

SOUTH FLORIDA



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# THEAT

**THE VOICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022



**Detective Cesar Echaverry**

Miami-Dade Police Department

End of Watch: Aug. 17, 2022







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## COVER STORY



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## For Echy

Miami-Dade Detective Cesar "Echy" Echaverry will live on in so many ways. His many friends and colleagues on the job will be inspired to carry on the way he dedicated himself to pursuing the bad guys and protecting members of the community. As we offer tribute to Echy, we celebrate him as the consummate professional, the type of officer who is the future of law enforcement in South Florida. We recognize his ability to live every day of life to the fullest, filled with immense love for his family and his beloved Stephanie. And we share the celebration of his life that took place with an inspiring memorial service at loanDepot Park.

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**All in the Family**



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## Election season is here, so help us make another political statement



STEADMAN STAHL

Political season is here, and it's making life very interesting for law enforcement officers in South Florida. I'm putting out a BOLO now for a mailing we will send to all PBA members with our endorsements for the general election on Nov. 8.

We're still screening candidates in some of the municipal races. But it's going to be a big list because we have endorsements for the governor and the entire administration, as well as for all congressional races and U.S. Senator.

Voting for our endorsed candidates is more important than ever. Like it or not, everything in life comes down to politics.

We have many reasons to be politically positive. We did very well in the August primaries. We take great pride in winning the vast majority of races in which we endorsed candidates. In fact, we won a lot of key races and the support for public safety we're seeing is unprecedented. A couple mayors in some of the cities that we represent put out questionnaires about what are the top things that they want to stay focused on. And public safety was No. 1 on all of them.

The cost of housing is up there, but public safety is still a front-and-center issue. It's where it all starts. You can have as nice a house as you want. You can have the nicest car if you want. But if you don't have public safety out there keeping you safe, the bad guys will find their way over your fences, and they'll find their way into your cars.

I think government now realizes they overreached with the defunding initiatives. We saw what it looked like without police in Seattle, Chicago and New York, where they've handcuffed the cops to keep them from doing their jobs. And what happened? Total chaos.

So I go back to how politics affects everything that goes on in our life. Everything from the clothes we wear to the price of gas and food is all dictated by government. And that's why the PBA has always taken a strong, strong position to be involved from start to finish. I don't care if it's a local city race, county race, state race or federal race. Elections have consequences. And if you don't stay involved and you don't stay engaged, the truck will run right over you.

We pick what we believe to be the best candidates, and we stay in with them. Like right here in Miami-Dade County with our mayor. She's proven herself to be a strong supporter of public safety, increasing the number of officers, the equipment, the funding.

Our endorsement has become one of the most sought-after. I can tell you, in this state, in this county, they're constantly reaching out. And you're finding that the ones that don't get the endorsement have to spend twice as much money to try to win their elections.

The governor has been a great example of seeking our endorsement. On Sept. 19, he came to meet us at the Palm Beach County PBA Hall, where Dave Kerner, the Democratic mayor of Palm Beach County, endorsed Governor DeSantis. Hats off to John Kazanjian, our Florida PBA president, who is from Palm Beach County. He hosted this event, and the attendance was standing room only with police officers and firefighters.

The governor again pledged his strong commitment to public safety. And you can see how we feel by the photo on the next page, where we're holding the sign that says we have the governor's back.

A lot of times, politicians will say things, and then when they get into office, they don't follow through. This guy has said it from day one. He is walking the walk and talking the talk.

We had no doubt that the governor and his entire cabinet would show up for Cesar Echaverry's memorial service, joining our mayor and all our county commissioners. They were able to see how Echy embodied what police officers are and what they do.

We also have to thank the Marlins for allowing us to use loanDepot Park to have his memorial service. They stepped right up to the plate. I can't think of a greater respect for his family, fiancée and the officers that worked with him. We can't thank the Marlins enough for hosting it. The Marlins knew Echy's love for baseball, and they didn't hesitate when we reached out to them.

The turnout was overwhelming. Officers came from all over the state. Many came from outside the state. I also think some bobbies from London were there.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



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At a press conference at the Palm Beach County PBA, when the Palm Beach County mayor announced his endorsement of Governor Ron DeSantis, we were able to thank the governor for having our backs and show him we have his.

#### STAHL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Echy was a smart, well-liked young man who probably could have picked any profession to go into. He chose to be a police officer. And he went into a unit that goes after the worst of the worst. He confronted evil and went after evil. He put the community first. He put himself in front of other officers' safety to make sure that this bad guy wasn't going to harm other people. He is what you look for in a police officer. He was the real deal.

We can never forget what he did for this community. And that every day when we go to work, never take any day for granted. Before you leave the house, kiss your loved ones. Don't forget what he did. Be careful out there, stay safe and always look out for one another.

That's what we signed up to do. That's what Echy signed up to do, and his memory will not be forgotten.

On a final note, I want to recognize a couple of towns where we have finalized contracts and reached some very rewarding agreements for our members. On Sept. 23, we signed a contract in Sunny Isles Beach. Two days earlier, we finalized a great agreement in Pinecrest.

Pinecrest is a great example of how the PBA's persistence and political presence have paid off. We couldn't make any headway there. The city manager just would not step up. And we took it to an impasse hearing, where we no longer had to deal with the city manager. After both sides presented their cases, it was left up to the city council to decide whether they were going to stand with public safety or not support us. And it was a five-to-nothing vote supporting the police. It was refreshing to see another local government stepping forward and agreeing that the officers deserve what they're asking for.

Sunny Isles also wanted to make sure that their officers are at the top when it comes to compensation, benefits and working conditions. They wanted to make sure that they're one of the top-paid departments in this county. Again, that's refreshing to see local governments putting their money where their mouth is, making sure that the citizens come first and making sure that public safety is front and center of every budget.

We may not get that in every single city. But we are not taking our foot off the gas pedal here at the PBA when it comes to fighting for benefits for our members. We'll dig in. We'll do whatever it's going to take to make sure that they are properly compensated for the jobs that they do.

That brings us back to Echy. We had this horrific shooting, a fatal shooting. And the night before the service, we had two officers who were viciously attacked with knives. How we didn't



On Sept. 23, we signed a new collective bargaining agreement with the city of Sunny Isles Beach that confirmed how the city has made it a priority to give our members some of the best benefits and working conditions in the county.

lose two more that night, I have no idea.

They were stabbed multiple times. But their training kicked in, they fought back, and they took the perps into custody. One officer was hospitalized for about a week. And the other officer sustained serious injuries but was released that night.

It goes back to the heart of the job. You never know. And you go back to how Echy went to work, went out looking for evil, found it, confronted it, and, unfortunately, it took his life. There is no community out there that's not being touched by this. None.

So that's why we think it's more important than ever that we've established a good working relationship with our elected officials. We've made sure that they know the dangers that our members are facing every day. And we make sure that, again, we don't take our foot off the gas pedal when it comes to defending them, when it comes to supporting them and when it comes to making sure that they go home at the end of their shift.

**Steadman Stahl, President**  
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# Officer down



DAVID GREENWELL  
EXECUTIVE  
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“Officer down” is something that makes our hearts pound in a way we never wish to experience. During my 40 years as a cop, I’ve heard it too many times and will never get used to it, or the funeral services that follow.

On Aug 23, 2022, MDPD RID Detective Cesar “Echy” Echaverry’s funeral was held at LoanDepot Park (the Miami Marlins ballpark). Detective Echaverry was shot and killed on duty after chasing an armed robbery suspect. And on Aug. 29, 2022, FDLE Special Agent Jose Perez’s funeral was held at St. Kevin Catholic Church. Agent Perez died from an on-duty traffic crash. He also served in the U.S. military and with the City of Miami Police Department. These are just two of many who gave their lives for their community. We should always remember them, as well as the many others who passed before them.

This year, with the help of some volunteers, we once again set up the PBA Fallen Officer Tribute on the first floor of the Government Center. In 2010, the Miami-Dade County Commission passed a resolution declaring the month of September “Fallen Officer Tribute Month” in Miami-Dade County to honor officers who died in service to this community. The tribute has been built and displayed throughout the month of September every year.

The South Florida PBA commissioned the Fallen Officer Tribute to serve as a visual reminder to our community of the sacrifices made by law enforcement officers, who gave their lives so that we could live in peace. Each mannequin is wearing a shirt inscribed with a fallen officer’s name and date of death. Our Fallen Officer Tribute represents all police departments from across the county. The names of their departments were left off symbolically to represent unity. It doesn’t matter what agency an officer works for, because they all share the same calling.

It takes a special person to walk down a dark alley uncertain as to what awaits them at the end, or to advance in a gunfight when common sense and self-pres-



ervation tell you to do otherwise. It is our officers, these special people, who are the ones running into danger when everyone else is running out, trying to escape it.

These brave men and women were husbands, wives, parents, sons, daughters, coaches, volunteers, relatives, friends and neighbors. Representing every race and every gender, they entered law enforcement because they wanted to give back. They wanted to serve their community and make it a better, safer place for us all. It was their duty to serve; it is our duty to remember.

Just to look at the current numbers for 2022: Officers killed by gunfire is up this year to 46, auto crashes killed 38 of our fellow law enforcement officers, and COVID continues to be the leading cause of death, with 76 deaths so far. So while you are out in the streets protecting the community, please make sure that you are continuing to do what you can to protect yourself from all threats, including COVID.

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





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# Your legacy



NIZAM "ISH"  
ISHMAEL  
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As I sat among my brothers and sisters in law enforcement at the memorial service for Detective Cesar "Echy" Echaverry, I could not help but wonder: If this happens again, how many of us have completed our estate planning? That's your ability to dictate what happens to your accumulation of money and belongings (your "estate") after you die. If you are an active-duty first responder, this issue has heightened importance. If your job entails elevated risk, there is an elevated need to have your affairs in order.

It is common to dread the subject of estate planning, as it involves facing our own mortality. As a result, most people postpone or ignore it altogether. However, you can gain great satisfaction by getting your affairs in order, especially when it means you have taken care of the people who mean the most to you. If you do not make the decisions, then the State of Florida will, and it may not be what you intended. You can accomplish estate planning through legal documents such as wills, trusts and beneficiary designations.

## Wills

A will is the document that most of us think about when it comes to distributing assets at death. It is a set of instructions that is provided to a court when you pass, explaining what you would like to happen to your things after you are gone. If you die "intestate" (without a will), the court will decide what happens to your assets, using Florida Statutes Chapter 732 (Probate Code) Intestate Succession and Wills. If there is no will, assets are distributed according to specific intestate rules in Chapter 732:

- The surviving spouse receives the entire estate if there are no living descendants.
- If there is a surviving spouse and surviving descendants, and all the decedent's children are related to the surviving spouse (and the surviving spouse has no children from anyone other than the decedent), then the surviving spouse will receive the entire probate estate.
- If there is a surviving spouse and surviving descendants, and either the decedent or the surviving spouse has children with anyone from outside the current marriage, then the surviving spouse is entitled to 50 percent of the probate assets, and all the decedent's children will split the remaining 50 percent.
- If the decedent was not married and left descendants, the probate estate will be divided at the generational level of the decedent's children. If a child died before the decedent, their share of the estate will be distributed to the descendants of the deceased child.
- If the decedent was not married with no surviving descendants, the estate will pass to surviving parents followed by siblings.

As you can see, the rules seem somewhat arbitrary. Do not settle for arbitrary. At the very least, call the PBA and let us prepare a will for you and your significant other for free. This is covered by your dues.



## Trusts

A trust is another legal structure that can be helpful in estate planning. There are two primary categories of trusts: revocable and irrevocable. Each intended to achieve different goals. A revocable trust (the name indicates that you can change it at any time) is a replacement for a will. Like a beneficiary designation, a revocable trust ranks your assets to beneficiaries immediately upon your death. When you die, the trust essentially ceases to exist, and your assets immediately belong to your heirs. The portion of your estate covered by the trust does not need to go through the probate (court) system. The cost and complexity of the probate system varies from state to state, but no matter where you are, avoiding it can be a pleasant thing for your heirs. Also, anything that goes through probate court becomes part of the public record. So if you value your privacy and would not want anyone to have access to your personal business after your death, using a trust is preferable.

With an irrevocable trust, you permanently give away assets. They cease to belong to you, and instead belong to a vehicle you have created that is set up to carry out your wishes. While a revocable trust ends with your death (or the death of you and your spouse/significant other) and the resulting distribution of assets, an irrevocable trust can live on indefinitely.

There are several possible upsides of this sort of trust. First, the potential tax benefits. When assets are placed into an irrevocable trust, they cease to be part of your estate, which can have tax benefits if you have enough money to be subject to estate taxes. Second is the longevity of care of your family/heirs. If you die or otherwise become unable to manage your affairs, a trust can carry out your wishes long after you are gone, including looking after your family. If you have minor children, an irrevocable trust can provide structured financial support until they reach adulthood. For older children, you can base their inheritances on the achievement of goals, such as college graduation or reaching a certain age. Thirdly, you can avoid un-



intended lousy consequences — for example, imagine you pass away and your spouse remarries. Absent a trust, if your spouse then passes away, whoever they married could end up with all of your assets, while your children get nothing or very little. The same kinds of issues can arise if you get divorced. Lastly, it can provide you and your family with legal protections. Let's say you (or one of your family members, after you pass) is involved in an accident or someone slips and falls on the sidewalk in front of your house. You can be sued for everything you own, but it would be much harder for someone to successfully sue for money in an irrevocable trust (because those assets technically no longer belong to you).

### Beneficiary designations

A will is not the only way to dictate where your assets go upon death. Some investments and retirement accounts allow for beneficiary designations that say who will inherit the money. A beneficiary designation allows your heirs to bypass the will/probate process. When you pass away, those accounts immediately belong to the loved one of your choice. In the case of a spouse, they can roll the proceeds of your IRA directly into their own retirement account (with no tax consequences). If you fail to designate a beneficiary for an IRA, it becomes part of your estate when you pass away, and the distribution of the proceeds will be dictated by your will.

### Communication

There are two common repercussions when a spouse or

other family member passes away. The first, of course, is grief. The second is chaos. The chaos can be largely avoided with a bit of planning. Much of the confusion and difficulty that ensues upon the passing of a loved one can be avoided through communication. Do you want to be buried or cremated? Do you know what kind of service you would like, and where it should be held? Did you communicate these things to those who are closest to you? You should also let them know where your will and other documents can be found.

In short, do not leave your loved ones with a mess to sort out in their time of grief. They are going to be dealing with a lot as it is. You should avoid saddling them with confusion and easily avoided stress on top of it all. Again, I realized this is not an easy subject. It's not something that you, or for that matter your spouse/significant other and kids are going to enjoy discussing. But a little discussion in advance goes a very long way toward making things easier for them when the time comes. Many families are torn to shreds by battles that ensue because of disagreements over what should happen after someone passes. Please feel free to contact me at [ish@sflpba.org](mailto:ish@sflpba.org) or at 305-593-0044.

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# Mental health in times of change



JERMAINE  
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Throughout 2021 and for most of 2022, all our members have had to adapt to monumental changes, working for long hours. Mental health problems in the workplace are prevalent in many countries. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated that 20 percent of working-age adults have mental health problems.

The impact on people's personal and professional lives took quite a toll. Even on our best days, stress can prevent us from being fully focused and doing our best work. And too much of it can lead to burnout, disengagement, more sick days and strained relationships in the workplace. According to an article

on the 2022 State of Workforce Mental Health, mental health issues like burnout have contributed to many workers' decisions to leave their jobs. Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognized workplace burnout as a medical condition that could also be considered a mental health issue.

Officers have more stress-related physical complaints and psychological problems than workers in most other professions and are exposed to more acute and chronic life stresses. Making split-second, lifesaving decisions; facing inherent dangers; working shift work and long hours all take a toll on individuals. The mental health of our members has long been overlooked.

According to the latest law enforcement statistics by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), law enforcement officers report much higher rates of burnouts, PTSD, anxiety and depression than

the general populace. In addition, approximately 25 percent of law enforcement officers have experienced suicidal ideation at least once in their lifetime.

As the landscape of law enforcement is ever-changing, so are the men and women who lead, supervise and manage our agencies. Good mental and psychological health are just as essential as good physical health for law enforcement officers to be effective in keeping our country and our communities safe from crime and violence. As an organization, we need to do more to prioritize the needs of our employees by creating a culture that puts mental health first. When employees feel their department is doing all they can to support their whole being, it will encourage self-care and help to reduce burnout. Mental well-being leads to higher job satisfaction.

Mental health concerns are unlike other performance-related issues and must be approached with caution. As such, the department should invest in training supervisors at all levels about signs and symptoms of mental health problems. Learning to empathize, practice active listening, and provide referral and support are not skills our supervisors are trained to do. It is important to provide your subordinates with the freedom to express themselves and speak openly and to gauge whether undue pressure at work is causing the decline in mental health. Being educated, alert and empathetic to staff is what matters most when it comes to mental health.

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



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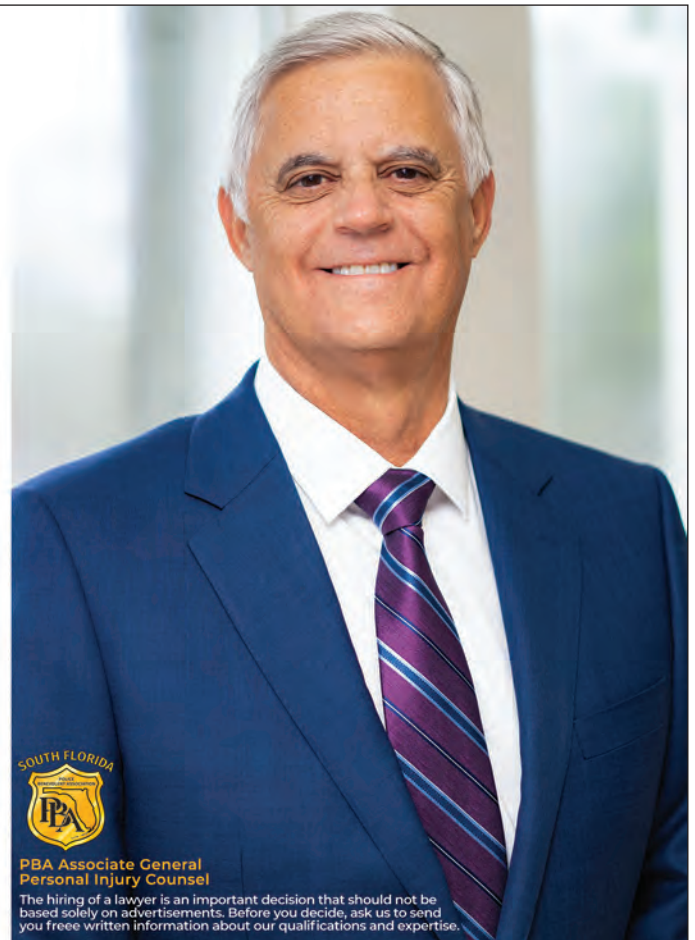
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# Wills vs. living wills: Your voice when you can no longer speak



**GRISKA  
MENA  
STAFF  
COUNSEL**

What is the difference between a will and a living will? They are two documents that memorialize your desires but accomplish two very different tasks. Both of these documents can be prepared and executed with one of the lawyers in our legal department.

A living will is a document expressing your desires while you are living. It is a person's statement to health care providers dictating the type of life-prolonging treatment desired when facing a life-threatening condition that makes them incapable of communicating their doctor. If you're incapacitated, do you want to be kept on life support? These decisions include pain management, surgical matters and life-saving measures. The benefit of having a living will is that your decisions are clear to medical personnel and your family. It will prevent conflict or disagreement between family members and limit the emotional burden on your relatives. It's a way for them to care for you when you cannot make decisions for yourself.

Unlike a living will, a last will and testament does something completely different. It is a document that explains what you want to happen to your estate at the time of your death. In this document, you name your beneficiaries and who you desire to be your personal representative. You give the power to your representative to settle your estate, as you wish. This document will deal with your assets and the items where ownership cannot pass to another person without a probate process. This is the document where you set out who you want to care for your children until they become adults. It can also name the person in charge of managing assets that you leave for your children, because while minors can own property, they cannot administer those properties.

A last will and testament and living will must meet certain legal requirements so that they will be valid. Both documents must be in writing and executed by a competent person. The testator must be at least 18 years of age and of sound mind at the time the documents are signed. The will must be signed by the testator/principal before two witnesses and a notary. After the documents are completed by one of our lawyers, the legal department will also provide both witnesses and the notary.

We live our lives planning for the future and making plans regarding how we want to live our lives and what we want to do. We rarely think, "What if something unforeseen happens that prevents us from carrying out those plans?" It is best to be ready for any scenario. A living will is just one way to plan for your voice to be heard if you cannot speak for yourself. A last will and testament speaks for you and sets out your desires once you are no longer with your loved ones.

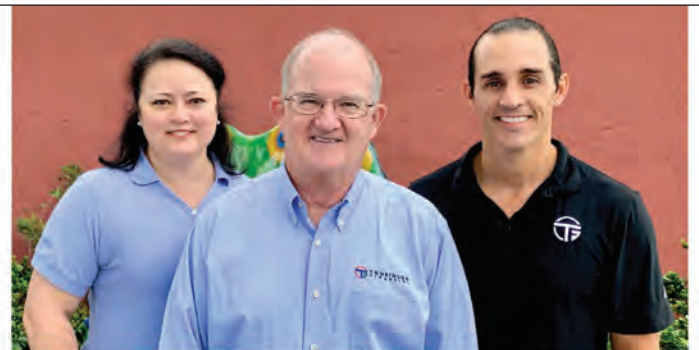
The one thing both of these documents have in common is that in a time of crisis or your unexpected death, your family will know exactly what your wishes are. At the South Florida PBA, we want to ensure that in the event of an unexpected tragedy, we can assist our member's families by ensuring that their wishes are respected.

## 2022 Pending Grievances

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of Aug. 31, 2022. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

### DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

AVENTURA PD	2
BAL HARBOR PD	1
DORAL PD	1
HOMESTEAD - CORRECTIONS	1
HOMESTEAD PD	1
KEY WEST PD	1
MIAMI, CITY OF PD	1
MIAMI-DADE CORRECTIONS	
ASSOCIATION	1
TGK (MHTC)	1
TOTAL	2
MIAMI-DADE POLICE	5
MIAMI GARDENS	5
MCSO (DEP SHERIFF)	1
NORTH MIAMI	1
OPA LOCKA	3
SWEETWATER	3
<b>TOTAL GRIEVANCES</b>	<b>28</b>



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# An outpouring of community support



SERGEANT  
KENNETH  
HORGAN  
POAT  
ASSISTANCE  
COMMITTEE  
CHAIR

There are never enough words to describe the sense of loss when a law enforcement family loses one of their own. The Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD), the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the City of Miami, along with our law enforcement community, all experienced that loss this past month.

On Aug. 15, 2022, good and evil converged on a street in our community. The MDPD Robbery Intervention Detail (RID) observed a vehicle involved in an earlier armed robbery. The driver fled when officers attempted to stop the vehicle, until it crashed. The driver exited and fled on foot as RID Detective Cesar "Echy" Echaverry, along with other officers, pursued him on foot. The subject opened fire, striking Detective Echaverry. Detective Echaverry succumbed to his gunshot wound after a brief battle

for his life. End of Watch: Aug. 17, 2022.

FDLE Special Agent and retired City of Miami Assistant Chief Jose Perez passed away 17 days after he was hit by another driver (who was driving under the influence) in a vehicle crash while responding to a building alarm. Special Agent Perez spent his life serving others, from the U.S. armed forces to more than 30 years in law enforcement. End of Watch: Aug. 20, 2022.

We are humbled by the outpouring of support from the entire community, which was tremendous. Everyone came together in support of the families and helped in any way they could. These

heroes were honored and were laid to rest. Remember them in your prayers.

In the late 1980s, a rash of killings of officers in the line of duty occurred in the Miami-Dade County community. The families of those officers received the same support from the community, but the families found that months later, the support was no longer there. Some amazing people came together to find a way to make sure that the families and the officer were never forgotten. The Police Officer Assistance Trust was created in 1989 and has supported law enforcement officers and their families ever since.

On the backs of officers who make payroll deductions to POAT, numerous fundraisers, and donations from the community, the foundation is set. The current generation of officers has the funding they need. Funding to support officers in times of crisis and support their families so they know "we will never forget." So the question is: Will you, the current generation, do the same? Will you support the POAT, so that the next generation will have the same support that you and your families have?

There is one potential upcoming event. Pre-pandemic, the POAT had tables at some of the local malls in support of Holiday Gifts for Surviving Children. We had presence in the Falls, Dadeland, International and Aventura malls. Depending on the response from the malls, we will attempt to bring this event back. If all goes well, we will need volunteers to staff these tables. We will keep you posted on the progress.

Thanks for your support, and stay safe.



Please join us for the Annual  
Police Officer Assistance Trust  
Cops Ride For Kids  
December 3, 2022  
to Gilbert's Resort  
Registration begins  
at 8 am  
Kick Stands Up at 10 am

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# Staying the course and growing the RPOC



JOHN FRALEY  
RPOC  
PRESIDENT

Going into the later months of 2022 we can look forward, because the pandemic is slowly drifting away. I want to stay positive, stay the course and grow the RPOC. In that regard, we are seeing greater interest from new retirees who recently left the law enforcement profession.

Your board of directors is striving to present the membership with events that promote fellowship, camaraderie and awareness. We know that new retirees will have new and useful ideas. We want the newly retired officers to be an integral part of the continued growth of the RPOC. We welcome all who are honorably retired from the law enforcement profession. At the present time, most of our

members are from MDPD, but we are open to those from all departments. I want all of us to work together to grow and preserve the RPOC.

The Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund will resume in January 2023. I urge members of our group to review the documents on our web page and start the application process. We have had great success with the program and have awarded numerous grants to deserving students seeking to continue their education in various fields of study.

We are trying set up monthly lunches at the Miami Springs Country Club. I'm hoping to have the Christmas lunch there in December. Additional information will be sent via email to retirees in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Monroe Counties.

There is a Thin Blue Cruise in the works for early February 2023 on MSC Cruise Lines. It's a seven-night cruise to the eastern Caribbean. Prices are reasonable and include the drink package. It is open to our RPOC, the IPA and Palm Beach SO. It's much like the pre-pandemic cruise that Jerry Rudoff put together several years ago. Retired MDPD officer John Robert from the South District is working on this project. Expect to see an email flyer with additional info soon.

In closing, remember to be stay safe and keep your colleagues in your thoughts and prayers. Getting older is not for the faint of heart. Take care of yourselves, your families and those close to you. God bless America.

Here are reports from some of our officers:

**Treasurer Ed Spisak:** It's been a good year for RPOC, with 60 new and 16 reinstated members. We thank Steadman Stahl, Dave Greenwell, Margarita Vasquez and the PBA for their support in helping to increase our membership. We urge you to tell your retired LEO friends and acquaintances who have not yet joined about us and what we do.

**Chaplain Reba Miller:** "Always remember: You are braver than you believe...stronger than you think ... and loved more than you know."

Our hearts are saddened by the loss of a true warrior and great leader, Commander Robert W. "Mac" McCarthy, who passed away in July 2022. We send heartfelt condolences to his wife, Katherine, and his wonderful family.



Danielle Cooner, the daughter of MDPD retirees Jim (right) and Allison Bishop Cooner, was presented with a \$1,000 scholarship from the Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund by John Fraley, RPOC President.



Kayleigh D. Linsinbigler, granddaughter of MDPD retiree Teresa Gonzalez, (right) was presented with a \$1,000 scholarship from the Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund by John Fraley.

We are also extending special words of encouragement to the following friends and family members who are recovering from health issues: John McCay, Rich Bragassa, Gary Gable, Stan Cochran, Tim Pieper, Jerry Rudoff and Ron Sorensen. All these members could use a lift-up or a shout-out from their LEO extended family. Contact information can be forwarded to you. I can be reached at 954-448-0939.

We appreciate all the friends and members who work hard to bring our friends, family, and retirees together throughout the state and other states far and wide. Thank you for your planning and organizing and continuing to support and inspire all with good food, memories, excellent storytelling and wonderful camaraderie—the spirit of good fellowship. Blessings to all.

*"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."* — Booker T. Washington.



# 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.



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Miami-Dade Police Department



**Carlos Labrada**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Chris Hodges**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Deborah Gross**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**George Pacheco**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Glenn Sellan**  
Miami Gardens  
Police Department



**Guillermo Cuba**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Ivette Perez**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Kimberly Conley**  
Miami-Dade Corrections  
& Rehabilitation



**Congrats to South Florida PBA employee Maritza Landa**  
Thank you for 25 years of great service and dedication



**Miguel Palacios**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Rawn Mc Phee**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Susan Dudley**  
Miami-Dade Police Department



**Tammy Torok**  
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**Terrance Bacon**  
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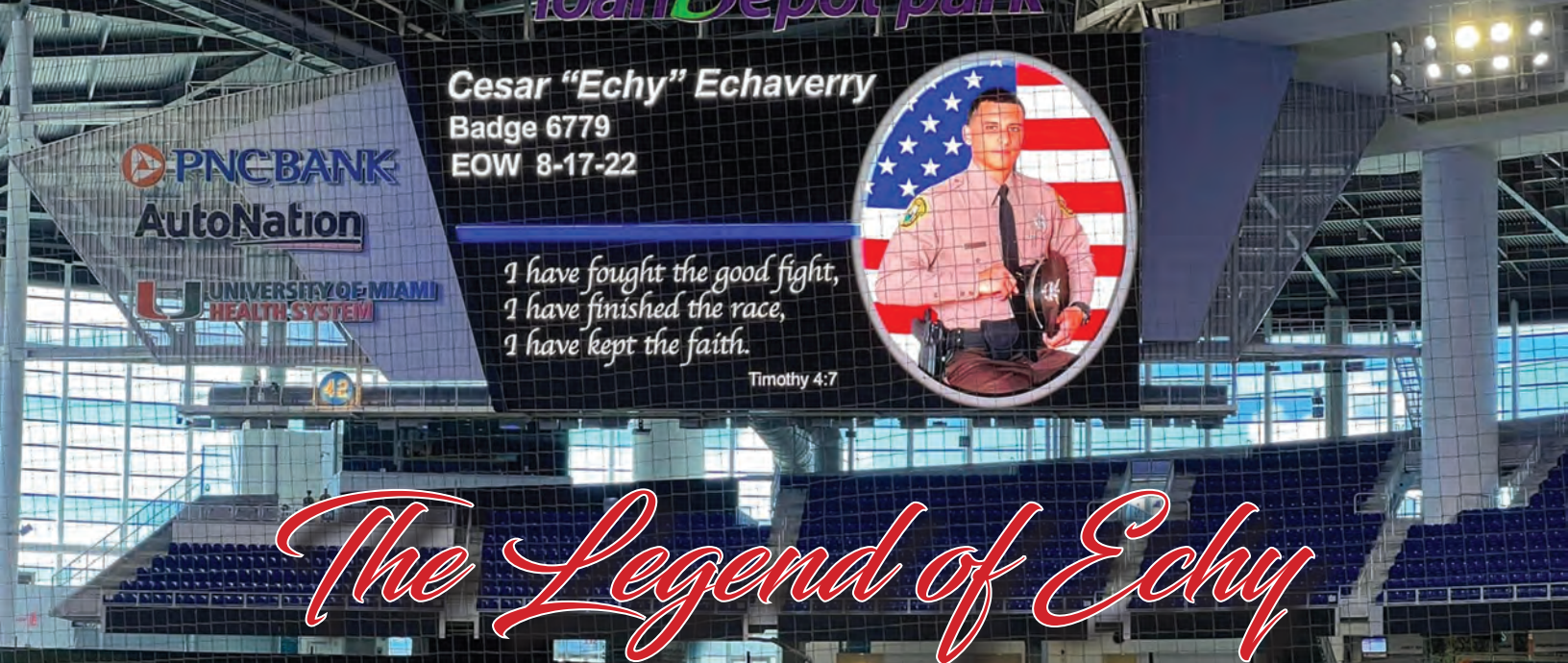


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**The glowing tributes to Detective Cesar Echaverry show how heroes get remembered and legends never die**

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Descriptions of Echy reverberated from the venerable Miami-Dade PD Robbery Intervention Detail (RID), and, before that, the South District Crime Prevention Unit. Sergeant Jonathan Ortiz heard detectives say Echy is a go-getter. Echy knows how to find bad guys. Echy is a badass.

When he finally transferred to RID, Ortiz couldn't wait to meet this detective who had generated almost a legendary presence.

"I'd always hear stories about Echy, so I pictured him being a 6-foot, 215-pound, lean, muscular guy," Ortiz related. "And here's Echy, 5 foot 7, maybe 150 pounds. He just smiled and said, 'Nice to meet you, Sarge.' He was so humble."

Facts, though. Cesar "Echy" Echaverry cast a larger-than-life persona. Whether sniffing out stolen vehicles and illegal firearms on the street, riding dirt bikes or mountain bikes with best bro MDPD Detective Jorge Prince, starting his walk through life with his beloved Stephanie, going to work out with childhood friend and Miami-Dade Firefighter Leo Meneses at 7:30 a.m. after they worked all night, and anytime he was on a baseball or softball diamond, Echy most definitely was a badass.

A quiet badass. Echy didn't engage in the horseplay on the job. His stealthy sense of humor came out only to people who knew him well, those who continue to revere his many virtues since that Aug. 15 night when he went after the bad guy without hesitation and suffered the gunshot to the head that eventually took his life.

But Echy didn't need words. His actions were always louder. He led by example.

"He never had a problem with being asked to do something



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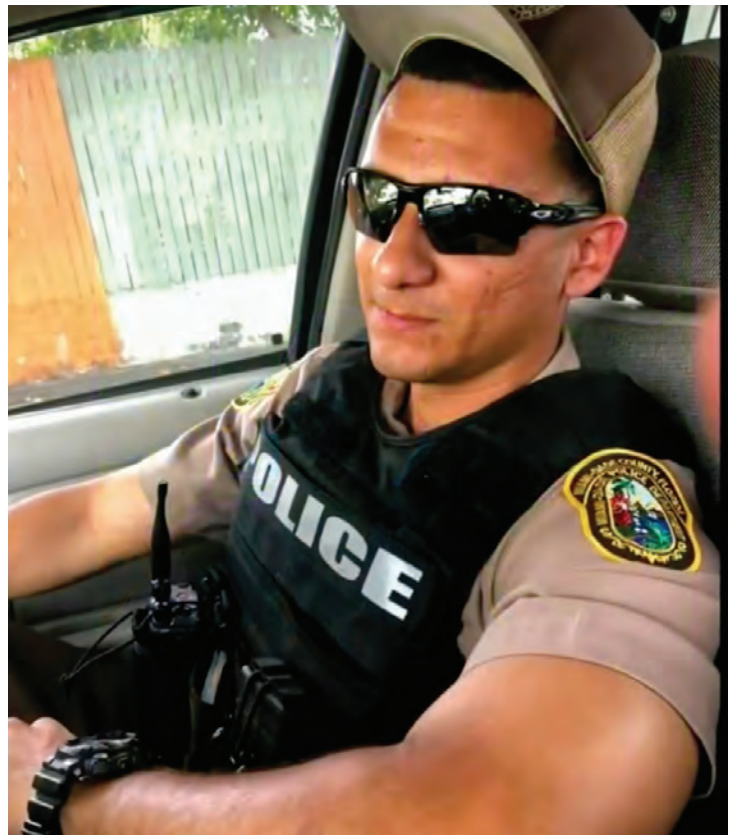
The tribute to Cesar Echaverry at the memorial service included his dirt bike with his riding uniform and his mountain bike.



Another testament to Echy included a Miami Marlins jersey signed by members of the team and his dirt bike jersey, both bearing his favorite number 9.



The car he was in the night of the shooting working the Robbery Intervention Detail was turned into a monument to honor Echy's bravery.



#### THE LEGEND CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

or directed to do something — or most of the time, he was volunteering to do it,” Ortiz continued. “It could be the crappiest detail and he would just say, ‘QRU, Sarge.’ Sometimes at night, I still hear him: ‘QRU, Sarge.’”

Prince, who worked with Echy in the crime prevention unit, extolled how he could make an impact on so many people with so few words. A conversation with Echy rarely, if ever, featured any badass vernacular.

“I never met a 29-year-old dude that says heck, darn and shoot. That was him,” Prince shared. “He had that inner aggression you need to do this job, but he was just a fantastic person that didn’t show that aggression until it needed to be there. And that’s not something everybody can do.”

\* \* \* \* \*

**RID created a monument** out of the car Cesar was in when he responded to spotting a vehicle in Liberty City that was involved in an armed robbery. Multiple bouquets of flowers. Multiple displays of Echy’s badge number, 6779. More than meets the eye, however.

The car will forever be a testament to the way he responded. RID works in crime-ridden neighborhoods. Officers were prepared when they pulled over the vehicle and the driver took off. This is the type of situation Echy policed for.

The gunman, 32-year-old Jeremy Willie Horton, came to Florida from Georgia, where, according to court records, he was facing charges for kidnapping, battery and cruelty to a child. Three days before he shot Echaverry, he reportedly was one of two men involved in an armed robbery in Dania Beach.

Horton was a bad guy. Echy was the right man for this job. “Cesar was prepared to be the first pursuit vehicle,” Ortiz reported. “That way, we wouldn’t lose the suspect in case he bails out. And Cesar was one of the first ones in foot pursuit.”

A short chase ended after Horton crashed his vehicle into a car carrying three civilians, then rammed into a pole. He got out





Echy (far right) hanging out with members of the Miami-Dade PD Robbery Intervention Detail.



Cesar with his sister, Sandra, and his parents at a Marlins game.

of the car and began shooting. Echy was hit in the head. Horton was killed.

“He embodied what police officers are and what they do,” praised South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl. “He was out there doing what he took an oath to do, and that’s protecting his community, protecting the citizens.”

Echy embodied that oath.

\* \* \* \* \*

**As Cesar’s FTO**, John Song anticipated a need to look after his PPO, just like any other PPO. But Cesar was far from being like any other PPO, or any other law enforcement officer for that matter.

Song quickly saw how Echy was always ready to go. That he did everything by the book, he knew the book to a T, and he did everything well from the jump.

Sometimes, it takes rookies several months to develop the BOLO instincts. But Song noticed that Echy was keen on the lookout from the moment he first buckled into the patrol car.

“He picked up very quick – very quick – and that’s why I was able to teach him more of the investigative work and the BOLOs in any specific hot areas we got to look into,” Song described. “He had an eye for a lot of stuff. He already nailed the key points, so it almost felt like I’m not training him. It felt like he’s just another officer who’s been on for so long.”

When he was in the South District gangs unit, Ortiz heard some of the detectives always speaking highly of this guy, Echy. When Ortiz came to RID, he quickly noticed Echy’s dedication. He was always on point.

Cesar had become such a natural in his short time on the job that Ortiz made him the senior detective on their shift and eventually, his backup as acting sergeant. Ortiz recalled how Echy could always be counted on to be on point with the details, like reminding him where they needed to be working on a particular night.

Ortiz knew what made Echy a great cop.



Echy proposed to his beloved Stephanie in January. They always joked that they never left the honeymoon stage.

“When it came to police work, Echy had an eye,” Ortiz explained. “He could be driving, and he sees a suspicious vehicle. He knew either it’s a wanted subject or it’s stolen. And when I tell you he was respectful, it’s like an understatement. I think all around he was a great cop.”

\* \* \* \* \*

**Meneses became friends** with Cesar when they started at John A. Ferguson Senior High School in West Kendall. They bonded over their passion for riding dirt bikes and eventually mountain bikes, and they seemed to be cut from the same pod.

Cesar was a year older, and when Meneses followed him to Florida International University, he wound up in his first class with Echy. A computer class.

“He let me copy off of him in that class,” Meneses quipped.

That was about as close to committing a transgression as Ce-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22





Echy was known for his passion for riding dirt bikes and mountain bikes.

#### THE LEGEND CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

sar ever came. As they got older, Meneses noticed how Cesar was not much for hanging out with the partying crowd. That became Echy's calling card, the foundation of how everybody knew him.

"He was family-driven, churchgoing, straight as can be," Meneses related. "He was such a good dude. He was never power-hungry. It was just, you did something wrong and he's a police officer. You got to enforce what you got to enforce."

That was Echy's propensity to be humble. His quiet demeanor could easily be mistaken for shyness. But that was his humility, his respect, his composure. And Cesar had an uncanny instinct to channel that composure.

"He was able to keep himself composed through the most stressful situations," Ortiz observed. "He could be in front of the most vile, disrespectful person and when the time came, he would say, 'OK, you've had your say, now this is what's going to happen.' He could flip the switch from this humble guy to this all-about-business guy."

Now, there are plenty of officers in RID who saw the freakin' warrior in Echy, fueled by the heart of a lion. But there was a reason for this.

"I think it was the true meaning of catching really bad guys, helping victims and actually making a difference in police work," Prince reflected.

\* \* \* \* \*

**The memorial service** for Echy on Aug. 25 at loanDepot Park honored all his uniforms. Man, he could look so elegant, so handsome, so much like a recruiting poster wearing the Class A MDPD browns.

A display on the podium included a Miami Marlins jersey signed by all members of the team. Manager Don Mattingly's autograph is right there at the top above "ECHAVERRY" on the back. How much would Echy have loved seeing "Donnie Baseball" on that jersey, the ultimate testament to his immense love for baseball?

Next to that, also bearing his lucky number 9, was the jersey from his dirt biking wardrobe. His boots, helmet and gloves

were folded on his CRF 450 dirt bike, accentuating another testament to the loves of Cesar's life.

A month after the tragedy, Meneses disclosed that he was sorting through Instagram messages and realized everything he had from Echy featured videos of guys doing crazy stuff on dirt bikes. They started riding together at 15 years old, and Cesar wanted to push further and faster every chance he had to ride.

His passion for bikes was contagious. He even convinced Prince to take up riding both dirt bikes and mountain bikes at 30 years old. The only feeling better than catching the bad guy for Echy probably came when he was on a bike, where he was even more badass.

"Man, if you ride two wheels, it's something that..." Meneses professed. "It's liberating. All our conversations had something to do with bikes."

Every morning, Meneses would meet Echy at a restaurant near their home called Pasapoga. They didn't need to order. The servers would just bring them Cuban coffee and the traditional breakfast. And from there they would head to the gym for strength training.

Didn't matter how late they worked or how much sleep they got. If they were a little tired or felt a little lazy, they would forsake the gym to run a couple of miles.

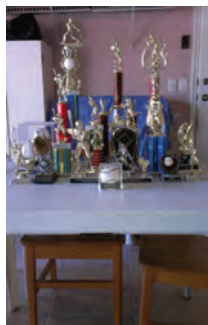
Echy's other great escape from the job was the ballfield. He played varsity baseball in high school, and after college, he went to his parents' native Nicaragua, where he did a stint playing pro baseball. He played on more than a few softball teams for MDPD, and a consummate night out was going to a Marlins game with his family.

"If we want to a restaurant for lunch or dinner and there was a game on, his eyes were hooked on it," Ortiz confirmed.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Of course, Echy's greatest passion** in life was his fiancée, Stephanie Vargas. Meneses revealed that Echy once told him he knew she was the one when he first met her. They first met in seventh grade.

During her remarks at the funeral, Stephanie told how Cesar would pass by her house in the middle of the night. He would







Officers line the tarmac at the airport where Cesar was transported before being flown to Nicaragua to be buried.

take a quick break from work to write love notes on Post-its or notebook paper and leave them on her car door or window.

He brought her to Fairchild Gardens in January and proposed in what Stephanie called “the most romantic way possible.” In vintage Echy fashion, he didn’t need many words. Just got down on one knee.

Prince and his wife used to hang with Echy and Stephanie from time to time. He could feel their everlasting love.

“They always joked and said they never left the honeymoon stage,” Prince gushed. “They never really did. They were madly in love.”

\* \* \* \* \*

**Echy’s sendoff reverberated** with the indelible images and memorable moments befitting a hero and legend of this magnitude. The procession seemed to stretch all the way from the funeral home to the park, and officers lined the entire path, saluting as Echy went by.

Governor Ron DeSantis, Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Núñez, Attorney General Ashley Moody, Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis and U.S. Senator Marco Rubio led a delegation of the state’s highest elected officials. They were there to honor Echy and show their support for law enforcement. As were Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and Jose “Pepe” Diaz, chair of the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners, who added eloquent words of tribute that reminded just how much Echy will continue to inspire his friends, family, fellow officers and community.

With officers coming from all over the world to fill the stands, almost like a World Series game, the memorial service provided an opportunity for grieving, healing and remembering. Imagine how it felt when the service reached its peak:

Officers combined for perhaps the biggest present arms in the history of Florida law enforcement. As that salute was being held, the end-of-watch transmission broadcast across Miami-Dade County came over the PA.

“Echy, we’ll take it from here, brother.”

The park went silent.

And then began another procession to escort Echy from the park to the airport, where a private plane was set to transport him to Nicaragua for burial. Another detail of officers lining the streets and the tarmac, another fleet of flyovers and another present arms created one more emotional rescue for the masses of people Echy touched in a too-short but unforgettable career.

“It was a little rough to keep ourselves composed, but it provided some closure to be able to honor him,” Ortiz confirmed. “We have absorbed his humbleness and his pride and dedication to the job. And now we will put it back out there on the streets.”

It’s a good bet that every Miami-Dade officer will do so, and thus, the legend of Echy will live on.



**Ignacio Alvarez**

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



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## MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT 2023 COMMEMORATIVE YEARBOOK

*Available to all Members — Sworn & Civilian, Active & Retired*

PRINTED IN  
FULL-COLOR!

The South Florida PBA is proud to announce that we are developing an all new 2023 Commemorative Yearbook to celebrate the men and women of the Miami-Dade Police Department, past and present. This hardbound commemorative "coffee-table" book will include hundreds of photographs and memories that fully illustrates what it means to be a member of the MDPD family.

Many of you participated in our last yearbook that was produced in 2015-16. Since then, many of our members have retired with hundreds of new faces brought on board, and with so many changes having occurred over the last decade, we decided the time was right for a new yearbook.

What better way to capture MDPD's proud past and promising future than through a collection of pictures and information that, combined, tell the story of this great agency and of the people who made it what it is today? The publisher and the yearbook committee are committed to making our album a comprehensive and professional publication of which all our members, sworn and civilian, active and retired, will be proud to own.

This 9x12-inch, hardbound book will be printed in full-color and contain hundreds of historic and modern photos of civilian and uniformed personnel. It will also include professional portraits of department members, as well as candid and action photos.

### We Need Your Help

This is your yearbook! Our goal is to commemorate the many accomplishments and services that you provide to our organization and community. To make it as comprehensive as possible, we are asking you to contribute by sending in stories for consideration.

You can also submit photos from your time with the department – action shots and group photos will be reviewed. Send any stories and photos for consideration to [mdpd23book@acclaimpress.com](mailto:mdpd23book@acclaimpress.com). Watch for additional information on when individual portrait photographs will be scheduled.

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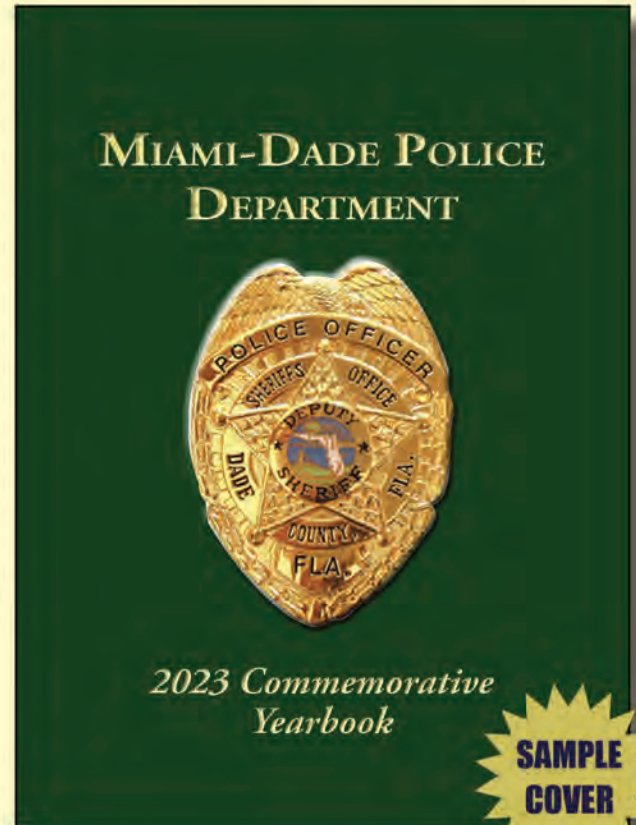
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### Sponsored by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

Our commemorative yearbook is being coordinated by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association, Inc., and a portion of proceeds will benefit the PBA's Love Fund to assist our members at times of great need.



Please be a part of this historic project and order your copies today!



*Pictured is the proposed cover for the Miami-Dade Police 2023 Commemorative Yearbook. Note: the actual cover has not been finalized and will feature the MDPD badge(s) stamped in gold or silver foil.*

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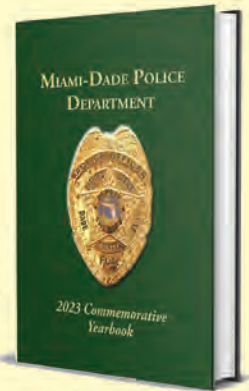


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NOTE: This full-color, hardbound 9x12-inch commemorative book will be a limited edition publication and you must order in advance to be assured of receiving a copy. **RESERVE YOUR COPIES TODAY!**



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**The hard work has paid off**  
**PBA college scholarship recipients realize the rewards of all they have done, and all their parents have done on the job**

South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl presents 2022 scholarship awards to, from left, Arthur Codrington, Camrawn McPhee and Jadelyn Pacheco.

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

As three PBA members and their children, the 2022 PBA college scholarship recipients, walked into the South Florida PBA Hall on June 1, they were welcomed by President Steadman Stahl. They all took seats around a table for a celebratory luncheon. Then Stahl presented the awards that would help these college students embark on their future careers of serving, of giving back, of helping others as their parents have inspired them to do.

PBA member Catherine McPhee described it as an intimate gathering and one of the first times she was able to show her son, Camrawn, this side of law enforcement. The side where the PBA so graciously gives back.

As members watched their children receive the scholarships, perhaps memories of missing so many of their school events faded to the background. Because here, they were able to share a special moment where their children were recognized by the PBA not only for their numerous accomplishments, but also for overcoming the challenges of having a parent on the job.

"In reality, what I deal with doesn't compare to what my family deals with," commented PBA member George Pacheco, whose daughter was the Bronze Scholarship winner. "And it's nice to see the PBA saying, 'Thanks for taking care of your dad while he did all that shift work to get you through high school and college, that on behalf of our members we're saying thank you to you for supporting your dad.'"

After completing the scholarship application process, Arthur

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28







PBA Gold Scholarship winner Arthur Codrington with his mother, Monique Bony, an officer in North Miami.



PBA Silver Scholarship winner Camrawn McPhee with his mother, Catherine McPhee, an officer in Miami-Dade.



PBA Bronze Scholarship winner Jadelyn Pacheco with her father, George Pacheco, an officer in Miami-Dade.

#### **HARD WORK** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

Codrington remembers feeling shocked that he was selected to receive the first-place-level scholarship. Many of his family members are law enforcement officers, like his mother, Monique Bony, who serves with North Miami PD.

Watching the sacrifices that they have made to serve their community has encouraged Arthur to want to make a difference too, in his own way.

“To find out that I won first place was heart-touching to me,” Arthur explained. “Because I want to do the same thing, but through the medical field.”

At first, Arthur was planning to follow in his mother’s footsteps. But then, he discovered his ability to excel in science and fell in love with it. Now Arthur is a freshman on the premed track at Howard University, with the goal of becoming a surgeon.

The support he received from the PBA further inspired his desire to serve others, just as his mother and her fellow PBA members do so selflessly.

“I received this scholarship from a board, from a group of public servants, really, who dedicate their time, effort and energy to protect and serve others,” Arthur related. “So to receive a scholarship of this level from such a high group of people, it motivates me to keep going in my goals of becoming a public servant to help my community. I have an entire team that wants me to continue this mission of public servitude.”

One of the most memorable pieces of advice that Camrawn McPhee’s mother has given him seemed to make a contribution to earning the Silver Scholarship award. Catherine McPhee, who is on with Miami-Dade PD, always told her son, “It doesn’t matter what you want to do. If you want to do it, believe that you can and finish it.”

And that is exactly what Camrawn did when he applied for the PBA scholarship, even though he was not expecting to receive one of the top three awards.

“Knowing that somebody else believes in me and likes my writing really motivated me to become a full-time student,” Camrawn noted. “It means a good deal.”

As a freshman at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Camrawn is studying to become a physical therapist, with the hope of opening his own practice one day. His mother, Catherine, who has served with Miami-Dade for 28 years, has been one of his greatest inspirations in following that dream.

And witnessing the PBA’s support has caused Catherine to appreciate the PBA even more.

“I value that the PBA acknowledges our members’ kids and says, ‘They stayed the course and we would like to give them a token because of that,’” Catherine attested. “I’m basically just telling the PBA thank you, because it felt good to receive something back from something I invested so much into.”

When Bronze Scholarship recipient Jadelyn Pacheco received the news that she had been selected to receive a PBA scholarship, the first thing she did was call her father, George, who has been on the job for 26 years with Miami-Dade PD.

He expressed how much the PBA scholarship can help kids like his daughter follow their dreams.


“Even if it’s just a few funds that gets attributed toward her education, it makes a difference for her, especially when she put the effort in making that happen,” George explained. “And it’s good to see that she is given the fruits of her labor.”

After switching her major a handful of times, Jadelyn began taking language classes and found a passion for American Sign Language (ASL). After transferring from Miami-Dade College, she now studies ASL in an immersive program at the University of South Florida, with plans to become a legal interpreter.

When Jadelyn met Arthur and Camrawn at the scholarship presentation ceremony, she said she felt happy and blessed to know they all had this incredible opportunity. It was an opportunity for them to also celebrate how much of an impact their parents have made on them as police officers.

“The PBA reinforces that view that police officers are here to serve and protect, and they’re here to support you when you need it,” Jadelyn added. “So having that organization set up to support the families of police officers really is something that needs to be recognized by the community, because the PBA is a little light in a darkened world.”





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# Master Sergeants

**Four members of the Fuentes family share the same rank as some of MDPD's superior supervisors**

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Miami-Dade Police Officers in the Organized Crime Bureau have become adept at investigations because of leadership and training from Sergeant Fuentes.

Of course, officers in the Special Patrol Bureau who work special events, or are assigned to such units as marine patrol, the bomb squad or are part of the special response teams follow the lead of Sergeant Fuentes.

Also, the department is growing its integrity, confidence and reliance on its officers through the presence in internal affairs of Sergeant Fuentes.

And many of the uniform patrol officers in the Hammocks District have experienced the department's empowering standard of supervision because they work with Sergeant Fuentes.

There's Sergeant Leo Fuentes in organized crimes and his wife Sergeant Diana Fuentes, the admin sergeant in special patrol, who are parents to Sergeant Alejandro Fuentes in IA and Sergeant Adalberto Fuentes in Hammocks. One family. Four sergeants.

Confusing? Maybe only because Alejandro and Adalberto are identical twins.

MDPD is filled with many special family legacies, but perhaps none like the Fuentes family. Because Leo and Diana have nearly 60 years combined on the job, there are very few officers who don't know these esteemed sergeants. But when they find out that Alejandro and Adalberto also are of rank, well, that's where the fun begins.

"Normally, they're in shock," Alejandro describes. "Just because of my parents' tenure, they've met a bunch of people in the department. And then I get, 'Oh, I remember when you were a kid.'"

Adalberto, who also goes by Bert, has seen a more elaborate

response confirming the uniqueness of this family.

"Honestly, everybody gives a similar reaction of 'Oh my God, all of you guys?'" he submits. "I think it's something that has come naturally because my brother and I, since we were little, have always been around cops."

How did this happen? Well, first, let's set the lineup so you can tell the players without a scorecard.

Leo, who has been on with MDPD since April of 1997 following four years working for the Florida Department of Corrections, supervises a squad in the organized crimes bureau that investigates organized retail thefts. Diana has become one of the department's administrative aficionados, having served 24 years. You have to be an organizing genius when you enter the academy with four-year-old twins at home.

The twins are 28 and have been on with MDPD for five years. They came to the department together after serving two years in Coral Gables together, worked in Cutler Ridge together and both worked at special victims together. They were promoted to sergeant off the same list about a year ago.

Here are some more fun facts: Leo met Diana before both came on the job. She was a supervisor at a bank, and he worked for her as a teller. They have a younger daughter, Angela, who is a public safety aid with the City of Doral. The family confirms that she will definitely be another sergeant and most likely even go beyond. Oh, and Bert's wife, Katrina, is an FTO and a South Florida PBA rep.

"I think the best lesson that I've learned for being a sergeant is being a dad," Leo shares. "You're tough with your officers when you have to be tough with them. You look out for their best interests and make sure nobody wrongs them."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32





The Fuentes family from left, Adalberto, Leo, Diana, Alejandro and Angela, a PSA with the City of Doral.



## MASTER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

For some insight into the foundation of this family of sergeants, check out some excerpts from the family way. When they all gather around the dinner table, guess who has rank?

"Mom," Leo adds. "We know that mom is always the boss."

When dinner-table conversation turns to investigations – the passion for Leo, Alejandro and Adalberto – Leo renders the good advice from his expertise and years of experience. When an inspirational message is needed about how to be a successful sergeant, mom speaks up.

"Be there for your people. Just my way of being a sergeant," she comments. "In admin, I'm constantly helping everybody who works for me and backing them up."

Leo and Diana didn't anticipate a second generation of sergeanting in the family. The boys played sports and were in band, among other activities, growing up. In college, they even talked about going pre-med.

"They grew up their entire lives listening to my wife and I talking about police work from the backseat," Leo reports. "Many times, we didn't think they were paying attention and they really were."

Diana was more mom than sergeant in hoping the boys might pursue a profession with less risk. But she knew how much they loved policing.

Still, when Alejandro decided he wanted to be a cop, he came to his dad. And Leo promptly took his boys on a ride along through the Northside district, one of the busier areas in the county.

"That only cemented in further," Alejandro recalls. "After the ride along, I was sold."

Adalberto adds that during that ride along, Diana wanted to make sure he and his brother could see themselves doing this job for the rest of the professional lives. Imagine the conversation coming out of the backseat then.

"Once we explained to them it's something that we really wanted, they accepted it," Bert reveals. "A lot of how we lead, we learned from them. How to behave, what is expected. It translated pretty well to being a supervisor."

Forming a family of sergeants takes a lot of effort above and

beyond the call of parenting. Diana was able to rely on two people who did the one job that is even more important than being a cop. Her mother and mother-in-law played a huge role in this family, and when Diana became an FTO, she would get the boys ready, drop them at her mother-in-law's house and then go to work.

How much their parents put into the family is not lost on the second-generation sergeants.

"Stability was a big thing," Alejandro praises. "They were always around. I know how hard that is with law enforcement because of unpredictable schedules."

Incidentally, Leo and Diana are paying it forward. Alejandro has a son and a daughter, and Diana has made an impact on his little girl.

"I know for sure my granddaughter wants to be a police officer," Diana notes. "She says it all the time. She wants to be like grandma."

The network that runs through this family is oh-so exhilarating. Many officers can benefit from Alejandro and Adalberto being able to consider what would dad do or what would mom do to handle a certain situation. The brothers also talk several times a day to fortify each other with the learning they received growing up and continue to tap.

"We've been able to learn the good things about admin from my mom and the good things about investigations from my dad," Adalberto confirms. "The cool thing is that between the four of us, we've all done different jobs. So it's cool to have all that knowledge between the four of us to help each other out."

Clearly, it's hard not to run into a Sergeant Fuentes somewhere in the department nearly every day. Diana and Leo are very proud of how Adalberto and Alejandro have built that name up with their hard work, never once trying to rest on their parents' vast laurels.

And with the way the boys were promoted just five years into their MDPD careers, not to mention that Angela will no doubt make her own mark on the department some day and Katrina also being a rising star, it's highly conceivable that the next story will be about the Fuentes family of lieutenants. Or captains. Or who knows.





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# SURVIVOR

## MDCR officer Adrian Perez thwarts an inmate intent on 'destroying' him



■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Good thing the inmate didn't know how to throw a punch. Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Officer Adrian Perez exchanged blows with a convicted sexual predator and repeat offender as they grappled on the ground inside Metro West. He tried to eye-gouge Perez, who had fractured his ankle in two places when they fell to the floor in the midst of the assault.

"Because of the adrenaline, you don't feel the pain," confided Perez, who came on with MDCR in October 2020. "The guy was very resilient. He couldn't hit. If it had been a guy that actually knew how to hit, it would have been a different story."

The Aug. 12 incident went on like a round in the Octagon. After nearly five minutes of putting the inmate in a restraint hold and him squirming out, Perez finally subdued him.

Perez was the only officer in the unit at that time. Somehow, his call for backup did not go through. And prisoner gangs would not allow anybody to intervene. But the strength, the fortitude, the refusal to give up that makes MDCR a superior correctional agency flowed through Perez this day.

"Basically, it's three things," Perez explained about how he endured this assault. "Number one, survive. Number two, regain control. Number three, finish the fight. By the time backup arrived, I had already survived. I was on my way to regain control, and that's when the fight ended."

Perez seems to be an officer who has added to the MDCR spirit and durability. He came to Miami from Cuba when he was 15, immediately enrolled in and finished high school and then joined the U.S. Navy.

During his eight-year commitment, Perez served as an operations specialist. He handled radars, navigational equipment and other duties that came through the ship's informational center.

When he was discharged, his brother-in-law was on with MDCR and told him about being a correctional officer, which he had never heard of. In 2018, he applied for the job and started the academy in April 2020.

COVID delayed graduation, but in October 2022, Perez came out and was assigned to the TGK Correctional Center. From April to October 2021, he served at the main jail and then was assigned to Metro West.

Perez went into corrections with the hope of being able to change lives for those who have been incarcerated. He wanted to help those who made mistakes get their lives back on track and get

them away from the habitual criminals.

Eventually, he realized the best way to do the job.

"I just do my job in a professional way," Perez stated. "I treat inmates with dignity. I have never mistreated an inmate, and I will never do that. If we're going to start mistreating our people in custody, then we might as well become North Korea."

Not that you ever back down when an inmate steps to you, as was the case for Perez on Friday, Aug. 12. The only element really working against him that day was the understaffing MDCR continues to face. If there was not the approximately 400-officer deficit in manpower that he believes is the case, Perez might not have wound up alone in the unit.

"We try to work well as a team," he continued. "When I say try, it's because we are really outnumbered right now. Once we have the numbers, I believe life is going to be way easier for everybody."

Whether understaffing contributed to the delayed response to his call for backup is not clear. Perez was working in a unit with a history of harboring a lot of rough inmates, prisoners who find it very hard to follow directions.

He encountered this particular inmate stirring it up a bit the day before. When he went into the unit on that Friday, he found the inmate trying to pick a fight with anybody he could find.

So immediately, they decided the inmate needed to be relocated. That required handcuffing him. The inmate refused to comply with commands. He refused again. Perez called for backup, and then the fight broke out.

Perez applied defensive tactics and worked to get him on the ground. He recalled all the training in the academy about fighting on the ground. All those hours crawling around with classmates was coming into play. He was able to subdue the inmate enough times for backup to arrive.

"I am grateful to Officer Delman Lumpkin for helping out," Perez declared. "If not for him, I might not have survived."

In addition to the fractured ankle, Perez dislocated his shoulder in the melee. He has just finished physical therapy on the shoulder and will be going back on light duty soon. When the ankle heals, he will rehab that injury and then take on the mental challenge of going back into the unit.

"I don't know if I want to go into a facility for a while," Perez shared. "You can call it PTSD or whatever. That guy was trying to destroy me, trying to blind me with his nails, trying to wipe me out. I'm fortunate I was able to survive."



# REFLECTIONS

Catching up with a renowned South Florida PBA Member

## Always Moving Forward

Retired Miami-Dade officer Maria Mederos relied on those around her throughout her career

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

In 1986, Maria Mederos, an animal cruelty investigator for Miami-Dade County at the time, was walking toward the Miami-Dade Police Department headquarters when she saw a line of people extending around the building. When she walked through the side door, she smiled at Sergeant Jay Cuthbert.

"Hey Sarge, what are you giving away?" she asked jokingly. "I want one."

And with that, Cuthbert took Mederos by the hand, led her to the front of the line and handed her an application packet.

"Fill this out," Cuthbert said.

"I don't know if I've got what it takes to be a police officer," Mederos replied.

But Cuthbert was adamant.

"No, fill it out."

He reassured Mederos that it may take a year or two for a background check to be complete. So Mederos agreed because she didn't want to turn down an opportunity to move forward.

Six months later, Mederos was in the academy. And that's the moment she says her entire life changed when she started a 34-year, unparalleled career with MDPD.

"When I first got there, I never felt alone," Mederos recounted. "The people that trained me were, and always will be, held in my heart and in my mind with love and happiness because they fine-tuned and polished the rock. They passed on what was so important to pass on."

When Mederos came on the job, she began as an undercover officer with vice, focusing on prostitution and gambling. But from there, she wanted to continue moving forward in her law enforcement career. So eventually she found her way to narcotics, before ending up in homicide investigations.

As Mederos transitioned throughout her career, she often looked to her brothers and sisters around her for support.

"There's no way that one person can do this kind of job alone," Mederos said. "So, when you have a backup system, where you don't have to look over your shoulder,



Retired Miami-Dade officer Maria Mederos, who came on the job in 1986, with her first training officer, Hal Slayden.

der, there's nothing better that you can ask for you. These folks are lifting you up, teaching you right from wrong and not sugarcoating, and that teaches you."

Mederos worked investigating homicides in Seaport for two years before she retired in 2020. She learned the meticulous ins and outs of investigative work, and some of the key ways to receive a good response from people when you need it.

She related that the one thing that helped her most was her blunt personality. She has never been afraid to ask the embarrassing questions and because of that, she was able to question anyone when needed.

"[I would] try and connect to a person on a human level, especially on something so serious," Mederos explained. "And you usually get a good response. One of the basic things to do any kind of investigation is to be able to speak to anyone, be it the guy who lives in the bushes because he has no place to live, or the CEO who's on some island somewhere, where you have to go through security guards to even speak to somebody like that. You have to be smart, tenacious and confrontational. That's where the details come in. That's where the agenda, where intent comes in. And those are the things that you have to bring out in people."

Reflecting on her career, Mederos has one piece of advice for her brothers and sisters in law enforcement or anyone who is new on the job:



From left, Sergeant Bill Williams, Detective Mike Dominguez, Detective David Demark and retired Miami-Dade officer Maria Mederos worked homicide investigations together.

### Maria Mederos's Record

- Served 34 years with Miami-Dade Police Department
- PBA member since 1986
- Worked undercover in vice
- Worked in narcotics and homicide



From left, John Butchko and Maria Mederos, who were partners in homicide investigation, and their sergeant, Tommy Hixon.

"You're working for the people, and that's everyone," Mederos said. "No matter who they are, no matter where they come from, no matter what they look like, no matter what they believe in, you work for everyone. That's what makes this world a better place. For some people who go through the most horrible things in life, we usually meet them at their very lowest. You work for those people."



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# Members Only Section

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

## A True Inspiration

### South Florida PBA members celebrate Miami-Dade officer's courage as he is released from rehab

■ BY ESTHER GONZALES

As Miami-Dade Motor Officer Matthew Larsh walked down the hallway of Encompass Health Rehabilitation on Aug. 12, overwhelming joy washed over him. His sisters and brothers from the Miami-Dade PD motors unit stood on either side of Larsh and cheered as he made his way to the door.

And when he reached it, a crowd of PBA members were gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion.

Listening to the cheers and applause and experiencing the immense support from the brotherhood fortified Larsh to persevere on his road to recovery, filled him with gratitude and showed him that the PBA stands with him.

"That experience was very emotional and very heartwarming," Larsh said. "To have them there supporting me was amazing."

Throughout his four months of rehab, Larsh said he was blown away by the kind of support he received. After he was severely injured in a motorcycle accident on April 21 when he collided with an SUV while on duty, Larsh sustained extensive injuries, including a fractured kneecap and severed quad on his left leg, a ruptured bladder, a dislocated elbow on his right arm and a ruptured aorta.

He was transferred to the ICU at Jackson Memorial Hospital's Ryder Trauma Center, where he didn't wake up until two days later with no recollection of what had happened. During the next three weeks, members constantly stood by his side to offer comfort and help with anything he needed.

And Larsh was even more amazed when the PBA paid for a hotel for Larsh's father when he came from out of town to visit.

"The support there in ICU was unbelievable," Larsh said. "Then, while I was in rehab, that same level of support continued. It was above and beyond what I could have even expected."

That support helped inspire Larsh to keep fighting through the pain to recover. Larsh expressed his deep gratitude for all those showing care along the way, including South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl, Executive Vice President David Greenwell, Miami-Dade Police Director Freddy Ramirez, Lieutenant George Montero and Major Andrew Glass.

"All of the love I got from my police family [motivated me] because I constantly had people there visiting me," Larsh explained. "I'm not the kind of guy that stays down, so I knew that I was going to pick myself up and move forward."

After leaving rehab, Larsh began a grueling course of physical therapy, with the goal that he will return to work next year. He described the hours as long and exhausting, but even now, the overflow of support from members has been endless.

"They're encouraging me to push, and so many of them say that they're just inspired by the progress that I've made so far," Larsh added. "Above all, God gave me a second chance at life, and I'm not going to waste it. I will be back."



South Florida PBA members gathered to celebrate Matthew Larsh, who was released from Encompass Rehabilitation four months after a vehicle collision left him with severe injuries.



Miami-Dade Motor Officer Matthew Larsh left rehab to begin intensive physical therapy.



Miami-Dade Police Director Freddy Ramirez shook Larsh's hand as he left rehab to continue his journey to recovery.



# Right at Home

## MCSO deputies befriend refugee child

Home is where the heart is. And Monroe County Sheriff's Office deputies recently opened their hearts to a little girl, who needed such an effort to make her new surroundings feel like home.

On Aug. 19, MCSO Deputies Imalay Diaz and Lee Mortensen were on their way to refugee arrival during a standard day on the job. Everything seemed normal, but the officers paid special attention to a young girl.

"To get a little girl involved is not something that you really see every day," Diaz recalled. "So we obviously wanted to make contact with her, make her feel a little bit more comfortable after that long trip that I could only assume how scary it was."

Before they headed to the refugee arrival, they had picked up clothes and toys to donate to victims who had lived in homes riddled with domestic violence. The deputies decided to look through the items to see if there was anything they could donate to the girl.

"We looked through all the stuff and then we saw some dresses, some toys and so we just decided to make her day and give it to her," Diaz explained.

Diaz says the young girl was beyond excited, and it made the deputies' day to see her so overjoyed.

Coming to a new country where you don't know anything and interacting with law enforcement could be intimidating for some. But Mortensen said that feeling motivated them to approach the girl.

"I think there's probably an intimidation factor that goes into that," he said. "But once we met with her, we just reassured her that everything was going to be alright."

Diaz found a few dresses that were her exact size. Deputy Mortenson gave her some toys and a bunny. The deputies posted on Facebook that she was very happy and stated how she wants to become a law enforcement officer because "we are so nice!"

Giving out toys or clothes may seem like a small gesture for some. But the officers recognized how it promotes the idea of community, a value that Diaz says her department puts first.

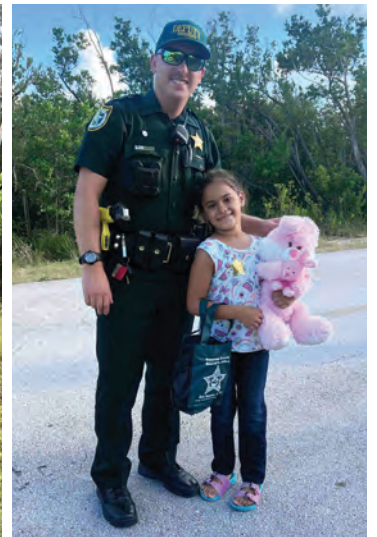
"It's a small community. So I feel like little things like that, just giving a toy out or just small things for us, might seem like a small thing, but they're a big deal to them," Diaz added. "It makes such a big difference just to be able to say that we're approachable."

She continued to note how those values start right at the top of their department with Sheriff Rick Ramsay. Mortensen says while investigating crime and protecting the public is important, building relationships with the community is what matters.

The officers had a special knack for making this young girl feel special, but what may be surprising is the impact the girl made on the deputies. Diaz says she feels like the assignment was fate.

"It was all meant to happen. It was meant for her," she said. "They come with nothing. They only have a bookbag with documents. So, it made a big difference for me and for her."

And in the end, this chance meeting was an opportunity to show this little girl that law enforcement can make anywhere feel like home.





# South Miami captain honored by Florida Police Chiefs Association

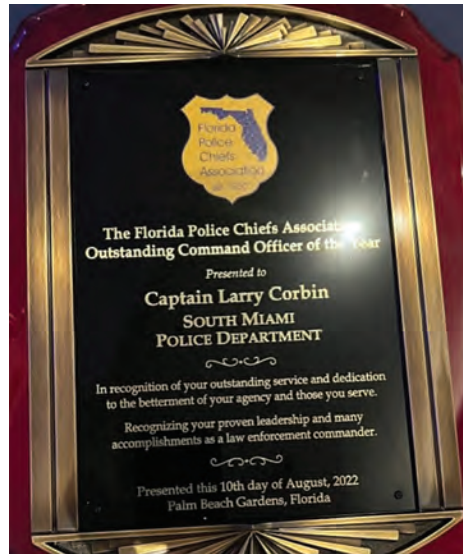
Sometimes, life as a law enforcement leader can be a thankless job. But other times, a big thank-you note comes to a person who has a distinguished and deserving career.

On Aug. 10, Captain Larry Corbin from the South Miami Police Department was honored as the Outstanding Command Officer of the Year by the Florida Police Chiefs Association. The award was given at the organization's Annual Summer Training Conference and Exposition, after Corbin was nominated by South Miami Chief Rene Landa.

The 35-year police veteran has been recognized for his leadership, service and dedication to the South Miami community.

Corbin is in charge of South Miami's Operations Bureau, which houses Uniform Patrol and Criminal Investigations.

According to the Florida Police Chiefs Association, "During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Corbin instantly recognized the need for a new way to protect officers under his com-



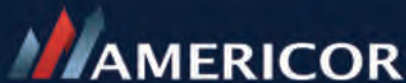
mand, heading a committee to create new safety protocols."

Not only is Corbin concerned with officer safety — he has also worked to improve his community's crime rate over the years and improve response times.

For all of these reasons and more, Cap-



tain Larry Corbin is the 2021 Outstanding Command Officer of the Year.



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# And the awards go to...

Members of the South Florida PBA are always receiving recognition for the sacrifices they make daily to go and above and beyond to protect and serve. Sometimes, those thank-yous come in the form of awards. Here are some members who were honored this summer:



**Medley**



In July, Medley officers attended the Florida Law Enforcement Traffic Safety Campaign ceremony. The team was awarded third place in the category of educating the public on traffic safety.



**Miami Gardens**



Miami Gardens Officer Richard Robinson (second from left) was honored for the work he does with the children in his community. On Aug. 6, he was the law enforcement honoree at the Black & White Gala Glo Awards, which recognizes extraordinary youth.



**North Miami**

Some officers serve to live, and others live to serve, like North Miami Police Officer Omar Quintero. On Aug. 30, Quintero was honored with a Meritorious Service Award. Throughout his career, he's trained multiple officers in the department. Recently, he was asked to step into the role of acting sergeant for the Uniform Patrol Section. Without hesitation, he accepted the task and has been leading for the past two years.



**Miami-Dade**

Quintero isn't the only one going above and beyond. On Aug. 12, Officer Orlando Fleites was named Miami-Dade's officer of the year. The honor was presented to him at the 47th Annual Citizens' Crime Watch Awards.



# Back to School and Looking Cool

## South Florida PBA members help prepare students for the upcoming school year

In preparation for the new school year, South Florida PBA members hosted many events and giveaways for children in their local communities. From backpack giveaways to greeting

children at their schools to a dunk tank at a Back-to-School Bash, here are a few glimpses of how members helped ignite an eagerness to learn.



**Bal Harbour**

Bal Harbour officers celebrated the back-to-school season with students at Holmes Elementary School on Aug. 16. Officers volunteered their time to make a special delivery of school uniforms, new backpacks, school supplies and hygiene products.



On Aug. 13, Bal Harbour officers brought many smiles to the students of Henry Reeves Elementary School with an array of school uniforms, backpacks and other essentials for the new school year.



**Key West**

School resource officers from Key West made a special appearance on Aug. 9 at Gerald Adams, Poinciana, Sigsbee and Horace O'Bryant schools for Meet the Teacher Day and to welcome new students.



Key West officers joined fifth graders for a game of jacks and conversations at Poinciana School for the monthly Pelicans and Police event on Sept. 1.



**MDCR**

On Aug. 22, MDCR officers partnered with the Salvation Army to donate backpacks and school supplies for more than 600 students in the Miami-Dade area. With the 2022 Apple Tree Program, children ages 4 to 18 received items to prepare them for their school year.



**Miami Gardens**

Miami Gardens officers gathered at Walmart on Aug. 6 to host a backpack and school supplies giveaway for children in the community.



**Sunny Isles Beach**

Aug. 11 was filled with a dunk tank, fun and games for Sunny Isles Beach officers and students alike at the Back-to-School Bash.



# South Florida PBA members celebrate National Night Out

Aug. 2nd marks National Night Out, a time for the community to connect with law enforcement in a positive way. South Florida PBA members took the opportunity to further their

relationships with their neighbors and show them a little bit about how law enforcement works. Here are a few of the highlights:



MDCR



Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitations got their hands a little dirty for National Night Out. Officers put together a fingerprinting safety station for local kids across different areas throughout the county, including the North Miami Beach and Miami-Dade Police Departments.



Sunny Isles

It was all about the kids at Sunny Isles National Night Out. Pictured here, some local children got the chance to be a part of the officers' motorcade and tapped into their creative side by coloring pictures.



Key West

Key West Police celebrated National Night Out with the help of multiple partners, including the Key West Fire Department, Key West Transit, and even some four-legged friends in a petting zoo.





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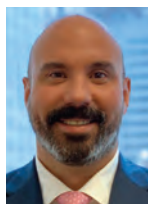
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# College costs: Is the investment worth it?



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There is no shortage of headlines regarding this administration's announcement of cancelling \$10,000 worth of college loans for many borrowers. The debate rages about whether the move is fair or unfair for individuals, including those who paid off their loans or those who don't qualify. Moreover, is the policy move a clear path toward universal free education and a step towards socialism?

These are all valid concerns and merit further debate, but before we can address whether the cancellation of debt is acceptable, we need to address the most important question: Is an investment in higher education worth it?

One of the important responsibilities we have as parents is to help our children understand the merit of taking on debt for an education, considering that they may be saddled with it for years — or even worse — invest in the wrong degree. When we look at the investment of an education, we must guide our children accordingly and help them make a sound choice.

Higher education costs have soared over the decades and completely outpaced inflation by a staggering ratio. Surprisingly, though, since 2010, education costs have been declining (relative to their growth rate) for the majority of applicants. This is due to the spread between the "sticker price" of college paid in full by wealthier families and lower income families qualifying for aid.

But the real problem for many families is the question of whether college is worth it. To be more specific, which degrees are worthwhile. As it turns out, the most recent numbers from the National

Center on Education Statistics demonstrates that majors like gender studies, anthropology and English are becoming less popular.

We must not forget that education is a business, and to attract buyers, businesses need to make their product attractive. During the Great Recession in 2008, many people who would have been ready to enter the workforce were unable to because the economy shrank at such an alarming rate and jobs, let alone decent-paying ones, were scarce. As a result, many Americans turned to the alternative of furthering their education, which was made easy through government loans, regardless of the degree.

We are in a very different economy in which job opportunities abound, so much so that many businesses are having a hard time attracting employees. Furthermore, traditional wealth-generating careers (law, medicine and finance) have expanded to include tech and, social media, which does not require any higher education.

As parents, we want our children to succeed. As such, we need to help guide them to make sense of the true investment that is higher education. It is a very similar process that I go through when I invest my client's money. In its most basic form, it boils down to four questions: what are the risk, quality, cost and potential return on investment?

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

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# Thank-You Notes TO THE PBA

08 August 2022

Steadman Stahl, President  
South Florida PBA  
10680 PBA Memorial Blvd.  
Doral, FL 33172

Dear Steadman:

I just receive my copy of "Heat" for July/August 2022 for which I thank you.

Your article, "The PBA is there for you when you need us most" brings back memories. You mentioned the Great victory for John Song. You further stated: "It started out under our first president, Charlie Maddox, who hired one attorney." I was the subject of that first case, my attorney was Gene Spellman and we won. I was most improperly reduced in rank from Police Major to Police Captain. I became Police Major again for one day and then reverted back to Police Captain. The rank of Police Major was eliminated under affirmative action. I retired as a Police Captain with 37 years and received Police Major's Pay.

On another subject, there was a Federal Law Case where two Great Police Sgts., Sanford Gutman and Tony Monheim and I were defendants. The case was before then Judge Hastings who was removed for cause. The PBA won that case. Please research your attorney's records and send me a copy of the initial charges that were furnished to the defendants. I want to give it to my Great Grand children as part of my records to be remembered.

Again, I thank you for your service to the P.B.A.

Law Enforcement is in trouble today. Maybe some day we can meet again and talk. I, for good reason avoid use of the internet.

Stay safe.

Richard H. Plager  
(Retired Police Captain, Miami/Dade PD)  
(Retired Captain (0-6) U.S. Coast Guard)

*Richard*

**HOLLY**  
**MERRILL RASCHIEIN**  
**COUNTY COMMISSIONER**

Dear Steadman,  
I'm so grateful for the PBA's endorsement, please share my gratitude with your members! And thank you for the contributions! It's wild being on the campaign trail but worth it -j (cheers/Holly

JESSICA  
**BAKER**  
FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

STEADMAN

THANK YOU FOR HELPING SECURE THE PBA ENDORSEMENT/CHECKS! I AM HONORED TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF PBA & I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING TOGETHER IN TALLAHASSEE!  
Best, Jessica

Dear Steadman,  
It is with a heart filled with gratitude that I write this thank you note. Through you, I thank all the members of South Florida PBA for endorsing our campaign. Your support encourages me to keep fighting the good fight of faith. I do so very much appreciate you.  
Peace and Blessings,  
FRED





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