. The Fun Fish winner was John Saavedra from team Mo Mahi Mo Problems, with a 17.5-lb Almico Jack.

There are many people to thank for helping make this event a great success. First, I would like to thank all the sponsors, all of our Miami-Dade commissioners, and a big thank you to Chairman Jose "Pepe"



First-place winner Orlando Reyes



Second-place winner Joe Gonzalez



Third-place winner Jason Gambill and top female angler Yvette Guzman



First-place junior angler Nelson Rodriguez III

Diaz, who showed up and assisted at the tournament. Mr. George Joseph, president of the Dade County Federal Credit Union; Williamson Buick GMC; Bill Archer from Big Cheese; Al Germi from Acco Foreign Shipping; Mills Consulting; Eduardo Barreto from Sea Tow; Andy Antelo from the Palmetto Bay El Capitan Marine & Fishing Center; Rene Alvarez from ISure Insurance Inc.; Clifton Event Group; Ray Crego from Excaliber Towing Service; Justin Landau from El Carwash; Rodbenders Rawbar restaurant located in Cutler Bay; Seaboard Marine; AvMed; and Our Pharmacy Network. Remember to support those who support law enforcement.

I also would like to thank the PBA Fishing Committee: Steadman Stahl, Joel Val-

des, Juan Villalba, Oscar Ravelo and Mike Barrios. Thanks also to PBA volunteers Kim Gregson, Sonia Castro, Margarita Vasquez, Alex Munoz, Orlando Sosa and Paul Kuiper. We are already thinking about next year's tournament, and we are planning to have more boats and more prize money. So we hope you'll plan on being a part of this great event, which is a fundraiser for the PBA Love Fund. The Love Fund supports active PBA members and their families in their time of need and is a federally recognized charitable organization 501(c)(3), with all donations being tax deductible.

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



THIN BLUE LINE
— FINANCIAL —



Nicolas Valdes-Fauli

Founder and CEO, Thin Blue Line Financial

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™

We are hired because we are trusted

- Experts in DROP, Investment Plan and Deferred Comp Plans.
- 20+ years experience serving the LEO community in South Florida.
- 100+ references available upon request.

**Call to Schedule a
FREE benefit and
investment review.**

☎ 305-798-1842

📍 3105 NW 107th Ave Doral FL 33172

✉ nvf@tblfinancial.com 🌐 tblfinancial.com 📘 @tblfinancial 📷 @thinblueline_financial

Investment Advisory Services offered through Main Street Financial Solutions, LLC, a federally Registered Investment Advisor

Do physical therapy from the comfort of your home



NIZAM "ISH"
ISHMAEL
VICE
PRESIDENT

Have ever been injured and had to do physical therapy? You can understand how frustrating the physical therapy journey back to health can be. If you have Miami-Dade County insurance (AvMed) as part of your enrollment, you are entitled to the SWORD Health program.

The SWORD Health program is a free, at-home, at-your-own-pace-program. It pairs you with a physical therapist who will create a program just for you, adjust it as you progress, check in with coaching and advice, and chat with you anytime. If you are currently suffering with a back, shoulder, hip, neck, knee, elbow,

ankle or wrist injury, then you can benefit from this program.

Let me take you through my journey thus far: I injured my shoulder a few years ago. I received a medical evaluation and was placed on an at-home physical therapy routine to strengthen my shoulder. The facility provided several bands and a photocopy of some exercise routines. After a few months, I saw very minimal improvement. The therapy routine was boring. If I needed to see or visit a physical therapist, I would have to get an appointment, make a co-payment and take time out of my busy schedule to be available to attend the appointment. I gave up after a while and figured that I am getting older and should just accept that I will have to live with the pain in my shoulder.

I received a mailer from Miami-Dade County on the SWORD Health program. I read it, visited the website and decided to set-up a virtual (Zoom) appointment. I enrolled by answering some simple questions about my injury, then they offered many dates and times to choose from on their site for my initial appointment. It was very user-friendly. My virtual appointment with the physical therapist went well. We spoke about my injury, and I did some moves for evaluation purposes.

After two days, I was approved to participate in the program. SWORD Health sent me their tablet and motion trackers. I wear the motion trackers during the therapy sessions, and they guide me and provide real-time feedback during

the exercises. My physical therapist designed a tailored therapy program specific to the rehabilitation of my shoulder injury. During the sessions, I play a video. Trackers enable me to position myself and ensure that I am doing the exercises correctly. If I am not doing them correctly, the interactive tablet lets me know, and I adjust accordingly. During each exercise, I earn up to five stars if I do the motion correctly. If I do not or cannot perform the exercises do the range of motion restrictions due to my injury, then I earn the appropriate number of stars.

My physical therapist is always available for support virtually. I downloaded the SWORD application on my cell

phone, and it lets me know your weekly goal (mine is four sessions per week).

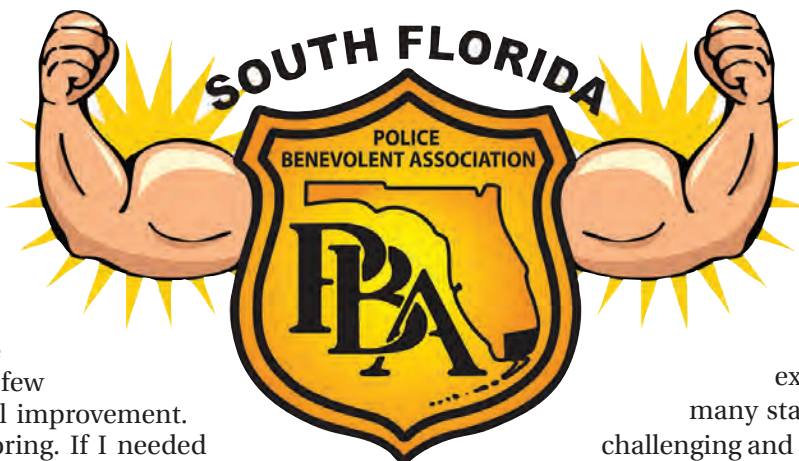
There is also an academy and knowledge features to assist you to learn, and there is a chat feature where you can communicate directly with your physical therapist. My therapist makes periodic adjustments to the exercises, depending on how

many stars I earn. I find the program challenging and structured, and I am feeling a direct improvement.

The best part of this program is that it is completely free. I have not paid anything out of pocket. No more co-payments, travel time or waiting rooms for me. I do my exercises where and when it best suits me. I do encourage any of you who have the aforementioned injuries to give the SWORD Health program a try. What do you have to lose? It is completely free.

Visit <https://join.swordhealth.com/avmedmdc/> for more information. You still have the in-person physical therapy option, if that is what you prefer. This SWORD program does not have to be a replacement for in-person therapy.

All of us should have the goal of a healthy and long life in retirement. We all must do a better job at taking care of our health. I personally want to enjoy healthy golden years and want the same for all of you. Please feel free to contact me at ish@sflpba.org or at 305-593-0044.



Unprecedented challenges in hiring



JERMAINE
LAWSON
TREASURER

For the past few years, our department has struggled to recruit, hire and retain officers to fill our shrinking ranks. In the wake of a spasmodic year of demonstrations and the pandemic — plus an aftermath of violent crimes, a wave of bad media publicity and calls to defund law enforcement — our profession may be approaching a generation of historic reckoning.

The outflow of officers retiring, resigning early and switching to other agencies has become a torrent while, at the same time, the influx of academy graduates has slowed significantly. This work shortage has forced our members to take on tons

of unwanted overtime, impacting our staff through longer days and work weeks.

Our members can no longer make plans for after work because they know they might be mandated to work overtime. I know there are certain positions and vacancies that are considered essential and must be filled to meet the safety, security and programming needs of our department, but mandatory overtime is not a real solution.

Many feel that mandatory overtime places an unfair burden on the members who are already overworked. This results in fatigue and dejected officers. It is a dangerous thing whenever you don't have the staffing to do the job and you are overworking the staff that you have. It is a recipe for disaster.

In 2017, the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) declared an emergency at El Dorado because of persistent staffing shortages. The massive shortages led to an hours-long uprising in June of that same year. In response, the governor authorized a 10 percent pay increase for the officers at El Dorado and a 5 percent increase to the other prisons in an effort to mitigate staffing shortages.

I am hoping that the department will find ways and means to fill these vacancies. The main problem is supply and demand. All the departments in and around the state are competing for the same qualified applicants, and this in turn forces other agencies to be more competitive to attract the best applicants.

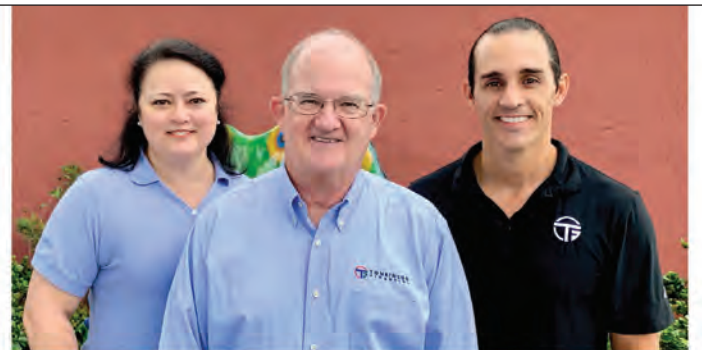
In my opinion, the department should do more to retain our trained, dedicated and qualified staff because our turnover is at an alarming rate at the moment. I know all the attention is geared towards recruitment and incentive packages for new hires, but the department needs to start entertaining the idea of incentivizing the remainder of our current population.

Our members are experiencing burnouts after a difficult stretch and are becoming less motivated than usual. This has led to disengagement that stems from overexhaustion. At the moment, staff do not have a choice as to how many hours they work, and as such are burned out quickly. This means that the extra cash becomes less incentivizing and more stress induc-

ing. This means more productivity but at the bare minimum of quality, causing a diminished sense of pride in the work of each employee. Corrections work can be very dangerous, and as such the benefits packages must be generous enough to encourage staff retention and people to apply.

It is important for management to take time out more regularly to thank staff for their dedicated effort to keep the department afloat in this difficult and challenging time. As supervisors, we should remember that we could not do what we do every day if we were on our own. It is a well-known fact that people like to be valued for their work, with appreciation being one of the most sought-after forms of praise in the workplace. It's motivating and encouraging, and it creates job satisfaction, thus resulting in better performance and less turnover.

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



CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ PROFESSIONALS

SPECIALIZING IN THE RETIREMENT NEEDS OF WORKING PEOPLE

Because we know how important it is for you to feel secure in your financial future.



House Calls

We meet clients where you feel most comfortable: at your home, at our office, over the phone or video call.



No Account Minimum

The emphasis is not on how much money you have, but rather on making the best use of it, whatever the amount.



Experience

Our team of professionals have over 60 years of combined experience. We are ready to serve as your trusted advisors.



TONKINSON
FINANCIAL

2398 S Dixie Hwy, Miami, FL 33133

www.tonkinsonfinancial.com

305-858-1628

Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. Fixed Insurance products and services offered through CES Insurance Agency.

Discipline: Don't "just eat it"



**DANIEL
VAZQUEZ**
STAFF
COUNSEL

Although it is something no officer ever wants to deal with, discipline and police work go hand in hand, like peanut butter and jelly. Given the compound microscope through which society views police work, departments have gradually normalized investigating every allegation, no matter how bizarre, with a fine-toothed comb. More often than not, the officer is exonerated of bogus claims. However, as police and correctional work modernize with the times and policy and procedures evolve, there is less room for error and more room for departments to impose discipline to rectify behavior it deems against policy. I find staggering the number of times that I represent an officer at an internal affairs investigation in which the "major allegations" are unfounded but a minor technicality — for instance, muting a body-worn camera while recording — is sustained.

These minor allegations, which often result in nothing more than a record of counseling or a written reprimand, can become the building blocks for a department to impose more severe discipline in the future for seemingly unrelated incidents. Today, many administrations seem hesitant to impose what we would agree is reasonable discipline that, although correct and showing true leadership, may not appease the masses and the media. And as a result, officers face more serious disciplinary matters that must be appealed to an independent arbitrator. It is a win-win for the department. If the discipline is deemed excessive by an arbitrator, the officer will be reinstated with less severe punishment, effectively making the tough decision for the department without it being ridiculed. Because of this, it is important to treat every disciplinary action one might face throughout his or her career as if it were a termination.

Often, an isolated incident for which an officer is disciplined may not rise to the level of severe discipline, such as a lengthy suspension or termination. But the department will utilize (incorrectly) the principles of progressive discipline to rid themselves of an officer it may not want on its department.

What exactly is progressive discipline? Progressive discipline is a system of addressing employee behavior over time to correct an employee's unacceptable behavior. The point of progressive discipline is to correct past behavior by escalating discipline for repeat offenses by the officer of a similar nature. The classic example of this would be an officer who is constantly tardy to his or her shift. The officer may receive a written reprimand after 10 instances of tardiness in a month. If that pattern continues the

2022 Pending Grievances

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of **June 30, 2022**. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

AVENTURA PD	2
BAL HARBOR PD	1
HOMESTEAD CORRECTIONS	1
HOMESTEAD PD	1
KEY WEST PD	1
MIAMI-DADE CORRECTIONS	
ASSOCIATION	1
TGK (MHTC)	1
TOTAL	2
M-D POLICE	4
MIAMI GARDENS	5
MONROE COUNTY (DEP SHERIFF)	1
NORTH BAY VILLAGE	1
NORTH MIAMI	2
OPA LOCKA	4
SWEETWATER	2
TOTAL GRIEVANCES	27

next month, in an effort to correct past behavior, the department may escalate discipline to a minor suspension. This would be the appropriate application of progressive discipline.

Many departments often take advantage of this principle and utilize any past discipline as a reason to increase disciplinary action an officer may be currently facing, regardless of whether the behavior is similar to past disciplinary action. This is why it is vital to address any disciplinary action, no matter how insignificant at the time. The fewer bullets a department has in its proverbial chamber when it comes time to discipline an officer, the better it is for you.

Therefore, never hesitate to pick up the phone and call us or stop by the second floor of the PBA offices so that we may review and address any disciplinary action, no matter how insignificant you may think it is.



SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR BACK THE BLUE

PIG COOK OFF

COMPETITION



NOVEMBER 5, 2022
1-4PM - PBA

10680 NW 25 ST, Doral, FL 33172
ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE LOVE FUND, INC.

Space is limited! Teams wishing to enter contact:
Kim Gregson 305.593.0044

Homes for hometown heroes

Making your path to purchase easier

We are proud to offer the Florida Hometown Heroes Program to eligible community heroes, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, educators, healthcare professionals, childcare workers, Active Military and Veterans.

AS A PARTICIPATING LENDER WE PROVIDE:

- Down payment and closing cost assistance (DPA) up to 5% of the first mortgage amount - max \$25,000
- Lower-than-market rates on an FHA, VA, USDA, Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac first mortgage, plus other savings
- DPA as a 0% non-amortizing, 30-year deferred second mortgage

Learn more! Contact me today.

Funding provided by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation



**Call 866.929.6024 or email
union@myccmortgage.com**



41 Pinelawn Road, Suite GL-2 | Melville, NY 11747 | NMLS3029 NMLS1681501

Equal Housing Opportunity. All loans subject to underwriting approval. Certain restrictions apply. Call for details. All borrowers must meet minimum credit score, loan-to-value, debt-to-income, and other requirements to qualify for any mortgage program. CrossCountry Mortgage, LLC NMLS3029 (www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org). Licensed by the Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI) under the California Residential Mortgage Lending Act. Licensed by the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance. Licensed Mortgage Banker New York State Banking Department. this office is licensed and examined by the Office of the Consumer Credit Commissioner of the State of Texas. CrossCountry Mortgage, LLC is an FHA Approved Lending Institution and is not acting on behalf of or at the direction of HUD/FHA or the Federal government. Subject property and borrower income and credit must qualify to USDA guidelines. CrossCountry Mortgage, LLC is not affiliated with or acting on behalf of or at the direction of the Veteran Affairs Office or any government agency. Certificate of Eligibility required for VA loans.



POAT announces scholarship winners



SERGEANT
KENNETH
HORGAN
POAT
ASSISTANCE
COMMITTEE
CHAIR

It is that time of year! That time when parents and their kids are preparing for that next chapter in their lives: college. The POAT offers \$14,000 in scholarships each year for the children of law enforcement officers who work in Miami-Dade County. It is with great pride that we announce the 2022 POAT Scholarship recipients. Congratulations to all.

- **Mike Byrd Scholarship** – Erik Cheever, son of Officer Gregory Cheever
- **Roger Castillo Scholarship** – Jonathan Sarasa, son of Lieutenant Susana Sarasa
- **Amanda Haworth Scholarship** – Kayla Montizaan, daughter of Officer Edward Montizaan
- **Paul Janosky Art Scholarship** – Kayla Montizaan, daughter of Officer Edward Montizaan

- **Paul Janosky Criminal Justice Scholarship** – Zachary Allen, son of Captain Lonny Allen
- **Chris Todd Scholarship** – Adrien Gobin, daughter of Officer Gary Gobin
- **Chuck Duncan Scholarship** – Mia Prieto, daughter of Officer Tony Prieto

On Sunday, Sept. 11, 2022, the 9/11 Ceremony will be held at the Law Enforcement Memorial site in Tropical Park at 9:30 a.m. The POAT sponsors this ceremony every year in conjunction with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue. This ceremony is to remember and honor our country's heroes who were killed in the line of duty responding to the attack on our nation. It is important that we never forget all the heroes who perished that tragic day. Please make every effort to attend.

Thanks for your support, and stay safe.



SUPPORT YOUR POLICE

CLASSIC & TRUCK SHOW

SUMMER EDITION



#PBAFury Graphic:
Officer Chris Rivera
Town of Miami Lakes

Saturday -
AUGUST 27, 2022

DJ
Food
Amazing Cars

11 am - 4 pm
10680 NW 25th ST.
Doral, FL 33172

Awards for different categories * Judging starts at 12 noon
\$20 Donation for each registered car to benefit The Love Fund, Inc.
A charitable 501(c)(3) organization that aids fallen officers and their families when no other funds are available to do so

Info: Tony Rodriguez 305.332.9968 / 305.593.0044





ENDORSED CANDIDATES

Primary Election on Tuesday, August 23, 2022

Miami-Dade County Commission

	Punch #
District 02 - Wallace Aristide	104
District 06 - Jorge Fors	112
District 08 - Danielle Cohen Higgins*	116
District 10 - Anthony Rodriguez	122
District 12 - Juan Carlos "JC" Bermudez	124

Commissioner of Agriculture

Wilton Simpson	44
----------------	----

State Representative

District 106 - Jordan W. Leonard	58
District 107 - Christopher Benjamin*	60
District 108 - Dotie Joseph*	64
District 109 - James Bush III*	65
District 113 - Vicki Lopez	67
District 118 - Juan Fernandez-Barquin*	72
District 119 - Rob Gonzalez	76
District 120 - Rhonda Rebman Lopez	83

Circuit Court Judge

Group 3 - Lody Jean*	91
Group 20 - Robert Watson*	93
Group 34 - Ariel Rodriguez	95
Group 52 - Oscar Rodriguez-Fonts*	97

County Court

	Punch #
Group 5 - Fred Seraphin*	99
Group 19 - Jeffrey Kolokoff*	101
Group 42 - Alicia Garcia Priovolos**	102
Scott Janowitz* **	103

Miami Dade County School Board

District 6 - Maria Teresa "Mari Tere" Rojas*	134
District 8 - Monica Colucci	135

City of Miami Gardens

Residential Seat 2 - Reggie Leon*	142
Residential Seat 4 - Wiren "Chuck" Norris	144
Residential Seat 6 - Robert Stephens, III*	146

Monroe County Commission

District 05 - Holly Merrill Raschein*	
---------------------------------------	--

Monroe County School Board

District 05 - Alexandria Suarez	
---------------------------------	--

*Incumbent

**Co-endorsement

**Join the men and women of law enforcement
and vote for our endorsed candidates above.**

Old memories, new benefits and the latest news



JOHN FRALEY
RPOC
PRESIDENT

My role as the president of the Retired Police Officers Council (RPOC) is to continue the work done by my predecessors. My goal is to continue to serve our members as a leader dedicated to promoting unity and keeping our members informed about the issues before us. I look forward to hearing from anyone with ideas and suggestions. I want our membership to be a place where we can get together, have fun and share memories.

We have members throughout the U.S. I've noticed that members of the RPOC gather at various locations throughout the state of Florida. I recently attended a luncheon at the Arnold Palmer Legends restaurant in the Villages. Other groups meet in Southwest Florida, Tennessee and North Carolina.

These meetings promote the camaraderie that we shared while working on the road. Men and women who served the people of Dade County did so proudly. We wore the "brown gown," and now we are proud retirees. We all have memories, some good, some bad. We gather to tell stories, mostly about the districts we worked in. What this does is keep us in each others' minds and thoughts. We came to work to do a job, we did it well for the most part and we had each other's backs. It should be noted that the RPOC has grown, as officers retiring nationwide from many different agencies have joined our ranks. We are all part of the thin blue line.

I think back to the political conventions in 1972, and that dreadful day on April 1, 1976. In homicide, we worked on the Zore case on Christmas, and what I call the "River Drive nine" case, we worked in August 1982. Let's not forget Eastern Airlines Flight 401 on Dec. 29, 1972, and Hurricane Andrew in August 1992. I mention just a few things in which I was involved. The message here is, we all worked well together during trying and difficult circumstances because we were proud to be a part of the largest police department in the southeastern United States. I could go on and on with different stories, but my point is this: We all served proudly during these times, and now the new men and women have far different rules to work with. Keep them and our military in your thoughts and prayers.

One last thing: We lost good people recently. Bob Rossman was a mentor to me who knew how important common sense was in law enforcement. Ray Mata passed on July 3; he was a friend, a colleague, a Jersey boy and one hell of an athlete. They will be deeply missed. R.I.P., my friends.

As chairperson of the Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund, I'm proud to announce that the RPOC Board of Directors and I are awarding Otis Chambers Scholarships to the following students:

- Kayleigh D. Linsinbigler, granddaughter of RPOC retired member Teresa L. Gonzalez
 - Nicholas Bimonte, son of retired RPOC officers Chris and Patricia Bimonte
 - Danielle Cooner, daughter of retired RPOC member James Cooner
 - Nicole King, niece of retired member Richard "Dick" Magaldi
- Here are reports from our officers:

Jerry Rudoff, vice president: As John mentioned in his message, our membership is spread wide. As a focal point, we have

and will continue to enhance our social media outreach via our website and Facebook/Meta private group. Please keep in mind that you must be a current member to access our FB group, where you'll find some new features recently introduced by FB. As they continue to add new user tools, which you can choose to use or not as your personal option, we will bring those online. Lastly, as the latest benefit to our members, if you or your spouse has a side business you'd like to advertise, we have added that section to our website. Feel free to send me your business card, and we will add it at no charge as long as your membership is current. If you know of a nonmember wishing to advertise, we will be happy to add them for a nominal fee. That fee will go directly toward our scholarship fund. Thank you, and be well.

Ed Spisak, treasurer: We have had extraordinary support from the PBA and Membership Manager Margarita Vasquez in promoting the joinder and/or rejoinder of many retirees by the preparation and mailing of letters to those PBA members who have retired in the past four years, informing them about their opportunity to join the RPOC. The response has been robust, and we are looking forward to many more applications to join. With all the recent new memberships, the RPOC has grown larger and stronger. We encourage all members, both old and new, to offer their ideas and suggestions as to more in-person get-togethers in addition to our highly successful annual reunions. We are looking for an appropriate venue for our traditional holiday luncheons, which were temporarily discontinued because of COVID.

Reba Miller, chaplain: During this period of remembering and honoring our country, the history of the United States of America, the good and the bad portions, we can truly see and hear the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower reminding all Americans, "Freedom has its life in the hearts of men and women. So it must be daily earned and refreshed — else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die."

We send our prayers and deep condolences to our LEO families, recognizing the passing of our fellow officers and dear friends:

James John "Jim" Dooner: March 2022

Ernest "Glenn" Aguirre: May 2022


Ray Mata: July 2022

We are also reaching out to send healing thoughts and prayers to all our members and their families who are experiencing health concerns: Jerry Rudoff, Dennis Bambach, Ron Sorensen and Gary Gable.

A special welcome to all our new members and our reinstated members. To all our members and their families, if you know of any members who need special help or contacts, please do not hesitate to let any of your board members know about these situations. We need your help always to do our best for all of you!

"Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go, just remember how far you have come. Remember everything you have faced. All the battles you have won and all the fears you have overcome." —Unknown

Dennis Bambach, past president: I would like to thank Pete Cuccaro and Paul Law for putting together bimonthly luncheons in central Florida. Although not all attendees are RPOC members, they are retired or former LEOs and it is a wonderful time for all of us.



**In times like these,
you can't afford to be
without our protection.**

The coverage you need, that only we can provide.

The Admin Duty Policy is unique to Spectrum Advisory Group and is underwritten through Wellfleet. It is a very affordable policy used for officers who are placed on admin duty, admin leave, suspended, or terminated.

Coverage can include: officer involved shooting (OIS), in-custody death, excessive force complaint, or any disciplined action coming from an officer doing their job.

- **Sole provider of Admin Duty coverage**
- **Covers admin duty, admin leave, suspension, or termination**
- **12 months of coverage/30-day elimination period**
- **\$1,000, \$2,000 or \$3,000 monthly benefit**



SpectrumAdvisoryGroup.net

For a FREE Consultation Contact:
Executive Vice President

Michelle Jotz

TEL (702) 429 - 7202

EMAIL mjotz@spectrumadvisorygroup.net

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.



Art Perez
Miami-Dade Police Department



Bert Perez
Miami-Dade Police Department



Berthena Thompson
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



Carlos Perez
Miami-Dade Police Department



Charmaine Rolle
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



Dawn Agins
Miami-Dade Police Department



Denise Rera
Miami-Dade Police Department



Dwaine Jones
Miami-Dade Police Department



Frank Blasberg
Key West Police Department



Gary Burke
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



Gilbert Yap
Miami-Dade Police Department



Joseph Bermudez
Miami-Dade Police Department



Kenny Veloz
Miami-Dade Police Department



Maria Suco
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation



Mark Ford
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation



Mathew Meyer
Miami-Dade Police Department



Nelson Aloy
Miami-Dade Police Department



Raymond Robertson
Miami-Dade Police Department



Robert Dykes
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation



Sheila Mann
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation



Thomas Gonzalez
Miami-Dade Corrections
& Rehabilitation

PBA'S ASSOCIATE PERSONAL INJURY COUNSEL

Martin, Lister & Alvarez, PLC



**Specializing in serious personal injury
matters, product liability, medical
malpractice & wrongful death**

1655 N. Commerce Parkway, Suite 102, Weston, FL 33326

PHONE 954.659.9322

FAX 954.659.9909 www.lawmla.com

***Admitted: New York**

For a complete listing of our firm's credentials, please visit us at www.lawmla.com

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 experience.



Miami's Defense Attorneys

Founded 19 years ago with over 50 Years combined experience



Our office was established with a vision to be among the finest law firms in South Florida. To meet this goal, our founding partners have assembled the finest Miami lawyers to defend clients.

Our partners come from diverse backgrounds and have different life experiences, which makes the firm uniquely qualified to handle all areas of litigation.

Contact us: 305-444-0030
www.DMTLAW.com



On The Case

The PBA called on one of its great defenders, attorney David Braun, to represent Miami-Dade Officer John Song against a charge that appeared to be flawed. Here's the inside story of how it went down.

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL
■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA CARTA

“Not ...”

The second of the two words Miami-Dade Officer John Song had been hoping, praying, needing to hear for nearly four years didn't even register. By the time the judge added “guilty,” confirming on May 12 his acquittal on a charge of vehicular homicide, Song had already let loose with tears, exhaling years of stress, angst and horror, and searched for his beloved wife, Min, to have that long-awaited I'm-free hug.

Since the middle-of-the-night pursuit of suspects in a stolen car in March 2018 and the warrant that dropped the following November with the charge of vehicular homicide, Song had rarely slept. Min would find him on the living room couch so many mornings after lying awake all night wondering what might happen to his beautiful daughters, Kylie and Kristen, if he went to prison.

But now, the “not guilty” set off a bottle rocket of emotion recognizing his freedom, thanking the brilliance of criminal attorneys David Braun and Anna Cruz and blessing the South Florida PBA for providing a premium legal defense and unwavering, sustaining, life-saving support. When the verdict came in, Song went on a hugfest from Min to Braun and Cruz, to South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl.



Members of the South Florida PBA with Min and John Song (eight and ninth from left) and attorneys David Braun and Anna Cruz (next to John) after Song was acquitted of vehicular homicide.

It was that momentous of an outcome: an officer with an impeccable record unequivocally doing his duty and overcoming an overzealous prosecutor fueled by the post-Floyd effect. And finally, *finally*, after nearly four unimaginable years, Song could render the words he had been hoping, praying, needing to say.

“That day, when the warrant dropped, I couldn't even tell my

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



While being suspended without pay, John Song started woodworking, creating flags and other carvings that he sold.

ON THE CASE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

mom that I was actually on the way to jail,” Song divulged. “My blood pressure was up for four years. My family and friends in the courtroom said I looked like a zombie. But David, the things he picked up on. His motivation was a big key. And the PBA, what they did for me was a big deal.”

Zombies and blood pressure and not being able to tell mom, oh my. Talk about a nightmare — this was the MF-er of all nightmares. When he woke up the day after the verdict, Song felt something that had not been there for nearly four years. More about that to come as we flash back through the victorious case of John Song.

But the “not guilty” is also a statement on just how staunch the legal defense had to be on this case. And how valuable and necessary is the representation that the PBA provides, given the way officers continue to be vilified.

“My biggest thing is that I wanted a fair trial,” Song submitted. “Obviously, the state did not want to back off, even though we presented them with everything we had to say otherwise of why they should not have charged me in the first place.”

Defending them in this climate

At approximately 1:30 a.m. on March 6, 2018, Song was heading west on 147th Avenue in his patrol car with his PPO, Cesar Echevarry, in pursuit of a 2008 Lincoln MKX believed to have been stolen from a Palmetto Bay home two hours earlier. The initial call went out as a home invasion, and at trial, Braun presented to the jury that Song believed he was chasing a violent felon. That was on Song’s mind when he radioed dispatch that he believed he had seen the Lincoln well before racing through the intersection of Southwest 260th Street and 147th Avenue.

Song ran through a stop sign at that intersection and collided with a car being driven by Emilio Jesus Vizcaino. The crash killed Vizcaino.

It wasn’t until Nov. 14, 2018, that Song was charged with vehicular homicide, a second-degree felony, as well as reckless driving and a pair of counts of damaging property. The warrant stated that Song was not pursuing anyone or even responding to a call at the time of the accident, which Braun eventually proved was not the case.

Braun seemed destined for this day in court. For many years, the PBA had referred most of its criminal work to renowned attorneys Doug Hartman and Michael Cornely, and their success stories are well documented. But when the dynamic duo started looking at retirement in 2020, they began working on some PBA-referred cases with Braun.

A prosecutor in the 17th Judicial Circuit in Broward County, Braun opened a criminal practice 15 years ago with Cruz, his partner in law and in life. Hartman and Cornely shared their toughest cases with Braun. So he was the natural choice to take over representing Song when the duo retired at the end of 2020.

Braun had been undefeated in cases representing PBA members. And he wanted to put that record on the line, because representing police officers had become an inspirational and invigorating privilege.

“With everybody trying to get a police officer in trouble, get them on video and all that kind of stuff, to be defending them in this climate is not easy, but it’s very rewarding,” Braun observed. “It has become a political thing in our court systems, and people want to turn their backs when an allegation is made. But once you’re able to fight through that and prove your client is innocent, there is no better feeling.”

Braun is one of those attorneys who never stops digging. His workday does not end at 5 p.m. It doesn’t end at 10 p.m. It’s probably a good bet that he and Anna can go on talking about a case they are working into the wee hours.

He had made Song feel more comfortable and confident with many after-hours phone conversations. Song loved how Braun communicated extensively and relentlessly about every detail of the case.

But it was in one of those wee-hour moments that Song realized Braun's genius.

"Because my accident happened at 1:30 in the morning, David wanted to go to the scene at that time to see what I saw," Song reported. "So he drove all the way from Broward to Homestead at 1 a.m., and I never would have expected that. I mean, he was just so positive."

He was trained for that

One of those little things would ultimately crack the case. Again, stay tuned.

During another late-night phone call, Braun set in motion his strategy to appeal to the jury. Jury selection had been another winning touch Braun was able to effect. The six-member panel included a doctor and nurse, two hugely vital assets.

"These were two people, like cops, who do their jobs right to the best of their ability and bad things still can happen," Braun explained. "And that doctor turned out to be our jury foreman."

On the night before making his opening statement, Braun reached out to Song for a few more details about his life. A few nuggets he could use in the opening to make the jury understand just how much of a public servant was on trial and just how absurd it would be that Song would ever take any action to wantonly hurt somebody, as Assistant State Attorney Laura Adams would try to argue.

Braun learned that Song had always wanted to be a police officer. He applied right out of high school but was told he didn't have enough experience. So to get experience, Song joined the Army National Guard.

During a deployment to Iraq, Song was switched from being a motor transportation specialist to the infantry. One of his main jobs was escorting convoys carrying supplies or military equipment across the country.

"He had driven safely more than 10,000 miles in a military vehicle at night," Braun noted. "You talk about a guy who's got experience doing the right thing driving and being safe at night. He was actually trained for that."

Braun further articulated in his opening how Song volunteered with the Hamni Korean American Church, traveling around the world to build houses and do simple tasks for underserved communities.

"Places where they didn't even know what shampoo was," Song described. "So, helping wash their hair and stuff like that."

And that only ratcheted up Braun's desire to make his case.

"Whatever pressure there was on me to win this case, it's 10 times more because this is the kind of guy who deserves to be acquitted," Braun added.

These were serious criminals

When talking about the incident, Song never tried to be defensive. He related how while EMTs tried to attend to his bleeding from the head after the crash, his only concern was what had happened to Echevarry. After coming on with Miami-Dade following a stint in Sweetwater, Song had quickly ascended to become a field training officer.

How could the state's attorney make a case against him?

Turns out, she really couldn't. Braun established that Song was definitely on duty and definitely in a patrol car. He further established that the warrant had erroneously documented that Song was not in pursuit or even responding to a call.

Additionally, Adams didn't call the witnesses Braun had expected when making her case, instead choosing to put the investigating detective on the stand in a rebuttal case, which is



Miami-Dade Police Officer John Song has amassed an impeccable service record in both his military service and in law enforcement.

very, very rare. In what the *Miami Herald* described as "peppering of the detectives," Braun compelled testimony that they had not even listened to the entire radio dispatch of the call.

"We were able to find aspects of the case that weren't investigated properly," Braun detailed. "I think that was a big part of convincing the jury that John Song was not guilty."

After exposing the gap in the investigation, Braun, Cruz and their investigator came up with a stroke of brilliance. While the court adjourned for a lunch break, they went to a private room to listen to the entire dispatch call.

"[Anna] said, 'Did you hear that? They just asked for air support,'" Braun recalled. "You're saying that it wasn't a serious felony and that he wasn't justified in pursuing these guys. But they don't ask for air support for somebody stealing a Snickers bar. These were serious criminals they were after. That was a great piece to cross-examine him with — the transmission he failed to listen to. They were specifically saying, 'Hey, we're in pursuit, we're following him, we need air.' That was very important."

But none of this was vindication for Song. He was only interested in exoneration, and going through the trial was taking a toll.

"I couldn't make eye contact with anybody in the courtroom," Song confided. "It was such a rough week. I couldn't even eat. My family thought I was going to pass out."

They've been with me 100 percent

Throughout the week of the trial, the people who Song looked to for comfort were those he turned around to. Seated behind him, of course, were Min and Song's sister, who came when her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

responsibilities as an active military member allowed.

And there were also members of the South Florida PBA. Vice President Nizam “Ish” Ishmael was present for every minute of the trial. Executive Vice President David Greenwell, other board members and members also packed the place.

The PBA had actually been there from the moment Song was taken to the hospital following the accident. Every week — hell, almost every day — Song said he received a phone call or a text from the PBA, checking up on him.

“I know they’ve done a lot of things on the back end that I probably don’t know to this day,” Song shared. “Throughout the four years, they’ve been with me 100 percent. It was a big, big deal what they have done for me.”

And there was no other way any officer — any person — could afford the type of defense needed to get that verdict. Braun certainly was inspired to be the person to bring the best defense, but it also reinforced to him just how the union presence can be the difference in such a case.

“I’ve told everyone I could talk to that if you are not a member, or you know someone who is not a member, you’ve got to join. If you’re a police officer and you’re not a member of the PBA, it’s like taking a job on the SWAT team, them offering you a bulletproof vest and you saying, ‘No, I’ll pass on the vest.’”

We knew he was right

When the case was handed to the jury, the mixed emotions intensified. There was reason to feel hopeful that the verdict would come back “not guilty,” but after PBA members chatted with an alternate juror, it wasn’t exactly 100-percent confidence.

“But when the jury came back within one hour, it showed that the prosecution’s case was flawed,” Stahl commented. “Then, to see John’s reaction, it was emotional. Because we knew he was

right, and I think everybody was glad that there was somebody to fight back.”

That night, Song did something he had not done in nearly four years. He slept through the night. And for the first time in nearly four years, he woke up the next morning without a headache.

After being suspended without pay, he had found some work with Google on a contract that lasted a year. After that, he tried to get another job, but even places like Walmart couldn’t hire him because of the felony charge.

“There were so many days I would sit in the backyard smoking, thinking about what would happen to the girls,” Song revealed.

Eventually, he started his own woodworking business, crafting American flags for sale. His buddies from MDPD and the military, who texted him daily, stopped by often and even provided some financial support, helping to promote sales of the flags.

Perhaps the biggest confirmation of being set free came when Song did not have to ask Braun to request permission to be able to leave Miami-Dade County. After the trial ended, he took a short respite in Mexico, and now he is working on the rest of his life.

Song can’t wait to get back to work, primarily to be back on the job with his law enforcement family, who stood by him through the whole ordeal. That will come, but first he has some immediate plans.

Perhaps as a way to accentuate just how victorious a feeling has set in, Song is taking Min, Kylie and Kristen on vacation. And where do you take the family to celebrate a moment like this?

“We’re going to Disney World,” Song declared.

Those are really the words he has waited nearly four years for.



THE ALVAREZ LAW FIRM

Alex Alvarez

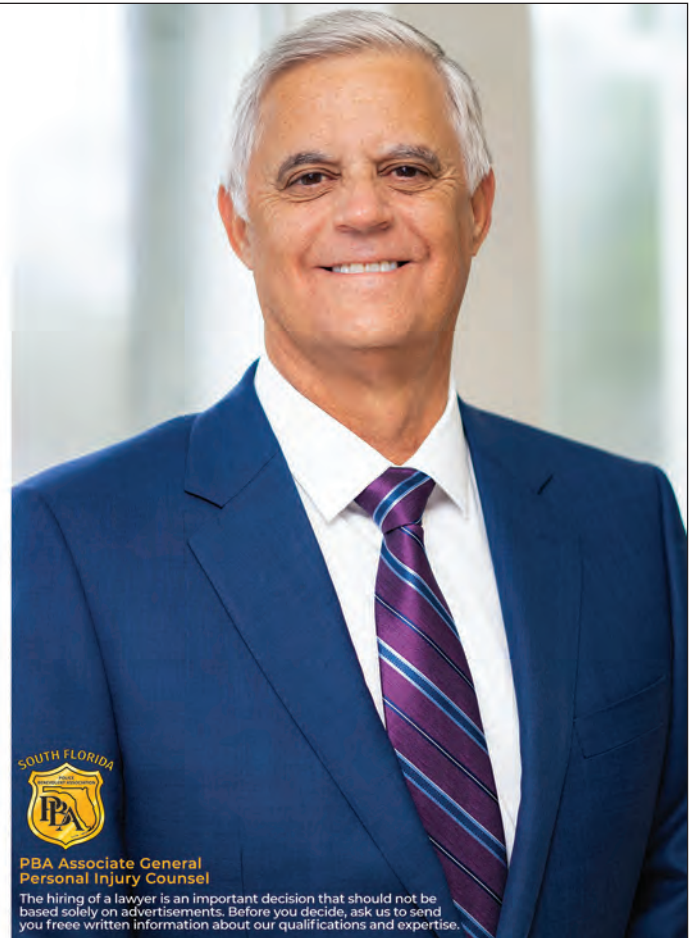
Former Metro Dade Detective,
honorably retired.

Trial Lawyer handling
Personal Injury and
Wrongful Death Matters.

Victims of Medical Malpractice,
Nursing Home Abuse and
Automobile Accidents.

**Special Fees extended to officers
and their families**

3251 Ponce De Leon Blvd. Coral Gables, FL 33134
Office: 305.444.7675 - Toll Free: 877.445.7675
intake@integrityforjustice.com



**PBA Associate General
Personal Injury Counsel**

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.



Relieve pain from the comfort of home

Tired of chronic, post surgical pain, or loss of mobility?
We have you covered! **Meet Sword, the new virtual
physical care program designed to help you overcome
your back, joint or muscle pain – at home.**

Combining licensed physical therapists with easy-to-use
technology, Sword is far more than just convenient. It's
proven to work better than in-person physical therapy.*



**Get
started
today.**

join.sword.health/avmedmdc-22

*Sword Clinical Studies



Don't just take our word for it

Ish, a police officer for Miami-Dade County, who has been participating in the Sword program for 7+ weeks says, "I'm almost to 100% and back to doing almost all of my daily routine without constant nagging pain."

"[Sword] gives you the comfort of doing [physical therapy] in your home so you don't have to go anywhere. Miami-Dade County makes it so easy for you, I have not paid one penny towards this program."

Available to Miami-Dade County enrolled employees and their dependents 18 and older
at **no additional cost** as part of your health plan.



Keeping Watch

End of Watch Ride rolls into MDCR to help honor six officers lost to COVID

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES
■ PHOTOS BY LINDA CARTA

When the End of Watch Ride rolled into the Metro West Detention Center on July 5, those gathered for a memorial service immediately noticed the faces. The ride is led by retired officers on motorcycles leading the End of Watch trailer, which is adorned with hundreds of faces of fallen officers. It continues to traverse the country to honor them.

The Beyond the Call of Duty End of Watch Ride came to Miami-Dade for the memorial honoring the six Miami-Dade Correction & Rehabilitation Center (MDCR) officers who were lost in the line of duty in 2021 to COVID. The presence of the trailer certainly seemed to elevate this memorial above and beyond.

"I mean, just talk about amazing," MDCR Public Information Officer Juan Diasgranados commented. "The fact that these guys travel across the country to honor fallen officers, and put the faces of every fallen officer on that trailer, you can't explain what that meant to the families when they saw their loved ones on there."

Members of the Miami-Dade Police Department Honor Guard escorted the family members of the six officers into the service. And the audience was addressed by several guest speakers, including Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, County Commission Chair Pepe Diaz and retired Miami-Dade Police Department Officer Yolanda Everett, who lost her husband, an MDCR officer, in the line of duty several years ago.

Diaz offered his appreciation for these officers making the ultimate sacrifice.

"They were doing their job," Diaz noted. "That was their duty. They knew the odds, they knew what could happen, but they took it upon themselves to continue their watch."

A moment of silence followed for the MDCR officers: Juan Llanes, Alexey Aguilar, David Jean-Baptist, Calyne St. Val, Terrell Jordan and Sylvia Allen.

In April, Diasgranados heard from Jagrut Shah, founder of the End of Watch Ride, that the ride would be passing through Florida the week of July 4. MDCR had been working on holding a memorial service for its fallen officers, so July turned out to be the perfect op-



The End of Watch Ride trailer features photos of fallen law enforcement officers from across the country.



Retired Miami-Dade Police Department Officer Yolanda Everett shared her experience of losing her husband, an MDCR officer, a few years ago.



South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl also attended the memorial service.

portunity to hold it in conjunction with the ride.

MDPD provided an escort for the ride when it traveled from another MDCR facility to Metro West. And with the faces on the End of Watch Ride trailer looking on, this turned out to be an event to honor the fallen unlike any other in Miami-Dade.

"It was definitely heartwarming," Diasgranados added. "And it just added a really beautiful touch to our memorial service."



We are proud to announce our affiliation
with the PBA by honoring all PBA members
& their immediate families with a

50% DISCOUNT

On all Cemetery Property*

For over 60 years, Vista Memorial Gardens has afforded comfort,
support and peace-of-mind to the residents of our community.
Whether the family of a police officer, or a family in need, every life matters.

Each time an alarm sounds, or a call comes in over the radio, your career
choice places you at risk. If you are prepared, diligence always lessens risk.

For information, or to participate in our 50% pre-need opportunity
for PBA members, contact us.

* Excludes promotions, cemetery merchandise and luxury upgrades.

www.vistamemorial.net • 305.821.1421



Vista Memorial
GARDENS

Riding with the PBA

Bike Night raises funds to benefit a retired member's daughter



■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

A long row of shiny black Harley-Davidson motorcycles lined the South Florida PBA parking lot on July 20 as a crowd of more than 150 retired and current members gathered for the first PBA Bike Night. The event brought members together and also served as a fundraiser to benefit Isabella Pedraja, daughter of retired member Willy Pedraja.

After learning that Isabella had been diagnosed with a rare pancreatic disease, PBA board members decided to host a fundraiser to help her family during their time of need.

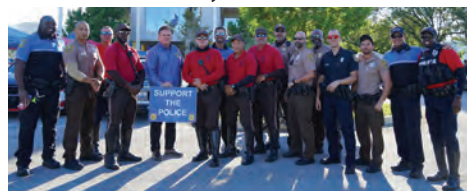
"[Willy] always helped out," PBA board member Tony Rodriguez explained. "He's one of those that liked to teach the younger crowd, and he was always there for us. And his wife likes to help the officers, very pro-police and always has our backs. So to help them out with a little bit of expenses, we decided to do the show."

The evening included a DJ, grilled barbecue, a contest with trophies for the best bikes and an auction, all sponsored by the Cartel Baggers, Rubenstein Law, Abuelito's Sauce Company and Joe the Smoking Pig.

As members enjoyed their barbecue and the camaraderie with one another, they walked around to catch a glimpse of the variety of bikes, which included a vintage gold Harley-Davidson and a blue line bike with badges decorating the rim and stars along the wheels.



Hundreds of retired and current members gathered to see the variety of bikes.

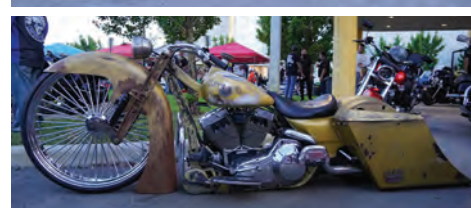


South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl with a group of members.

Throughout the evening, trophies were awarded for the best American, best classic, best custom, best import and best overall bike. An auction was held for a handmade wooden flag coin holder, which raffled off for more than \$300, and an install for lights valued at \$200, donated by Ghost Cycles.

By the end of the evening, members had raised several thousand dollars for Isabella, which would be presented to her by the PBA board. And many looked forward to the next Bike Night.

"Everyone in the PBA, the president and vice president, they were all very supportive of this, and it's a great cause,"



Trophies were awarded at the end of the event for the best bikes.



Rodriguez noted. "A lot of members were asking me when there was going to be the next one. So we might be planning our next show soon."

WILLIAMSON IS MIAMI

Treating You Like Family Has Made Us #1

GMC

WE ARE PROFESSIONAL GRADE



*W*ILLIAMSON
BUICK GMC

Williamson Automotive
7815 SW 104TH St.
Miami, FL
WilliamsonAutomotiveGroup.com

Sales
1-877-228-6093
Mon.-Fri. 9am - 8pm
Sat. 9am - 6pm
Sun. 11am - 5pm

Service
1-866-597-6015
Mon.-Fri. 7:30am - 7pm
Sat. 8am - 5pm
Sun. Closed

Hook, Line and Fundraiser

South Florida PBA members celebrate another successful Florida Keys PBA Charity Dolphin Tournament

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

More than 200 residents of the Key West community and more than 30 South Florida PBA members gathered at the Ocean's Edge Marina at Stock Island on June 24, armed with fishing poles and bait. They docked their boats in the marina to participate in the Second Annual Florida Keys PBA Charity Dolphin Tournament.

The three-day event of sport fishing for mahi mahi dolphin fish was sponsored by Monster Energy. All proceeds benefitted the Autism Society of the Keys, an organization that helps raise awareness and assist Monroe County families in Monroe County with autistic children, and the PBA Love Fund, which aids fallen officers and their families.

"Many of our members love fishing, but we're in this for a purpose," said Key West PBA Representative Frank Betz. "To serve the community and make the community a better place. And they're excited to do it."

Betz and South Florida PBA member Michael Pettee first had the idea for the fishing tournament last year in the midst of the pandemic. After they noticed many charities struggling to raise funds, they turned to their love for fishing and thought it would be a great way to gain community support.

And due to their longstanding relationship with the Autism Society of the Keys, Betz and Pettee decided this would be a perfect opportunity to show their continuous support.

"We do a lot of work with the Autism Society of the Keys, as far as law enforcement training," Betz explained. "They've come in and helped us with training and different things like sensory boxes, so when we're dealing with autistic kids, we have some sort of tools to help. We figured that's a great charity."

On the last day of the tournament, an awards ceremony was held. Team TNT won first place overall, with a 33.94-pound fish. And member Matt Haley won largest dolphin caught by a PBA member.

By the end of the tournament, members had raised \$25,000. And Betz was already looking forward to next year.

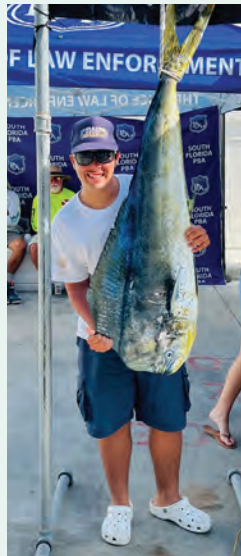
"We have next year's dates already," Betz added. "It's a great opportunity to enjoy our love of the outdoors while helping the community at the same time."



Team TNT took first place overall by catching a 33.94-pound dolphin.



Matt Haley won first place in the category of largest fish caught by a PBA member.





WILL YOUR INCOME LAST?

Many baby boomers can reasonably expect to live to 80 or 85, perhaps longer.
Can you sustain your income and lifestyle for the next 20 or 30 years?
For help in determining if you can, contact me today for a no-cost,
no-obligation appointment.



Richard D. Gerundo
ChFC, CLU, CRPC, LUTCF
Lead Financial Advisor
California Ins. Lic # 4047058
786.845.3183 • Rich.Gerundo@dcfcu.org
The MEMBERS Financial Services Program
Located at:
DADE COUNTY FEDERAL CU
1500 NW 107 Ave, Miami, FL 33172

**We can help
with your DROP or
457 Plan Rollovers**

President John Kazanjian and members of the Florida PBA executive board stand with Senator Marco Rubio after the union endorsed Rubio for reelection.



Backing Rubio

Because of his relentless support for law enforcement, the Florida PBA endorsed the senator for reelection

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Dressed in formal attire, members representing PBA charters and chapters across the state gathered before the South Florida PBA Officer Awards banquet at Trump National in Doral to make to make a momentous announcement. Not that this statement required tuxedos and formal gowns, but when the Florida PBA delivers news this important, well, it always helps to look the part.

"It's a great pleasure to announce that the Florida PBA, 30,000 strong, endorses Marco Rubio for reelection as U.S. Senator," Florida PBA President John Kazanjian stated. "Use it with whatever you have to do. You have 30,000 members pushing for you. And I'm sure you're going to kick some butt. I know you have our back. We got yours."

Never has it been more important than now to have somebody watching your back in law enforcement. And in its ongoing campaign to ensure vital representation, the Florida PBA acted swiftly and decisively to solidify its relationship with Rubio, which has been fruitful since he first procured the union's endorsement as a city commissioner in West Miami in 1996.

"He's been a true champion for law enforcement from the day he was with West Miami to where he's at today," emphasized South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl, who also serves as the Florida PBA Secretary. What makes him different than any other candidate out there is his track record. He has never turned his back on the citizens of South Florida. He's never turned his back on the citizens of Florida. And he's been a true champion for law and order, which is something that's been

lacking in other parts of this country."

Rubio embraced this opportunity to gather with Kaz and the PBA leadership from across the state to confirm his stance on the importance of law enforcement and getting your back.

"My biggest fear is that we're not doing enough to support men and women in law enforcement across this country," Rubio stated in front of a stable of cameras and reporters at the press conference. "I think it's about more than just the issues we support. It's about the steady and consistent behavior on our part. I think many of my colleagues as well say that now, more than ever, it's important for us to be on the side of law enforcement."

Rubio's statements following the announcement of the PBA endorsement revealed that his deep appreciation for first responders spawned from serving in local government. They confirmed that he does get it: that whoever calls 911, someone is going to show up and put their life on the line for that caller; that the public doesn't quite understand how police officers sometimes have to

make a life-or-death decision in a millisecond.

He further recognized that the lack of support for law enforcement is leading to two big problems: The way that criminality is protected in big and small cities across the country literally has led to people being willing to violate the law because they don't think there are any consequences for it. And the increasing challenges of retaining officers and recruiting new ones.

"If the day should ever come when people are no longer willing to do law enforcement because the price is higher than the reward, then we're going to be in a lot of trouble," Rubio emphasized. "Believe me, a lot of us respect law enforcement. And our



South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl expresses why law enforcement is proud to back Senator Marco Rubio for reelection.

job is to continue to repeat this to as many people as will listen. And we should thank God every single night that we have men and women in this country who are willing to do that work.”

Senator Rubio continued to touch on hot-button issues. He disclosed how he responded when a year ago or so, some of his colleagues proposed legislation to take qualified immunity away from law enforcement officers.

“They said, ‘Let’s make it easier to sue police officers,’” he added. “I said, ‘OK, that’s very easy. Here’s my proposal: Whatever we pass that applies to law enforcement should also apply to members of Congress. So you should be able to sue members of Congress if you don’t like the law.’ And it went away. I mean they stopped talking about it. For now, anyway.”

To keep them from talking about it again, legislators like Rubio are needed in Washington. But he didn’t want his gratitude for the endorsement to seem numbing.

So rather than just saying how much he appreciated police officers and how much he has your back, Rubio explained how he walks the walk.

“It’s easy to pass a law. It really is. It’s easy to write something on a piece of paper and put it into law,” he explained. “The law means nothing if someone’s not willing to go out and enforce it.”

Walking tall has also led Rubio to work on legislation that truly focusses on helping first responders in ways that would greatly impact them. For example, he wants to get Congress to consider a law that would give them a home-purchase benefit similar to what the VA offers those who served in the military. This would enable them, one time, to buy a home with no down payment and enable them to get financing to buy something priced at up to 110 percent of the median price in their communities.

He would also like to see those bystanders with their cell-



Florida PBA President John Kazanjian prepares to announce the union’s endorsement of Senator Marco Rubio for reelection.

phone cameras shooting video of every police response stand down. Or at least have the review of those videos be done in context.

“They release the video and some expert on television who knows everything breaks it down like was a review from an NFL or NBA game,” the senator quipped. “But that’s not how the real world works.”

The real world, he continued, is about common sense, especially in government.

“I tell people when they talk about over-policing or too much policing that they made a movie about that,” Rubio charged. “It’s called, ‘The Purge.’ Because that’s what society would look like.”

He concluded his remarks by reiterating how important it has been to speak up for police and how proud he is to be able to do so. Not an easy position to take in this day and age, to be sure.

“It’s easy for me,” Rubio submitted. “And I think there are many people who agree with me.”



Ignacio Alvarez

Former MDPD Major, honorably retired
15-plus years practicing law



Boutique law firm focusing on

Civil and criminal litigation • Corporate law • Business consulting • Crisis Management • Real estate

SPECIAL PRICING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

FOLLOW US ON    @ALGOLAWFIRM

815 PONCE DE LEON BLVD SUITE 101 • CORAL GABLES FL, 33134 • 305-723-1876 • WWW.ALGOFIRM.COM

REFLECTIONS

Catching up with a renowned South Florida PBA Member

The Teacher

Retired MDCR officer Michael Leflore has dedicated his career to helping officers and inmates learn the most important lessons

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

When Michael Leflore came on the job with Miami Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation (MDCR) in 1981, one of his first initiatives was establishing an educational program. An actual school in the correctional facility.

Leflore and a fellow officer created a library to teach inmates how to read. They patiently explained how to put sentences together, how to spell, how to sound out words and even how to count money. Leflore received support from local school teachers, who volunteered their time in the evenings.

During the six years Leflore worked with the school, he received encouraging feedback and saw just how powerful the school's impact was on inmates.

"It was very positive," Leflore reflected. "The thing about it is, when you can communicate with them and don't make them feel less than (human), then they'll want to do things. A lot of them were very positive because they were taught that."

Leflore worked 40 years and four months on the job, trying every day to make an impact on inmates. Be their teacher. Be their mentor. Be the one who believed they could find better lives.

That's the way Leflore was brought up. Raised in a single-parent household, Leflore was guided by many mentors throughout his life. And since then, Leflore has been inspired to do the same for others, including the inmates he worked with.

"My main focus was giving inmates a good nest and second chance at life, to show them a difference," Leflore related. "And to give them a hopeful tomorrow. You'll be surprised that the people that you talk to every day have changed because someone was there to change their lives."

Leflore never sought promotion because he found he could be more hands-on with the inmates and fellow officers and serve the department better in the position he was already in. He would often take officers under his wing to teach them the ins and outs of working with inmates.

There was one main piece of wisdom Leflore would always impart.

"Don't judge a book by its cover," Leflore remarked. "Get to know the individual, not just listening to what people say about a person, until you get to know them. You don't know their background. You don't know what they've been through. Everybody went through something different growing up. And you can make a difference in that person."

Leflore said his main goal was to inspire officers to make a difference, because he had witnessed countless inmates who had no guidance or father figures in their lives. They were in and out of foster care, or they were falsely accused.

So that was the fuel for Leflore to help the inmates he worked with. He was always driven to help them see a glimpse of hope beyond those cell walls.

"You've got a chance to show them a different way of trying to get out of the criminal elements that they were in, to do better in society," Leflore explained. "I've seen some inmates become bus drivers, graduate from college, have professional careers, and



Michael Leflore's Record

- Served 40 years with Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation
- PBA member since 1981
- Member of Miami-Dade County Progressive Officers' Club
- Helps raise money for kids to go to school as a member of the Miami Central High School Alumni Club

they never return back to corrections because they were able to see a different life."

Although Leflore saw many successes, he will never forget one inmate he could not help.

In 1986, Leflore met an inmate who was unknowingly involved with a robbery as the getaway driver. Although he claimed to be innocent, he was convicted of murder, and no one believed his story. Day after day, Leflore watched him crying.

Leflore believed he was innocent. He worked to try and help the inmate get his name cleared.

"Through my time there, a lot of people have called me an inmate lover," Leflore commented. "But just think, that one inmate that I saved out of 10, or five out of 10, that's one inmate that won't rob you, won't attack your mother, won't attack your father. He's gone on to a better life. And you see a lot of them being successful. They bring tears to my eyes because I know I've done something good."



Our Pharmacy Network

HELPING THE INJURED

- Did you know that the **Heart and Lung Bill** was passed to protect first responders; **police, correction, probation officers**, and **firefighters**.
- Did you know that **High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)** and most **Heart related diseases** are covered conditions under the Heart and Lung Bill?
- Did you know that **ALL** of your **medical treatments** and **medications** are covered for these conditions under the **Heart and Lung Bill** for the rest of your **LIFE**!
- Did you know that **OPN** is a specialty pharmacy that caters to our first responders and **delivers your medications** directly to your home or office **at no cost**?



OPN is a Florida-based workers' comp pharmacy that specializes in personal injury, auto accident, slip and fall, and workers' compensation, as well as, first responders covered by the Heart and Lung Bill.

Enroll Today!

844-238-9313

OurPharmacyNetwork.com

Pain, Pain Go Away

SWORD Health's innovative therapy program provides the most accessible way ever to feel better

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Welcome to the unmatched physical therapy experience at SWORD Health, where the mission is to free people from pain. Meet Sword Phoenix, your virtual therapist, who will guide and monitor every single rep, range of motion and movement to soothe and improve the kinks that the wear and tear of the job have left on your musculoskeletal system.

SWORD Health comes to the comfort of your living room, bedroom or even patrol car before or after the morning, afternoon or midnight tour as an on-demand team of digital physical health specialists. With 24/7 text-based support, SWORD can provide South Florida PBA members high-quality physical therapy when and where they want.

How likely are you to need PT? Well, studies show that one in two people are in some sort of physical pain related to their musculoskeletal system.

That's not you?

Well, studies further show that the other half will have pain in the future.

"We do things consistently for various types of disease prevention. We need to think about our musculoskeletal system the same way," advises Dr. Julie Docter, SWORD's lead clinical specialist.

She has been seeing law enforcement officers for nearly 15 years and understands their issues, limitations and desire for immediate relief. In other words, SWORD feels your pain and has established a means to help you deal with it – and overcome it.

"One thing we know about musculoskeletal injuries is that the earlier we address them with sound, evidence-based treatments, the easier they are to treat," Dr. Docter adds. "And we want to give early access to those individuals to really concrete clinical care with a dedicated physical therapist."

PBA members will be seduced by Sword's program because it eliminates travel time to a PT clinic, as well as the residual of sitting in a waiting room to get in to see the therapist. The virtual care also is covered by the Miami-Dade County employee health plan.

But the differentiators only begin there. To achieve the behavior change and education necessary to have a successful experience, SWORD is built on three pillars to create progressive individualized programs for patients.

First and foremost, exercises are tailored to patients and their specific injury, as well as their ability to perform them.

Second is educating patients about the mechanism of the injury in relation to how the body works. The end result of that education is to keep the injury from coming back.



Finally, patients receive guidance about how behaviors they can implement into everyday life in law enforcement, as well as life outside the job, to reduce injuries and keep them from recurring.

"There is static mechanism of injury and repetitive mechanism of injury," Docter explains. "What we find in law enforcement through their presentation of musculoskeletal disease is that some may be due to trauma, and some may be due to static or repetitive positions and movements."

SWORD looks at the job accordingly. So if you have pain, is it neck pain from looking to the right all day in the patrol car, working on your computer? That would be a repetitive movement in a static position.

Or does the pain result from the day when you had to jump out of the car wearing that 35-pound belt, taking off in a sprint chasing after a suspect and blowing out a hamstring or suffering a spine injury? That's trauma, of course.



SWORD's digital therapist kit includes the sensors and tablet.

Either way, SWORD can help.

"I think what's really important for your profession is preparing your body for what's imminent," Docter continues. "It's not just about one thing or about one day. It's about being consistent. What our program focuses on is not only educating the individual about how to rehab from an injury, but how to prepare themselves for their life and their work."

A study published in *Nature Scientific Reports* in July 2018 followed two groups of patients as they recovered from a knee injury. Half of them had traditional therapy, and the other half followed SWORD's program. Their recovery was measured with the "Timed Up and Go" test, a CDC recommended mobility test.

The group following SWORD's regime improved 30 percent more than the conventional physical therapy group. The patients who were treated from their own home also recorded a higher active treatment time — likely due to the ease of use.

Another study, published in February 2019 in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, reported that patients using SWORD's digital therapist maintained their results at three- and six-month increments without extra treatment. The reasons for such success are quite notable.

SWORD pairs patients with a physical therapist who creates an individual program, adjusts it as you progress, checks in with coaching and advice and can chat with you anytime. Patients also receive a digital therapist kit, so they do their exercises where and when it suits them through a tablet provided with motion sensors that guide you through every stretch and bend.

"They can place the sensors on their body and use the tablet to mirror along with our digital therapist," Docter details. "We review data on all of their exercise sessions. We can see every single rep, range of motion or how long they can hold something for, as well if you have difficulty or can't perform an exercise correctly."

And talk about going above and beyond. If you don't always have the right internet access for your tablet, like if you are on the road or on vacation, SWORD will even provide a hotspot to help you connect.

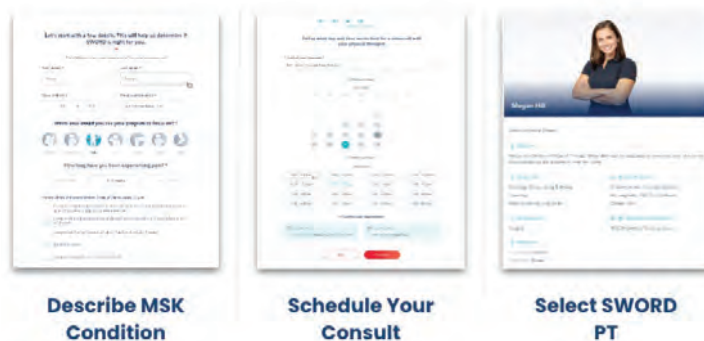
Additionally, SWORD's app provides members with access to a virtual masterclass, a library of more than 150 videos demonstrating exercises for just about any body part that might be in pain. Videos, research and other tools facilitate learning about pain science, how to establish better behaviors and tips to increase mobility.

And those videos and other information are much better to work with than those printouts you get from the clinic showing you how to do exercises at home. You know, the ones that don't always make sense and you have to call the clinic to decipher for you.

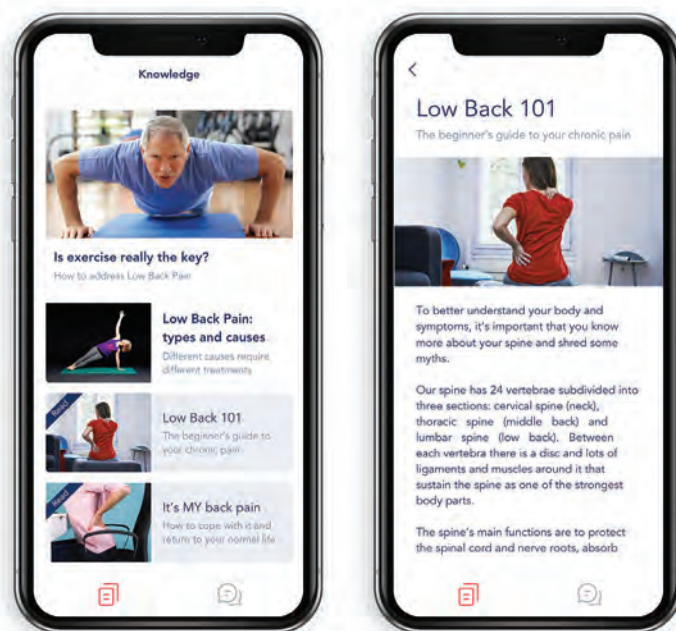
"They are directed to content that's very specific," Docter emphasizes. "Maybe they are having pain in their elbow after going to the gun range. Maybe they notice they're having neck issues or pain down their arm when they're working on the computer in the patrol car. We really want to prevent these from escalating to the need of higher medical interventions like opioids, like injections, like surgery."

SWORD Health CEO Virgílio Bento, who founded the company in 2014, developed the sensor technology in his native Portugal after his brother was injured in a car accident and struggled to get the physical therapy he needed. He brought this biofeedback-based approach to the U.S. in 2019, where it is making a profound impact on many of the 43 percent of Americans who suffer from back pain.

If the science of pain management can be a numbers game, then SWORD offers some data to consider why the program can be so beneficial. Consider that 70 percent of sessions across



The onboarding process includes describing the condition in need to treatment, scheduling the consult and then selecting your therapist.



SWORD's library includes more than 150 videos addressing almost any body part that can cause pain.

SWORD's entire book of business are done during non-traditional clinic hours.

Or that the rate for individuals in the program who actually finish their therapy is 83 percent, compared to 30 percent of those who go to a clinic. Or that the average number of sessions for a SWORD patient is 31.

"What that tells me is that people aren't only enjoying it and connecting with their therapists, they are finding relief," Docter reports. "They're sticking with the program because their pain is being reduced, their function is improving and they're reaching their goals. If that wasn't happening, they wouldn't be logging in."

The intensive treatment part of the pain-relief program continues for approximately eight weeks. Patients should see a change in sleeping comfort and pain levels during that time, after which it becomes a matter of maintenance.

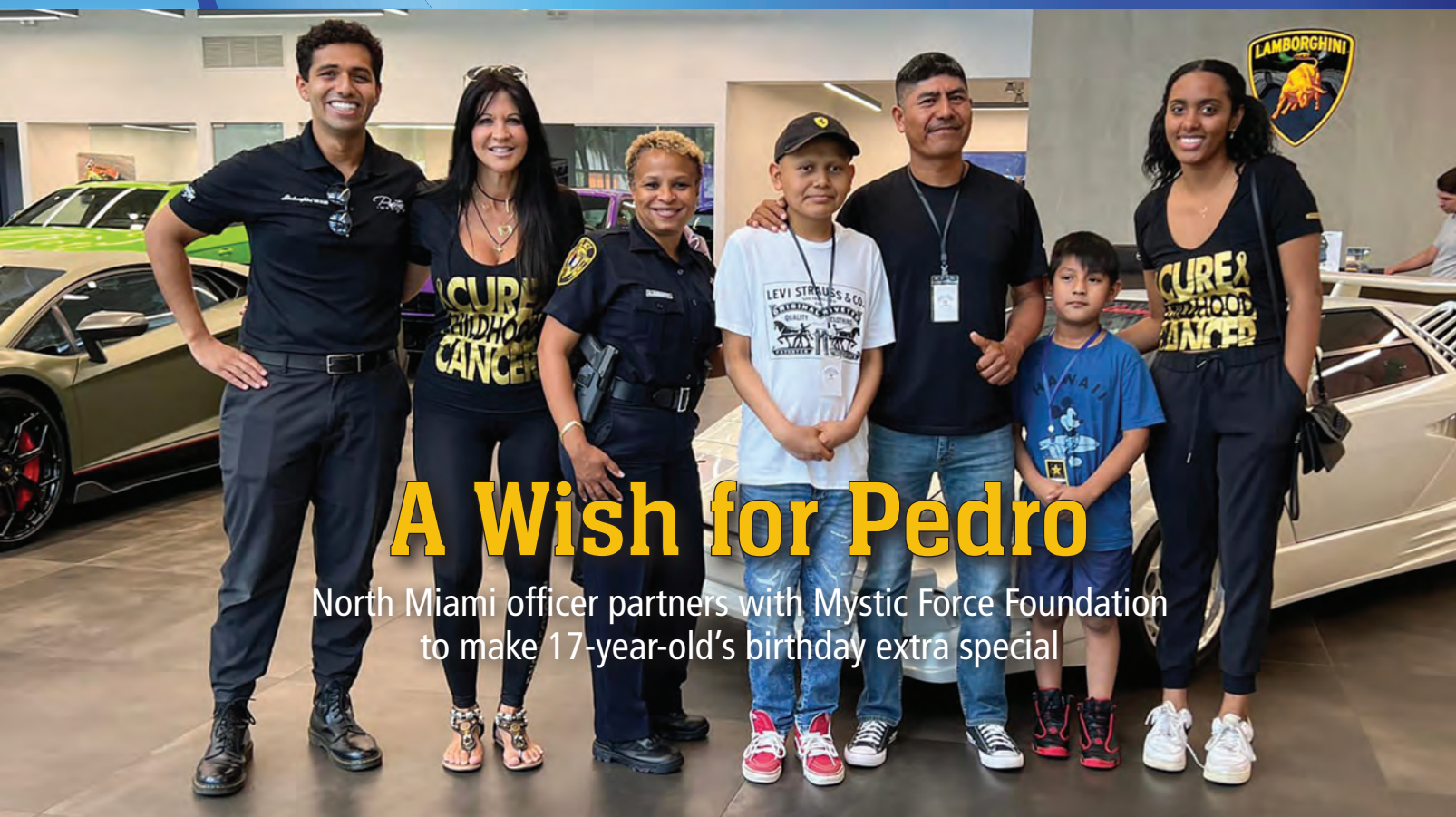
All the while, your digital therapist is there to offer motivation and accountability. Whatever time of day — or night — you have to do the exercises. And whatever time of day — or night — patients are getting real-time feedback about how they are doing.

"We're trying to start a movement of not only giving access to individuals within their home, but really changing the way we think about accessing quality-grade healthcare," Docter relates. "One quote that I love from some of our members throughout this journey is, 'It didn't just take my pain away. It gave me my life back.'"



Members Only Section

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



A Wish for Pedro

North Miami officer partners with Mystic Force Foundation to make 17-year-old's birthday extra special

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

North Miami Officer Natalie Buissereth watched 17-year-old Pedro's face light up as the Lamborghini's engine revved. They were at Prestige Auto with Pedro's family, touring the expensive supercars used by celebrities.

This special celebration on July 11 was a birthday wish come true for Pedro, who always dreamed of becoming an actor.

"When he started the Lamborghini, you could tell the roar of the engine made him smile," Buissereth said. "And then he actually was able to ride in it, and he enjoyed that."

When Buissereth was asked by Mystic Force Foundation, an organization that raises awareness and support for childhood cancer, to help make Pedro's birthday extra special, she didn't hesitate to volunteer her time.

Pedro had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. And after spending time with him and witnessing his joy, Buissereth felt inspired.

"Mystic Force is an awesome partnership because we get to be with these children," Buissereth explained. "And rather than us inspiring them, they actually inspire us. The way that they see things, their view on things. Where we may complain about something, they, on the other hand, are so appreciative."

After the car tour, Buissereth acted as Pedro's security detail. He rode in the Lamborghini as she escorted him to Mystic Force at North Miami Beach, where he was greeted with a VIP experience.

A red carpet was rolled out for him to walk on, and balloons lined his path. "Paparazzi" snapped pictures of him. And Buissereth escorted him into the building, where a surprise was waiting.

"Once we went inside, the team at Mystic Force had every dessert that he liked available, from cookies to cake," Buissereth said. "So that was beautiful as well. He truly enjoyed it."

To end his birthday celebration, Buissereth gave Pedro a ride in the gold



North Miami patrol vehicle. The lights flashed and the sirens blared.

And seeing life through his eyes moved Buissereth.

"He was a very sweet kid," Buissereth added. "Just seeing him full of life and seeing his family in such good spirits, it made me appreciate life a little bit more."

For the Children

South Miami PD's Nanney is honored for his work with families

During a 31-year-career with the Miami-Dade Police Department, Charles Nanney said he saw far too many children taken from their parents by gun violence. As the MDPD chief of detectives, he helped create the gun bounty, a program to procure information about criminals with guns that worked through Crimestoppers.

One incident he spearheaded involved pursuing a suspect with a gun who threw the gun into a field. It wound up embedded under a bush. Nanney deployed recruits from an academy class to do a grid search of the field. After several hours, they found the gun.

Another initiative Nanney led resulted in K9s being trained to search for guns. They were used to find several hidden guns and bullets from crime scenes.

His work and dedication led to Nanney, a career-long PBA member, being recognized on July 10 with the Community/Law Enforcement award by Miami-Dade chapter of Parents of Murdered Children (POMC). The organization provides ongoing emotional support to help parents and other survivors deal with their acute grief over losing a child to murder, as well as advocates for their cases in the criminal justice system.

The award was presented to Nanney, now an assistant chief with the South Miami PD, during the POMC annual prayer breakfast at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Miami Airport and Convention Center. Chapter founder Tangela Sears gave the award to Nanney in front of a packed ballroom that included South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl and many elected officials.

"It was definitely very honorable because it's from people who lost their kids," said Chief Nanney, who has been with South Miami for two and a half years. "Tangela said I've always been there doing stuff to prevent murders before they happen. I've seen, over the years, a lot of parents of dead kids as well as murdered kids, and nothing is worse. So I was very touched."

Nanney further noted that the annual prayer breakfast has become a momentous event because it honors the victims and the parents. And it raises awareness for POMC as an advocate throughout all aspects of the criminal justice system.

"They have a lot of juice," Nanney added. "By joining together, they have an organization that gives them a bigger voice, and it gives them the respect that they are due."



From left, South Miami PD Assistant Chief Charles Nanney, Tangela Sears and South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl. Inset, Nanney shows the award he received from the Miami-Dade Parents of Murdered Children at the chapter's annual prayer breakfast.



A combined honor guard representing agencies from throughout Miami-Dade County attended the POMC annual prayer breakfast.



Building Relationships

Miami-Dade PD forms connections with Colombian National Police

The Miami-Dade Police Department is reaching out with a helping hand to officers in Central and South America.

On July 15, Miami-Dade Police got to see their efforts come to fruition when members of the Colombian National Police graduated from a two-week International Training Unit Community Oriented Policing Course.

It's a partnership that has been more than 10 years in the making. In 2012, Miami-Dade Police formed a friendship with the State Department and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. That led to connecting with and offering training courses to several countries, including Haiti, Guatemala and Mexico.

Those courses had to be put on hold for 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, but now things are back up and running, with classes booked into 2023.

The Colombian National Police spent time in Miami in July focusing on how to handle critical incidents, including training on how to deal with active shooter situations.

"It's about building relationships," said MDPD Training Captain Sergio Alvarez. "First of all, we develop friendships, and we foster community work. So it's kind of like, even though we're the instructors and they're the students, it's a mutual learning experience for our instructors and their students."

Ultimately, these training courses can be imperative to the way these countries do their job. Alvarez recalls a time when their training made the difference for the Colombians.

"Years ago, there was an officer from Colombia who got shot, and he survived because he and his teammates had attended a tactical lifesaver class, which basically teaches you how to survive combat injury," Alvarez explained. "So this officer got shot in the leg, and they were able to save him by applying a tourniquet and using the techniques they learned here with us in training."

Once the training classes concluded, the officers returned home. But that doesn't mean the friendships stop there.

"We're fostering relationships, friendships that have lasted," Alvarez added. "We talk. We talk to students who have attended the class. We keep in touch with them. They email us. We email them back. We text. They text us. So we're building relationships."



A hero's welcome for Key West members

Children in Key West had a chance to meet some real-life heroes on July 12. Officers visited the children at the College of

the Florida Keys Future Heroes Summer Camp to show the kids what true heroes are made of.



Casting with Sunny Isles Beach members

Ready... set... cast!

Sunny Isles Beach members welcomed children and families from the local communities at the Newport Fishing Pier on July 17 for their Casting with a Cop event. Other agencies and local businesses partnered alongside them to create a positive atmosphere for children and build closer connections with residents.

And the Miami-Dade Intracoastal District Marine Squad also joined the event to demonstrate some tricks on baiting hooks and casting lines, along with other public safety partners. And by the end of the day, there were some great catches.



MCSO provides some comfort food

On July 8, MCSO members served food to residents in the Lower Keys community, working side by side with Monroe County Social Services. The food giveaway included hundreds of items including canned vegetables, other canned items, bags of macaroni and beans.



Homestead members put health on top

Serving and protecting often can include looking out for the mental and physical wellbeing of residents. Members from the Homestead Police Department recently had a chance to promote health and wellness.

On June 14, the Start Off Smart division hosted a community health fair. More than 20 groups participated, including the Alzheimer's Association, the AIDS Health Foundation, Healthy Families Florida and Nicklaus Children's Mobile.



MDCR members reach out to local students

Before school was out for summer, Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation members attended a career day for students at Joe Hall Elementary School in Miami on June 2. MDCR members participated in multiple career days to teach kids about what they do and what it means to be a correctional officer.

Pinecrest goes all out on 25th anniversary

Pinecrest Police Department celebrated a major milestone on June 25. In honor of its 25th anniversary, the department hosted a Police Expo at Evelyn Greer Park so local citizens could get to know officers better.

The day was full of giveaways, a helicopter flyby, a visit from the SWAT team and food trucks. There was even an appearance from a favorite superhero.





LAKEVIEW HEALTH

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

FIRST RESPONDER PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

For over 20 years, we have provided evidence-based care for first responders suffering with substance use and co-occurring disorders.

We treat the whole person by offering trauma-informed care combined with a focus on pain management.

AMERICA'S BEST
**ADDICTION
TREATMENT
CENTERS**
2021
Newsweek
STARBUCKS

888.746.1814

LakeviewHealth.com/firstresponder

Members join the celebration in Sunny Isles

It was a party for the City of Sunny Isles on June 12, and Sunny Isles PBA members had a chance to get in on the fun. Officers greeted community members at the Celebration of the Isles, which included a Pop 2000s concert featuring the boy band O-Town at Gateway Park.



Gooooooooal!!!!!! MDPD soccer team kicks some butt at First Responder Games

Law enforcement officers are used to working together as a team, but Miami-Dade members took the concept to a whole new level. In mid-June, they traveled to Fort Myers for the 2022 First Responder Games. The MDPD United Soccer team came home with some hardware in the form of a silver medal for placing second in the tournament.



Accredited by:



**CALIFORNIA COAST
UNIVERSITY**

10%

Tuition Discount

*For law enforcement personnel



Self-paced Programs



Affordable

Interest free payment plans



Credit for Professional Training

Undergraduate Only

* Applies to law enforcement enrolling after Jan. 2022. Offer is not retroactive for students already enrolled. Discount is subject to change and/or cancellation at any time without notice. This offer cannot be combined with any other discount(s).
www.calcoast.edu 925 N. Spurgeon St. Santa Ana, CA 92701

(888) 228-8648

admissions@calcoast.edu

www.calcoast.edu/HeatMagazine

Online Education, learn more



COLA: The gift that keeps on giving



NICOLÁS
VALDÉS-FAULI
CERTIFIED
FINANCIAL
PLANNER™

It's no secret that inflation has breached every aspect of our financial and consumer lives. Those with DROP rollovers, investment plan assets and deferred comp accounts have experienced firsthand the savagery of recent market turmoil. Additionally, Fed rate hikes have slashed bond prices, sending once-safe-haven asset classes into stocklike performance.

However, to those considering staying in the pension plan and electing either straight pension or DROP, you have a secret weapon in your retirement arsenal: COLA.

This cost-of-living adjustment is arguably one of the biggest benefits available to pension plan members, and it is important that you maximize it. I will explain why, how and what you can miss.

With inflation hovering at around 9 percent, this means the money under your mattress is losing that same amount. In other words, every dollar you own just lost 9 cents in value this year.

The DROP program offers participants a cost-of-living adjustment annually, and your pension benefit will adjust accordingly.

What's important here is that all COLAs are not created equal.

I recently sat down with two clients of mine, married LEOs, both DROP-eligible — one a candidate for DROP and the other already in DROP.

It was suspicious that both had different numbers on their COLAs, and we were able to identify why.

The FRS calculates your COLA with the following formula:

(Years of service credit before 2011 / total years of service credit) x 3% = COLA

There are two important variables that influence the outcome of your COLA. The first, you really have no control over, which is your start date. The earlier you started your career, the better your COLA. The second contributing factor is your years of service. What is surprising, and I am sure will disappoint some, is the longer you work, the lower your COLA! That is to say, your COLA is not improved by working longer.

Here is an example: Patricia started in 1995 and completes 25 years of service. Her COLA is 1.9. If she completes 30 years of service, her COLA is 1.6.

I can appreciate that the 0.3 percent difference in COLA appears numerically insignificant, but consider that someone receiving an \$8,000 monthly benefit after 25 years of retirement would earn \$124,000 more over those 25 years just with the 0.3 percent difference!

Make sure that you meet with a qualified professional and get all the official estimates from the Division of Retirement to make the most of your retirement 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.



Credit & Debt Relief Solutions For First Responders

Overwhelmed by credit card debt? Keep things simple with one, affordable monthly payment. No longer worry about high interest rates, multiple payments and the possible need to file bankruptcy.

Americor can help you settle your debt in just 20-48 months with no fees until each debt is resolved.

CONTACT US TODAY
for your free savings estimate:

866-333-8686

or email: info@americor.com



What you can expect from Americor:

- ✓ Free, No-Obligation Debt Analysis
- ✓ One Affordable Monthly Payment
- ✓ Absolutely No Up-front Fees
- ✓ Resolve Your Debt in 20-48 Months



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

FEAST DAY CELEBRATION OF

ST. MICHAEL

PATRON SAINT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

**Thursday, September 29, 2022
10 a.m.**

**OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

11691 NW 25TH ST., DORAL, FL 33172

*All denominations welcome.
Officers please dress in uniform.*



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

Thank-You Notes TO THE PBA



"From every mountainside
Let Freedom ring!"

Samuel J. Smith

Dear Steadman, May 2022
Thank you for your generosity
& supporting my kick off efforts!
Thank you as well for your support
of FRSCC! Congrats on an
amazing event @ Trump Hotel!
Great job as always.
Warmly,
Anna Manier

BALLARD | PARTNERS

Dear Steadman,

Thank you again for the hospitality
at your gala. Wow!

It was a great event and I
know it took a lot of work!

Congrats!

Max

JUNE
2022

DEAR STEADMAN & STAFF,

I AM humbled and GRATEFUL THAT
THE P.B.A. CONTINUES TO AWARD THE
LEADERSHIP AWARD IN MY NAME
EACH YEAR AT THE GALA. IT IS
AN HONOR FAR BEYOND MY DESERVING
BUT I SHARE IT WITH THE MEN
AND WOMEN WHO CONTINUE THE FIGHT
TO SERVE, PROTECT AND SACRIFICE IN
TODAY'S SOCIETY.

ENCLOSED PLEASE FIND A DONATION TO
ASSIST THE LOVE FUND FOR THEIR
INCREDIBLE WORK AND SUPPORT, AND
TO ASSIST THE GALA EXPENSES.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO WATCH OVER
YOU AND ALL OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT
PERSONNEL AND STAFF.

Respectfully yours and GRATEFUL,

FRED MAAS

(Retired Chief / Sunny Isles Beach.

Thank-You Notes TO THE PBA

GARY P DEMPSEY

Kim:

Please accept this check for the PBA-Love Fund from myself and my wife - USA GREGORISCH DEMPSEY. KATRINA GREGORISCH CONTACTED US REGARDING THE GAEA. WE ARE HAPPY TO DONATE TO THIS GREAT FUND WHICH ASSISTS OFFICER + THEIR FAMILIES IN TIMES OF NEED. PLEASE EXTEND OUR THANKS TO TO DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE AND PROTECT US DAILY. BEST WISHES FOR A SUCCESSFUL GOVT.

REGARDS

GARY DEMPSEY

STATE SENATOR
LAUREN BOOK

Steadman -

Thank you for the constant love and support always!! Please know it means the world to me and I promise I won't let you down! ♥ LB -

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT PHOTO FOR INFO APPROVED BY LAUREN BOOK, DEMOCRAT FOR STATE SENATE, DISTRICT 25.



PAY ONLY \$350 PER CREDIT HOUR



Finish Your Bachelor's Degree in One Year Or Less*

Transfer up to 90 credits - FREE transcript review

ENROLL TODAY!

It's FREE to apply.

Test scores are NOT required.

100% online classes start every 8 weeks.

- Criminal Justice Management or Emergency Services Management degree programs available.
- With eight-week sessions, it's possible for many to graduate in **just eight months!**
- **100% online classes** - earn your degree anywhere, anytime. Attend part or full-time.
- Regionally accredited by The Higher Learning Commission.

- FREE college transcript assessment. Get credit for past training - earn up to 60 nonregional credits.
- Created and taught by experts in the field.
- Financial Aid/FAFSA/military benefits available.

Already have your bachelor's degree? Ask about our M.S. or MBA concentrations - classes are 100% online, no residency, GRE/GMAT are not required.

*With 90 credits transferred in.



Enroll now to start towards your degree.
myunion.edu • admissions@myunion.edu
800.861.6400



1800 624-3767

Are You Ready to Retire?

1800 624-3767

**Are you a Public Safety Officer
(law enforcement officer, firefighter,
chaplain, or member of a rescue
squad or ambulance crew)?**



**As a Public Safety Officer you can elect to exclude
up to \$3,000 annually from income distributions
made from your Deferred Compensation Plan that
are used to pay the premiums for accident or
health insurance or long-term care insurance.***

**Certain conditions must be met to qualify for exclusion
from your taxable distributions.**

Want More Information...

Call 800 624-3767

E-mail: CS@mydfsfl.com

DATABASE FINANCIAL

999 VANDERBILT BEACH RD, SUITE 200
NAPLES, FL 34108

**Use your Phone to
make Request =>**



Database Financial is not affiliated with any State, City, County or Private Retirement Plan and the information provided is not approved by or endorsed by any State, City, County or Private Retirement Plan. *Reference IRA Pub 575