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COVER STORY



Heroes' Worship

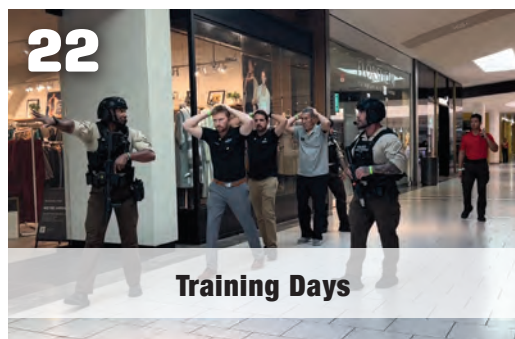
The second annual Hometown Heroes Parade and Festival on Oct. 28 provided a spectacular and much-deserved way to honor first responders and essential workers in South Florida. And the event went above and beyond that by not only furthering the connection between the community and its public safety but allowing an inside look at what first responders and essential workers do every day to serve and protect. The Hometown Heroes Parade and Festival also served as another example of how the county's elected officials truly have the backs of their first responders.

COVER DESIGN BY GINA CROTCHFELT

MESSAGES FROM THE PBA

- The Pres Says.....**Page 5**
- Message from the Executive VP**Page 8**
- The Dish from Ish..... **Page 10**
- Florida PBA Legal Corner **Page 11**
- Sergeant-at-Arms Spotlight **Page 12**
- POAT News..... **Page 14**
- RPOC News **Page 16**
- Honoring Retired Members..... **Page 17**
- Reflections **Page 32**
- Members Only Section..... **Page 34**
- Thank-You Notes to the PBA **Page 46**

INSIDE STORIES



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

MITCHELL KRUGEL

Publisher/Editor

mitch@PBAHeatMagazine.com

GINA CROTCHFELT

Art Director

gina@PBAHeatMagazine.com

DAN CAMPANA

Staff Writer

SYLVIA RIVERA

Director of Operations

sylvia@PBAHeatMagazine.com

KIMBERLY FLYNN

LAUREN PURCELL

Copy Editors

NIZAM "ISH" ISHMAEL

PBA Editor

ish@sflpba.org

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Getting engaged



**STEADMAN
STAHL**

The Dolphins, Marlins, Heat, Lightning or Inter Miami CF might get a parade sometime in the next few years, but it probably won't be like the one held in Tropical Park on Oct. 28. Miami-Dade County's second annual Hometown Heroes Parade and Festival gave a championship reception to those who deserve it most: the public safety and essential workers, who truly are the county's unsung heroes.

I was there to take it all in alongside many of our members, and I saw so much that indicates how the elected officials who have created and sponsor this event get it. New to the Hometown Heroes celebration was an exhibit titled "Hero Worlds," a first responder interactive activation that allowed young people to gain firsthand insight into the world of first responders.

The entire event provided an exclusive look at what our Miami-Dade County first responders do every day. And it further enhanced the community appreciation, which showed up en masse during the seven hours of the event. It's refreshing to know that we have yet another event sponsored by our elected officials that says

"thank you" to the first responders in such a grand way.

On behalf of our members, I want to say thanks to our elected officials for offering another refreshing show of support to the public servants in the county. Again, it was just a big thank you for what we do throughout the year. And a great way for the community members who attended to show their support.

My counterparts from other law enforcement labor unions throughout the country often ask me how we do it, how we get so much support from our elected officials and our community. I tell them how we really get into the trenches, and if you get the right elected officials, you get the right mindset in there, and it just brings that support home.

I go back just two years ago. I think we were the first county that recognized a Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. Now, there are cities that are stepping in and doing the same things in different ways but recognizing all of the hometown heroes. So for me, as a union leader, I relish it. I relish it.

This is the payoff we're seeing. And we're seeing it from the municipal governments in many of the towns where the PBA represents the law enforcement officers. All of them are putting their money into public safety. We've settled multiple contracts now in places where we struggled to get certain benefits, whether it be monetary or whether it be working conditions.

It just seems that all the elected officials know how important it is, and so we had the parade. It's been long overdue. It's the second year in a row, and I believe it will become a tradition that never goes away.

Before we look ahead to 2024, let me take a quick timeout to welcome a new member to our executive board. Officer Karlos Ramos from Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation, who has been serving as a union representative, has stepped up to be our sergeant-at-arms.

You can read more about what goals Karlos has for taking on this role in the story on page 12 of this issue. He's another one of our members who is very dedicated to the profession. He's been in the field for many years, and he's well respected.

He's certainly hit the ground running, and we look forward to working with him and his continuing dedication to the organization. Karlos certainly is like many members of our board. I mean, I don't think there's anybody on that board who doesn't want to get involved. Certainly it's not mandated.

But I've always said it's like watching a football game. You can watch it from the bleachers, you can watch it from the sideline, or you can get on the field and play. Everybody picks their spot where they want to be. I think our board of directors is on the field, right in the middle of the game, doing the blocking and tackling to pave the way for our members.

So Karlos will be a great fit. Along with the help of our new treasurer, Alex Munoz, who stepped up from sergeant-at-arms and used to work at MDC&R, Karlos is getting busy right now. Between them, they know so many of the players there.

It makes me think about how Luis de los Santos used to represent MDC&R as a member of our board. The famed "Delo" retired more than 10 years ago, and all members should read all about him in our "Reflections" feature beginning on page 32 of this issue.

He was a hoot, man. Delo had a heart of gold and would give you the shirt off his back. He was widely respected when he worked in corrections. Robert Davis, who took Delo's place representing corrections, said members would go crazy when he they would see him. It was like walking through there with Bon Jovi.

If you were to cut him, you would see corrections green pour out of him. Karlos wants to provide

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



SOUTH FLORIDA PBA

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The President's Gallery



At the Hometown Heroes Parade and Festival on Oct. 28, I had the opportunity to hang out with the true heroes, our members who were being recognized for their public service. I also had a photo opp with Miami-Dade County's new director of public safety, James Reyes, on my right holding a Hometown Heroes sign.



Some of our members from North Bay stopped by the PBA office in Doral to show us a new addition to their team. Not sure if he is a future K-9.



I also had the privilege to present one of our members, Carlos Gonzalez, a plaque recognizing his retirement from MDPD.

STAHL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

the same type of representation for our MDC&R members.

And, as most of you know, our new Miami-Dade Public Safety Director James Reyes has moved up from running MDC&R. When they were telling us about the announcement of James as the new director, I was able to pull out a copy of the September-October issue of *The Heat* showing him on the cover. You should have seen their eyes light up.

Obviously, what happened to create the need for a new director is a tragedy. But I think that we have great relationships with all of our chiefs and different directors, and this move solidifies that we're going to be even stronger as we move forward.

We have a lot of unknowns in Miami-Dade County with our first elected sheriff in more than 60 years coming in November 2024. I mean that in a positive way. It's going to be a big shift that we've never seen before in the way the county government operates. This entire state will be affected by it, because this will be the largest sheriff's office in the state.

And I think the department's going to find itself getting bigger. A lot more resources are going to be made available because of the way the funding of the sheriff's office is going to be recreated.

Whoever the sheriff is going to be will inherit a great department with a great reputation. Staying with the football analogies, I kind of equate it to when Barry Switzer took over coaching the Dallas Cowboys from Jimmy Johnson when they were winning Super Bowls in the 1990s. The new sheriff won't believe how good the department is that he or she just took over.

So as we go into the new year, there's a little bit of uncertainty, but it's more to get ready for what the future holds. I know change scares people sometimes, but I've always said that the grass always looks greener on the other side until you have to go cut it.

We go into 2024 when we will have not only a sheriff's race, but a lot of constitutional officers who will be elected. And we have a lot of challenges facing us in South Florida.

One of those is affordable housing. I just had a chance to meet with leaders in Aventura, one of the cities where a developer is going to come in and build some affordable housing. They're going to be building condos together with shops in a new building, but

they're going to have a certain amount of units available for first responders at a marked-down price commensurate with what you can afford making an average middle income anywhere in the county.

I had a chance to speak there. The mayor and commissioner asked me to come up and speak, and we supported the idea. I think anything you can do that's going to make it more affordable for our first responders to live and stay in the communities they're working in is a win-win.

That's another significant example of how this community values and supports its hometown heroes. We see it every day, everywhere in the counties and municipalities we represent, and as we head into the new year, I have a final thought for all of you – our heroes.

I know that sometimes there's some nervousness, and probably more with 2024 than we've ever seen before because of the way this government's going to be structured with a new sheriff. But I think we have many reasons to stay positive and stay focused.

Please know that there is nothing out there that can't be handled or can't be thought through. Unfortunately, this is the time of the year when a lot of people find themselves in dark places and don't think there are outs or a way through. I promise you that there is.

We here at the PBA are here to help guide people through it. If anybody has any problems that they're trying to get through and think we can help guide you through it, that's what we're here for. We're here for the members.

I think we have a proven track record for that. So no matter how bleak it gets, please just sit back, take a deep breath and we'll move forward because the sun will always rise. No matter how dark it gets, the sun will always come up. So as we move into the 2024, stay focused, stay positive and know that we here at the PBA are here for you and your families. We look forward to being even bigger and better in the year to come.

Steadman Stahl
South Florida PBA President
steadman@sflpba.org

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Hoot shooting for a good cause



DAVID GREENWELL
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

October is designated as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a campaign that aims to increase awareness and education as it relates to this horrible disease. So it only makes sense that we schedule our annual Hoot Shoot during this time.

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), it is the second most common cancer affecting American women, as well as their second leading cause of death. The numbers are much lower for men. The ACS estimates that approximately 43,700 women and about 430 men will die from breast cancer in 2023 — so it should be noted that this is not just a women's disease.

Because breast cancer affects so many people and families, this event gives us an opportunity to help support the fight against this horrific disease. This year was our fourth annual Hoot Shoot and, again, it was a great success.

Congratulations to the following winners:

2023 Top Gun Shooter and Overall Champion: MDPD PRT Officer Lajos Hadobas

Second Place: MDPD SRT Officer Jonathan Menocal

Third Place: Monroe County Sherriff's Department Deputy Addison Lepradd

I would like to thank all those who helped organize the Hoot Shoot, including the Homeland Security Bureau, the Training Bureau and the PBA for sponsoring. In addition, thanks to Chief Arnold Palmer, Chief Carlos Gonzalez, Sergeant Armando Borrego and Officer Kathy Suarez. Finally, I would like to thank all those who participated. We hope to see more of you there next year. As someone who has been personally affected by this disease, having watched my mother courageously lose her battle, I urge you to join us at next year's Hoot Shoot to try to help raise money for this important cause.

And as the holidays are fast approaching us, I would like to wish everyone a very happy, healthy and safe holiday season. I know the holidays can be a very stressful time of the year, so I hope that you all remember to take a minute to slow down, count your blessings, no matter how small, and take care of yourselves and your loved ones!

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

Hoot Shooting Gallery

Some of the sites from the 4th annual Hoot Shoot



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The Policing Lab has no place here



NIZAM "ISH"
ISHMAEL
VICE
PRESIDENT

Recently, the Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution between Miami-Dade County/Miami-Dade Police Department and the Policing Innovation and Reform (Policing Lab). The purpose of this partnership is to provide the Policing Lab access to pertinent MDPD records and data for providing MDPD with expert technical assistance, training, technology and subject matter expertise.

The Policing Lab claimed it will improve a law enforcement agency's ability to share information, perform tactical and strategic analysis, increase operational effectiveness and improve investigative functions.

The Policing Lab stated that it has worked with law enforcement agencies in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago and Los Angeles. As you all know, these cities have some of the worst crime rates, worst working conditions, most retention and recruitment issues and the lowest morale out of all our brothers and sisters in law enforcement across the country.

I am very much against using these types of policing labs to come in and tell us how to improve. First, they do not understand policing in Miami. None of them are from here, so they do not understand the culture in South Florida. We are a unique society. We have so many subject matter experts within our department who are never sought out to improve efficiency. Many administrations ago, committees were put together, and whatever recommendation came out of those committees was instituted. Now there are committees put together just to say there were committees put together, and none of their recommendations are ever implemented. Some decision makers just do whatever they want regardless of what the group of subject matter experts recommend. And some do not want to implement any ideas because they were not their ideas. They simply cannot put their egos aside and for once do something right for the troops.

I have always argued to the brass that the best way to produce solutions is to speak with the officers and sergeants. They are the backbone of our agency, but no one ever approaches these ranks and asks them what are the five biggest issues that affect them and how can we collectively solve them. Here is a basic concept: Each division chief and assistant director should conduct a zoom meeting twice a month with the troops. No more than 10 people are selected at random. The 10 people should consist of eight officers and two sergeants. No one else should be on the call — including supervisors. Give these folks a chance to tell what is going on in their division and have a healthy, real conversation to identify impactful issues and develop common sense resolutions.

Using policing labs for law enforcement purposes can have several potential negative aspects and implications. Some of these drawbacks include:

Privacy concerns. Policing labs often involve the collection and analysis of vast amounts of data, including personal information. This can raise serious privacy concerns, as individuals may not have control over how their data is used and shared.

Bias and discrimination. Policing labs can be prone to bias in data collection, analysis and interpretation. This bias can lead to unfair or discriminatory outcomes, especially when it comes to marginalized communities. For example, if historical data is biased, predictive models can perpetuate those biases.

Lack of accountability. The use of advanced technologies like

policing labs can make it difficult to establish accountability when things go wrong. It may become challenging to determine who is responsible for any errors or misuse of the technology.

Overreliance on technology. Relying too heavily on policing labs can diminish the role of human judgment and discretion in law enforcement. This overreliance may lead to situations where law enforcement officers blindly follow technology's recommendations, potentially resulting in unjust actions.

Potential for errors. Like any technology, policing labs are fallible. They can make errors in data analysis, leading to false positives or negatives. These errors can have serious consequences for individuals and society.

Erosion of civil liberties. The deployment of policing labs can lead to a perception of constant surveillance, which can erode civil liberties and individuals' freedom to move and act without fear of being monitored.

Mission creep. Policing labs designed for one purpose may be repurposed for others, potentially leading to a widening scope of surveillance and law enforcement activities beyond their original intent.

Financial costs. Implementing and maintaining policing labs can be expensive, diverting resources from other essential services or crime-prevention strategies.

Resistance and public distrust. The use of advanced technologies in policing can lead to public distrust and resistance, especially if there is a perception that these technologies infringe on civil liberties or are being used inappropriately.

Ethical and moral dilemmas. The use of technologies like facial recognition, predictive policing and data mining raises complex ethical and moral questions about the balance between security and individual freedoms.

Data security concerns. Storing and managing large volumes of sensitive data can create vulnerabilities for data breaches, potentially exposing personal information and compromising security.

If any of you have worked in the Northside or South District, you know how demanding these assignment can be. Northside District and now South District have been under scrutiny by the Policing Lab due to this agreement. Anyone with a 10,000-foot view and some common sense can identify and provide resolutions to the problems that the Policing Lab are identifying. Many of these issues have been there for years. Now, we have this team of outsiders who want our officers and sergeants to attend remedial report writing and are stating that officers need progressive discipline if they cannot write a police report to FDLE standard. They also indicate that our officers need to take more pride in our work.

All I can say is: Wow. I cannot believe that outsiders are telling us how to do our jobs, and no one is standing up to the way they are referring to our men and women in this department.

It seems to me there are many in control right now who are simply padding their resumes. It is no coincidence that the term of this agreement expires on Jan. 6, 2025, the day before the sheriff is sworn into office. We have lost our department, and the only way back might be the new sheriff. In the meantime, buy some popcorn and continue to enjoy the circus.

Please feel free to contact me at ish@sflpba.org or 305-593-0044.

From DAR to final decision



**GRISKA
MENA
STAFF
COUNSEL**

Discipline is a very common issue in our legal department. Many of the calls that we receive are from members facing different levels of discipline. There are several wheels that start turning once you receive the notice that your department intends to discipline you, in whatever form that may be. Our goal through the entire process is to make sure your rights are protected and you are being treated fairly. This can be very confusing if you haven't been through this process in the past.

Your department will provide you with notice of the policies and procedures they believe you have violated. What should you do? This is a very common question. You should first sign the notice. Your signature on that document does not mean you are admitting to the allegations; it simply means that you received the allegations on that day. If you like, you may write "see rebuttal" next to your signature, so that anyone subsequently reviewing the document will know that they should also look for a response.

The next step is to bring it to our office. You will meet with the on-call attorney to discuss the steps to challenge your discipline. The proper action depends on the level of discipline that is recommended. Each department has its own procedures, which makes meeting with an attorney that much more important.

It is important to understand that the very first document you received is a recommendation of discipline and not a final action. We will write a rebuttal or address the decision maker for the department before the department enters a final decision on your discipline. Once issued final discipline, you will have a limited number of days to challenge the final discipline. You should bring the final discipline to the office when you receive it. When you meet with your attorney, they will discuss the options moving forward.

Moving forward with the disciplinary process begins with a search for all the evidence in preparation for arbitration or hearing. This includes your personnel file, your evaluations and discipline issued to other sworn staff to ensure that the department is treating everyone equally for the same actions.

What is arbitration? How does it work? Who is involved? These are all good questions.

Arbitration is like a trial. The difference is there is no jury, and generally no discovery, meaning no exchange of documents beforehand and no depositions. A neutral arbitrator will listen to the evidence and make a decision based on the case law and arguments presented by both parties. Once the arbitrator is selected, the parties will choose a date when all parties are available. There are a lot of people involved in arbitration, so this could be months later. Your lawyer will sit with you and determine the best strategy in presenting your case. They will give you the pros and cons of calling certain witnesses and presenting evidence. Everything may not be part of your case. Sometimes less is more.

The department has the burden to prove the allegations found in the disciplinary action report. They will call witnesses and produce evidence they believe will support the decision to impose discipline. There is no requirement for your lawyer to

2023 Pending Grievances

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of Oct. 31, 2023. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

FIU POLICE	1
CITY OF MIAMI PD	4
MIAMI-DADE CORRECTIONS	1
MIAMI-DADE POLICE	1
MIAMI GARDENS	3
MCSO (DETENTION)	1
SWEETWATER	1
<hr/>	
TOTAL GRIEVANCES	12

present any evidence, yet in most cases, we will. The hearing may take a couple of hours or a couple of days. Once the hearing is over, the hardest part is waiting for the decision. The arbitrator will consider all the evidence presented during the hearing and then issue their decision.

The discipline process can be confusing and very overwhelming. The benefit for our members is that a lawyer will be right by your side the entire time. Your PBA lawyers have extensive trial experience and are knowledgeable about the arbitration and disciplinary process. Once you speak to one of our lawyers, they will be responsible for your case until the final decision is issued by the department or the arbitrator.

Be very wary of using any organization other than the PBA. We have heard the same story far too many times, that a client is a PBA member but also pays dues to other organizations, so they take turns with the organizations they have representing them at Internal Affairs statements. The time they use another organization (and it often is not even an attorney representing them in their statement to Internal Affairs), they then get suspended and find out that they are responsible for the costs of arbitration, which will be thousands of dollars. They then ask the PBA to represent them, after the fact.

While we would have been happy to represent you from the beginning, we can't pick up the case halfway through. It is often the prior representative's malfeasance that caused the suspension in the first place, and we would then be on the hook for that. If you are a PBA member, come to us first and we will see it through to the end, at no cost to you. However, we cannot help you if you do not come to us from the beginning. Why use an inferior product when you already pay to get the best?

Talk It Up

New PBA Sergeant-at-Arms Karlos Ramos shares some key words

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Whether working many details for Maimi-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation or volunteering to work many events for the South Florida PBA during the past 21 years, Karlos Ramos knows the importance of straight talk. So as he steps up to serve as the PBA's new sergeant-at-arms to represent MDC&R, Ramos has some choice words for members.

"I got into corrections because it seemed like a good opportunity to move forward into law enforcement," Ramos explains about his corrections affection. "But I loved what was happening. I had great friends. I was working midnights with Tuesday and Wednesday off as my days off. But I just loved what I was doing, the people I was working with, even the shift. Everything was just great."

The passionate rhetoric Ramos evokes for corrections is the same that he sends up for the PBA. He has had a similar humble ascension within the union.

"I used to see the emails about things that were happening – the good that they do – and I said to myself, 'Wow, I'd really like to be a part of that. I'd like to be a part of the good things that they do for fellow officers,'" he communicates. "I spoke to one of my good friends, Alex Munoz, the treasurer. He told me to come to the meetings, come and volunteer when there's things that are going on. Just be involved. I'm like, 'Really? That's all it takes?'"

And that's all it took.

"I started to participate in a lot of their fundraising events and just lend a helping hand. That's all I wanted to do," Ramos continues. "From there, it's now become something even more. I really like this opportunity that they've given me. I just feel honored that my name was even called to be sergeant-at-arms. I'm hoping to be somebody that members can count on, I can help them out in situations and be a good rep for the PBA and for my department."

Ramos pledges that members will get this type of straight talk from him 24/7, which, not coincidentally, will be when he makes himself available to members. Beginning with the next issue of *The Heat*, Ramos will be dishing out important information, like many of his predecessors who have represented corrections, in these pages alongside other members of the PBA executive board.

For those members who might not know Ramos, here's an introduction to your new sergeant-at-arms. He has been a K-9 officer for eight years now working with second partner, Koda.

Prior to becoming a K-9 officer, he worked in the MDC&R training bureau. And before that, he was a TA in the academy for approximately eight years. Ramos is also certified as a boot-camp instructor.



When he graduated from high school, Ramos joined the Army. When that hitch was up, he applied with corrections and also came on with the North Miami Police Department as a dispatcher. All that experience came up when MDC&R reviewed his application, Ramos was in the academy within five months.

His commitment since then has grown to renowned proportions, including serving with the MDC&R's esteemed honor guard for the past 16 years. And he has gained the experience and developed the perspective that can help all MDC&R members, as well as all members.

"Nobody grows up saying, 'I want to be a corrections officer,'" Ramos articulates. "People just seem to take a liking to it. The cops are out there catching the bad guys, and here we are dealing with them day in and day out. It takes a toll, but we learn that you just respect the inmates, treat them as human beings and have an open mind because we're not there to judge what they've already done."

As for some parting words, Ramos focuses on assuring members what they can expect when they reach out to him: If he cannot pick up, he will call right back. And to especially answer their calls when it relates to disciplinary action being taken against them, just a simple question or asking for some advice.

He is already putting the word out that he will be there. And though members know that they can call the PBA and speak to an attorney - and that will always be the case - sometimes they may want to vent to a fellow officer.

"I don't want you guys to feel like, 'Where is the PBA when we need them most?'" Ramos reiterates. "I know it's needed to just be walking in the building, showing my face and telling them, 'Hey, what do you need, how can I help or what do you lack?' I know the officers appreciate just a simple conversation because I know I did. Sometimes, it's just being in the trenches and talking for five minutes. That's all it takes."

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Jason L. Fox, Esq.

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Tonya A. Oliver

Tonya A. Oliver, Esq.

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Finding new ways to keep POAT going



SERGEANT
KENNETH
HORGAN
POAT
COMMITTEE
CHAIR

On the heels of another record-setting number of assistance cases, it is time to get back to our fundraising! While we have our signature fundraisers such as the “Cops Ride for Kids” and “Homerun for Heroes,” we’re working on new approaches to keep POAT going.

Please keep an eye out for us. We will be finding new ways this year to reach as many officers as possible, at all the law enforcement departments throughout Miami-Dade County. While we have many in the community who support

and help fund the POAT, the backbone of our funding comes from each and every officer who supports us. “Serving those that serve” has never been more important. As always, thank you for your support. We cannot do it without you!

The Tenth Annual “Homerun for Heroes” Kickball Tournament will be held at Kendall Indian Hammocks Park on Jan. 26 and 27, 2024. The park is located at 11395 SW 79th St. If you’re interested in forming a team, contact Major Thamy Gonzalez at 305-216-6605. Team registration fee is \$350, and team T-shirts are included.

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Team T-Shirts are Included

For further information contact: Major Thamy Gonzalez at 305-216-6605 or U302132@mdpd.com



“Proceeds from this event will go towards the Police Officer Assistance Trust”



Call 305-216-6605 or email u302132@mdpd.com to request material in accessible format, information on access for persons with disabilities, or a sign language interpreter 7 days in advance

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Maine shooting hits home for some of our retired members



JOHN FRALEY
RPOC
PRESIDENT

“Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey” is an iconic phrase. I took off to New Jersey for a few days to visit family and friends only to learn about the events in Lewiston, Maine. It brought memories that some of you might remember — I sure do. It has been a troubling week for the Lewiston Maine Police Department. The 17 members of that department faced a day that they will remember for the rest of their lives.

This incident brought back memories of Aug. 20, 1982. It was a payday Friday morning when Carl Brown murdered eight people and wounded several others with a 12-gauge shotgun purchased the previous night from Kmart. I was part

of a team that worked on the case, and it turned out that the entire Homicide Unit was called out to assist. I was dispatched to NW North River Drive because there was a deceased male in the road near Miami Jai Alai. Lieutenant Bobby Willis came on the scene and asked who was going to Bob Moore's Crane Service, as there were six dead on the scene and two dead at the hospital. It was going to be a long day, and I was called out at 2:30 a.m. for another homicide on a returning cruise ship. The only solace we got was the “warning shot” from a concerned witness that the subject had been killed the subject in this case.

On a lighter note, we had a very successful lunch on Wednesday, Oct. 18 of this year. Approximately 40 people attended, including members and others, at the Sports Grill in Kendall. We're planning our next event for Dec. 20 at the PBA building. We will give more information later this month via email and Constant Contact. This will be our Christmas lunch, combined with a meeting. We're also planning lunches for our members in 2024. If anyone has any ideas for future lunches, let me know.

In preparation for the 2024 33rd Annual RPOC Reunion, we are planning to have our golf event at the Mayfair Golf and Country Club. Due to the new way golf courses accommodate tee times via computer, we will keep our \$60 cost for each player. Golfers will have to pay in advance to guarantee times. The fee will include golf and prizes. It should be noted that if I tell the course two days before the event has 32 golfers, by contract we would have to pay for 32 golfers. I can always work things out on a case-by-case review. If any one of you out there has a better course or a better way to do this, please call me at 954-651-0451.

The Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund will be open for applications starting Jan. 1, 2024. Members in good standing should take this opportunity to review the goals of their children and grandchildren as they further their education. Many thanks to our members who have donated to this worthy cause. I am ex-

tremely proud to facilitate the scholarship, and along with the RPOC Board, we are grateful for your support. Please review the application process on our website: rpo cpba.org.

Attention, members:

Below is a recap of changes to the RPOC Bylaws that were adopted this year.

Any Voting Member (a “B Member”) or honorary member (an “H Member”) or member over the age of 80 (an “X Member”) who fails to (a) fill in and complete such member's annual Member Update Form mailed out in January of each year, and return same to the address for RPOC provided therein, or, (b) in the alternative, fill out and complete such information at the RPOC website (www.rpo cpba.org), or (c) contact the President or any member of the Board of Directors by telephone, for a period of two (2) years, shall be deleted from the Roster. The names of such member(s) shall be listed in a generally published RPOC monthly newsletter and/or in *The Heat*, allowing 60 days for such member(s) to have his or her membership reinstated by contacting the RPOC.

Members who have attained the age of eighty (80) years prior to mailing out of any RPOC annual dues notices shall be exempt from the payment of dues. Beginning with the following year, such members shall be designated on the RPOC Roster as “X” Members.

All present members who have turned 75 in the year 2023 or prior years will be exempt from dues payments (grandfathered in). This exemption does not apply to new members who have joined in 2024.

Please note that our by-laws have been updated as of January of this year. Copies are available to members in good standing upon request and will be sent via email.

A note from Chaplain Reba Miller

To RPOC members, friends and family: special wishes to all of you during the upcoming time of Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving, in the spiritual sense, means to give thanks for everything. Not just for one special day. “Gratitude refers to the ability to show thanks for things you have and the things you are grateful for.” It helps you to get closer to God by recognizing all the blessings in your life, and it makes it easier to focus on the positive.

We are honoring the passing of our friend and warrior, Harold Thomas “Scotty” Farquharson Jr., in September.

The entire RPOC family is sending special condolences to Eve Mucci on the passing of her sister Linda, and to Mike Stabel on the loss of his dear wife, Vicki.

To one and all, may the joys of your life bring you peace and fulfillment.

Blessings to all.

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.



Armando Planas
Miami-Dade Police Department



Enrique Fernandez
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



John Rasmussen
Miami-Dade Police Department



Lazaro Gonzalez
Miami-Dade Police Department



Michael Campos
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



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- Florida Bar Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer
- National Board of Trial Advocacy Civil Trial Specialist
- Former Assistant City Attorney, Hollywood, Florida
 - AV Rated Martindale- Hubbell
 - Adjunct Law Professor

David P. Lister

- Million Dollar Advocates Forum
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Some Kind of Heroes



The second annual Hometown Heroes Parade and Festival enables law enforcement officers to enjoy support and appreciation that makes them feel like rock stars

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Batman made the rounds at the second annual Hometown Heroes Parade and Festival, but the true superheroes here didn't need the Batman cowl. The parade also featured a man who came from Boston with a Camaro he custom built that turns into a Transformer, another tribute to the superheroes on hand in the form of a Bumblebee.

But the transforming of a community expressing its awe and appreciation at the Hometown Heroes extravaganza might have been best seen in the 11-year-old son of Miami-Dade County Commissioner Danielle Cohen Higgins, who helped create this extravaganza last year. Even Cohen Higgins was caught off guard when hearing how her son described the day's events.

"On the way home, he said, 'Mom, any kid is going to leave that event and say, I can't wait to go back next year,'" she reported.

The genius of Hometown Heroes might have been best confirmed by being held on Oct. 28, which, not coincidentally but perhaps serendipitously, is National First Responders Day. When the Miami-Dade Commission passed the legislation that Cohen Higgins brought to create Hometown Heroes in 2022, the mission was to have an event that showed respect toward Miami-Dade first responders and essential workers on an annual basis.



Batman went for a ride in the parade with the Pinecrest Police Department.

"It is an ongoing endeavor to help raise morale, show appreciation and simultaneously help change the narrative for young people on who our heroes truly are," added Cohen Higgins, who praised Miami-Dade Commission Vice Chair Anthony Rodriguez for helping to make this day possible.

Hometown Heroes was held this year at Tropical Park, where young and old and their families had the chance to interact with

law enforcement, firefighters, fire rescue and healthcare workers with what can be described as life-changing access. In addition to the parade, the event featured many exhibits, like “Hero Worlds,” where young people were able to experience many aspects of law enforcement and come out wearing their own uniforms and badges.

Hometown Heroes certainly showed how it’s a different world in Miami-Dade County than what law enforcement officers in so many cities across the country experience. Miami-Dade Police Officer Ralph Pagan, who works in the community affairs division, arrived at Tropical Park at 5 a.m., towing the big department helicopter that many, many kids took turns sitting in. More than 15 hours later, Pagan saw and felt how Hometown Heroes elevated the entire community.

“I can’t tell you how many hugs and handshakes and smiles there were and what a difference that makes that you received an entire day of nothing but positive encouragement from the people that we love to serve,” explained Pagan, who is also a South Florida PBA rep. “It’s always so exciting to see just the face of these kids seeing you almost like a superhero.”

Cohen Higgins detailed how she hoped the festival would celebrate the dedication she has seen in the many ride-alongs she has been on, the visits to the county’s detention centers and correctional facilities and spending time with first responders, seeing them work day in and day out at Surfside, during the pandemic and every time they put on the uniform and leave their homes. She reiterated that the mission is to promote the narrative that law enforcement officers are not anything other than what they are: men and women protecting and serving every day.

Officers did not need to wear Batman costumes to drive the narrative. Their capes were virtual, and at Hometown Heroes, that was easy for all to see.

After fun and food from noon to 6 p.m., the parade made a loop around a section of the park, led by a combined honor guard of MDC&R and MDPD officers flanked by firefighters on either side. Nearly every department in the county loaded officers into one of its vehicles painted or wrapped to showcase the various ways it serves or honor aspects of its personnel. Like MDPD’s car featuring patches of all branches of the military.

Perhaps the truck most fitting the parade was the one carrying North Miami PD officers and their family members. The trimming featured images of Thor, Superman, Black Panther and The Hulk.

South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl took it all in, standing with members from throughout the county. Some were assigned to work the event. Many more attended with their families, and it left Stahl with the feeling that Hometown Heroes is meant to generate.

“Whether it was climbing on police boats or fire trucks or interactive activities they had for all ages, it just brought the community together,” the South Florida PBA president declared. “Sometimes, this gets lost in the negative part of media, but this event, like many others we have had here in South Florida, reminds us that, man, we’re all in this together.”

How the community views its hometown heroes was evident in what Cohen Higgins described as the energy of the day. To give this additional perspective, consider that Miami-Dade has celebrated its rock stars and its sports stars with parades, festivals and worship from afar. But how many opportunities are there to shake Jimmy Butler’s hand?

Yet, the opportunity to reach out and shake hands with those being honored at Hometown Heroes might have a more powerful, lasting and valuable impact on the community than beating the Bills or the Patriots.



Kids experience the world of first responders, including getting their own uniforms and badges and sitting in one of the Miami-Dade PD helicopters on display at the festival.



A truck from the North Miami Police Department offers its own take on why law enforcement officers are superheroes.



Miami-Dade Commissioner Danielle Cohen Higgins, who started Hometown Heroes, with her family.

“To be able to do that in such a big event and with officers from multiple departments and Corrections shows how much goes into trying to keep our community safe,” Pagan added. “It’s inspiring for your police to see everybody in one place and have a bigger vision for the job of law enforcement other than getting a ticket or handling an accident.”

The parade took a route that began at the new arts center in the park, ran about five city blocks and was packed with cheers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation members provide kids with a chance to experience fingerprinting.

SOME KIND CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

and applause that lasted even longer than that. It was a rousing culmination to the day and an endnote to what Cohen Higgins and the commission wanted to create this year: a day of education about what law enforcement provides.

The line of kids waiting to experience fingerprinting at the exhibit MDC&R set up confirmed that the mission was accomplished. Jonathan Lingo, an MDC&R officer for the past 15 years, noted what Hometown Heroes achieved from his perspective.

“I don’t know if they understand what goes on inside, but with the different things that were offered to the community, the kids really seemed to enjoy finding out,” Lingo continued. “I think it’s definitely something that they will remember.”

And that seemed to lead to what Lingo enjoyed that he and many of the officers there will remember.

“It’s nice to be recognized with what we do when a lot of times, we go day in and day out doing our jobs, and you don’t really get recognized for what is involved every day,” he said. “And it gives you that morale booster for not only me, but to everyone there, that ‘Wow, it’s great what they did for us.’”

After seeing all this, Lingo added that he plans on attending the Hometown Heroes festival next year. Perhaps every member should think about getting this type of morale booster shot next year.

For another sense of what it was like for law enforcement to be present, check out the experience for Miami-Dade PD K-9 Officer Julio Comas. He has partnered with Sparky, Miami-Dade County’s first support dog, the past five years.

Sparky is a rescue from the Miami-Dade animal shelter. He certainly attracted a lot attention and, in return, left many kids



A mock police station was part of “Hero Worlds,” one of the new exhibits at this year’s festival.



Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava poses for a photo op with some of her heroes from the MDPD.

smiling over seeing this hero.

“That right there is a win for me in the day,” Comas related. “The support alone, it means a lot to us. That little slice of appreciation helps us, and it tells us people have our backs about what we do. And we’re glad to continue doing it.”

Having their backs received an extra dose from all the elected officials who attended, led by Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava. Many of them even piled onto a float in the parade.

Stahl had a chance to converse with many of them, who offered him a lasting message about why they wanted to be there.

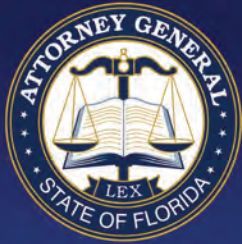
“They just couldn’t say enough nice words or thank-you to the unsung heroes out there,” he shared. “When you have moments like this – hometown events that are put together by elected officials – it’s a big thank-you to everybody out there. I loved it.”

A few weeks after the last float came in, the last songs played and the last of the specially made food and frozen lemonade was consumed, Cohen Higgins appraised the residual value of Hometown Heroes. She hopes that other communities will see it and plan their own parades. She wants to make sure that giving first responders the appreciation they deserve will keep recruiting and morale from declining.

“I hope that the community took away that our heroes in Miami-Dade County don’t wear capes, but rather they wear the badge and the uniform,” she accentuated. “I think we accomplished that. And if we didn’t, then we’re going to try again next year, we’re going to try again the year after that, and we’re just going to grow the message and continue to honor these professionals.”



A combined honor guard leads the Hometown Heroes parade.



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JOB OPENINGS



Here's The Plan

Another groundbreaking program from the MDPD Training Bureau has officers ready, willing and able in the event of a mass casualty attack

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

A “wow” reverberated through the Miami-Dade Police Department on Feb. 16, 2018. Two days earlier, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz opened fire on students and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in nearby Parkland, killing 17 people and injuring 17 others. The incident, which is the deadliest mass shooting at a high school in U.S. history, hit too close to home for MDPD, and certainly too close for comfort.

Two days later, MDPD Deputy Director Freddy Ramirez reached out to Manny Malgor, a sergeant in the department's training bureau. Malgor was also one of the department's rising experts in use for force analysis, homeland security and special response, as well as a veteran of the SWAT team and robbery intervention detail.

“He calls me and says, ‘I need to meet with you.’ So, I go to his office, sit down with him, and he basically asked me two questions,” Malgor recalled. “Number one was, ‘Can what happened in Parkland happen here in Miami-Dade?’ Obviously, the answer was yes. The second one was, ‘Are our personnel, our people properly trained to respond to an incident like that?’ And the honest answer was no.”

Almost immediately, MDPD convened a working group, including Miami-Dade Fire Rescue personnel, to provide a plan of action for the expeditious and focused response to an ongoing violent, life-threatening situation where delayed deployment could otherwise result in death or great bodily injury to innocent victims. They contacted departments across the country such as the LAPD, the NYPD, Dallas and Houston PDs and the Broward County Sheriff's Office, as well as incorporating ideas

from the FBI and renowned national programs, and eventually crafted an official department policy for a Mass Casualty Response Plan.

Implementation of the policy and plan came in the form of a 16-hour course run by the MDPD Training Bureau that nearly every member of the department has been through. Along with many members of Miami-Dade Fire.

MDPD Chief Arnold Palmer, who was assigned to the training bureau from 2018-2020 before being promoted, makes an unequivocal statement about the aftermath of the policy and the training.

“Let's hope we never get challenged,” he stated.

Prior to the training, the department's plan was still working off what it had developed in the wake of the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 and mobile field force training conducted every other year. Malgor confided that some of the department's brightest – and most passionate – minds debated-back and forth to produce a plan detailed in a 10-page briefing that guides everybody through what has been called one of the most intense and welcome endeavors from the training bureau.

According to this document that outlines the training curriculum, the policy was created using the best practices from the National Incident Management System and the National Institute of Justice to address mass casualty attacks and modified to meet the specific needs of the MDPD. From a high-level perspective, the goal is for Miami-Dade County first responders to be prepared to take immediate action, establish incident command and operate in a unified command configuration with multiple responding agencies when faced with an active shooter situation that could lead to mass casualties.



The MDPD Training Bureau's Mass Casualty Attack Plan equips officers with the ability to respond quickly to stop the killing.

A mass casualty incident, according to the Department of Homeland Security, is any incident in which four or more individuals are injured or killed. Malgor notes that this is the distinction from an active-shooter response in which someone is armed with a firearm, be it a handgun or a rifle, for example. But response to an active shooter is prepped as though it will become a mass casualty incident.

Consequently, the primary mission of the training is to first and foremost, "STOP THE KILLING." (The all caps is the way the document reads and worth noting here). Also, in recognition that mass casualty attacks generally occur during a short period of time, special emphasis is on the need to neutralize the threat as quickly as possible. Confirmation that the subject is either neutralized, has fled or has been contained will allow first responders to transition to the second and equally important mission: "STOP THE DYING."

"Instead of us assuming that they have the knowledge, we ought to make sure we input them, and we train them to that level," Chief Palmer submitted. "Give them an idea, tell them what we expect from them and train them in that format so that, God forbid, in case one day something happens, officers have a chance. They have an opportunity of mitigating the incident successfully."

From his research, Malgor submits that there have been numerous incidents in which law enforcement could have reacted or responded more effectively. He has sat in on debriefings and listened to after-action analysis of responses like the 2017 Route 91 Harvest music festival shooting in Las Vegas and the 2015 terrorist attacks that included 90 people being killed at the Bataclan Theater in Paris, France.

Malgor has learned straight from the horse's mouth, as he described it, about those responses and what could have occurred to save people's lives. He confirms that response scenarios to mass casualty attacks are developing and evolving so much from incident to incident. And from that learning, the MDPD training has been created to give officers sequential objectives when they respond to a mass casualty attack.

The A-B-C-D, boom, boom, boom of it," he added. "That's what we need to have."

The biggest learning event from Parkland that has shaped the MDPD training is the emphasis on solo officer response. But how many officers wouldn't have a hard time with that?

So to build a Mass Casualty Attack Plan that would empower the safest, most effective solo response and the A-B-C-D to follow safely execute it, MDPD left no stone unturned. One of the initial resources to help build the training came through a program based at the University of Texas known as Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training or ALERT.

The FBI and Department of Homeland Security consider



Nearly every officer in the Miami-Dade Police Department has undergone the 16-hour training course to respond to a mass casualty attack.

ALERT to be the standard on active-shooter response. The Mass Casualty Attack Plan team became trainers out of that program, then used the ALERT principles and concepts to create its curriculum.

"Now, we're changing the dynamic, asking officers to potentially go into an incident where you know there's an individual killing people actively, and you may have to go in there by yourself," Malgor explained. "So that was a hard sell at the beginning."

There was a little bit of pushback when the training first started. But the training bureau found a way to break that down and personalize the course.

"Most of us have children, wives, husbands, nieces, nephews, somebody that you love. And if you tell those officers, 'If that was your son or your daughter in that classroom and they were sitting in there for 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes while police officers are waiting outside and kids are getting slaughtered, how would you feel?'" Malgor reasoned. "Believe it or not, that makes a huge impact. I mean, you see the look on their faces, and they're like, 'Ok, I get it. I understand now.'"

Having this policy and plan will help officers most during that first 20-30 minutes of a response to an active shooter or mass casualty when it can be sheer chaos. Debriefing on incidents reveals that chaos can be heard loud and clear by people on the radio that only clears up when incident command is established.

"What we implemented with incident command is having that first individual officer arriving on scene, regardless of tenure – it doesn't have to be a supervisor, it could be a rookie with six months on, a year on – assume command of that incident," Malgor said. "And why is that important? Because now you have an individual in charge of that scene."

The MDPD mass casualty plan has also developed support protocols for Miami-Dade Fire Rescue. Four officers and three

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

HERE'S CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

fire rescue personnel on the scene create a rescue task force.

According to the plan, the rescue task force establishes a casualty collection point inside the warm zone of the venue wherever most of those victims are. The force secures that area, bringing victims in to start treating them medically so they can be transported to the hospital as quickly as possible.

"From the police officer's perspective, it allows them to focus on their police duties and give those high-risk activities of taking care of the patients over to those who that's their everyday job," noted Miami-Dade Fire Chief Chris Ackerman, who was part of the team that developed the training.

The plan also details staging the cold zone where all police and fire personnel gather, investigative responsibility, hospital security and management and incident demobilization. As part of stopping the killing, there are intricate directions for assault teams, including well-orchestrated communication procedures. And officers must be prepared to immediately transition to the stop the dying phase as soon as tactically feasible.

The majority of those who attended will confirm that it's an overwhelming amount of information to put into training in the limited time of 16 hours. But the takeaway is undeniable about how it can save lives and enable officers to respond safely and quickly enough to stop the killing and stop the dying.

"I think the genius behind it is creating a model response," Chief Palmer emphasized. "So if every officer sees the play before the play is called and understands it, when they get to a scene, maybe one of them doesn't realize the whole plan, but maybe the next officer does. When they get into the environment, they can all feed off each other, recall the plan and activate what we have asked them to."



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The Good Life

MDC&R Officer Omari Wright leaves a legacy that lifted up everybody around him

BY DAN CAMPANA

Live life to the fullest.
Life is short.

The sudden death of Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation Officer Omari Wright raised an undeniable awareness of how to live life for those who knew and loved him. Wright, only 26, died in the early morning hours of Nov. 2 when his vehicle and another collided in a fiery crash in Miami Gardens.

Officer Khiry Maxwell, who works at Turner Guilford Knight Center, remembered his cousin as a loving, outgoing person who enjoyed being around people and never complained about having a bad day.

“I’m going to miss everything about him,” Maxwell said, relating how they grew up together pretty much as brothers in Miami. “As far as living his life, I don’t think there was a place he would turn down going to. He was always vacationing and visiting different countries.”

Wright didn’t need to get on a plane to have a good time, though. MDC&R Corporal Alexander Francois got to know Wright through work — he would do overtime on the 10th floor, where Wright was assigned — and they hung out regularly. Whether playing Call of Duty or hitting the club scene, Wright’s energy for having fun was unmistakable.

Francois summed it up with the phrase they used to signal they were about to have a good time: “Get on the couch.”

“He’ll get on top of the couches in the club, and then he’ll start dancing, having fun. He just loved life, so he said, ‘From now on, if we ever go to a club, we get on the couch,’” Francois recalled. “I’m really understanding the term ‘life is short,’ because you never know when it’s your time.”

Wright started at Florida State Corrections at Maxwell’s urging before joining MDC&R in 2019.

“When I finally got him to come to Corrections, I think that it was probably



Officer Omari Wright

Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation

Date of Passing: Nov. 2, 2023



his dream job. Maybe not, but I think he enjoyed it. He took the job serious. I never heard him complain or say he had a bad day,” explained Maxwell, who also convinced Wright to go into the Air Force with him in 2021. Wright was a reservist at the time of his death.

“There was a little fight to get him to join, but finally he called me one day and said, ‘All right, cousin, let’s go ahead and do it.’ We shipped out together. We had fun there. We talked every day,”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

IN MEMORIAM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

Maxwell added.

Wright didn't let things get to him, which isn't always easy to do when working in corrections. Whether offering others encouragement or facing challenges head-on, Wright's approach was noticeable to those around him, including Miami-Dade Public Safety Director James Reyes, who said Wright would be greatly missed by the MDC&R family.

"He was really outgoing, and the thing about him is you gradually grow [to know him]. If you're having a bad day, you come to work and they put you on a floor you don't want to be at ... [and Omari] will come around and be like, 'Listen, man, make the best of it,'" Francois recalled, saying Wright exemplified that mentality. "You won't never see him upset. He won't complain. Whatever situation you put him in, he'll be the best at it. He just had a natural gift of having fun within himself."

That personality also helped Wright



connect with inmates.

"They loved him. Regardless of who you are ... he's going to show you respect. That's what makes him so genuine. He loves everybody. I don't think he had hatred in his heart for nobody," Francois noted.

The pain is fresh for those grieving for Wright. Maxwell said he had lost his



little brother. Francois, who talked to Wright a couple of hours before the fatal crash, will miss playing Call of Duty with his friend. The entire 10th floor crew will try to carry on and pay tribute to Wright. Maxwell stated how all law enforcement officers can do this:

"Live life and enjoy every moment," he declared.



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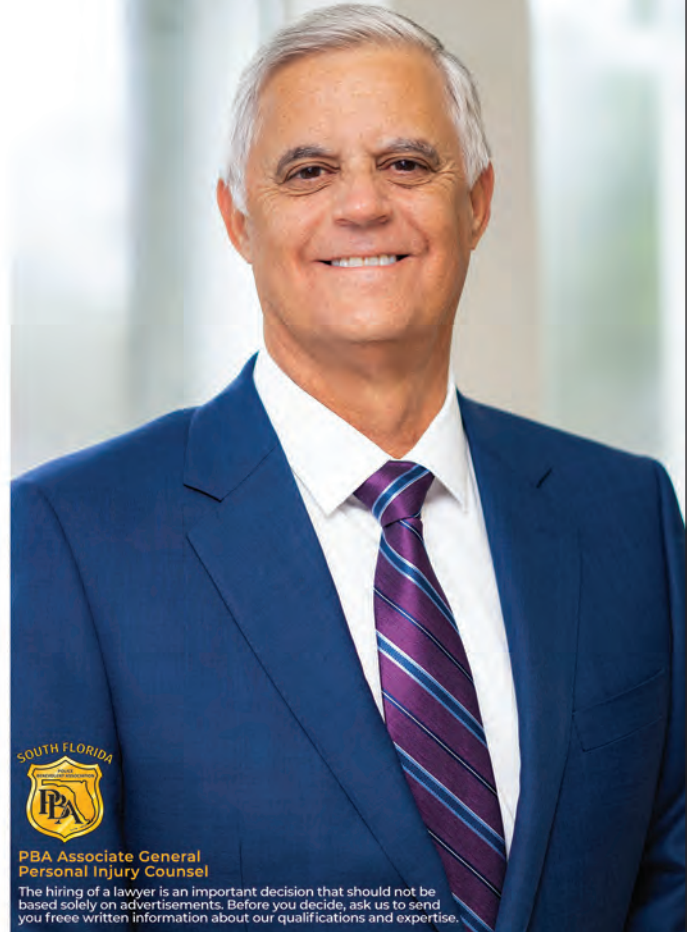
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Let's Go to the Monitored

Spotlighting how the MDC&R Monitored Release Bureau helps corrections make a big impact on the community



■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitations Officers don't have to look too hard to see the bad and the ugly of the job. And oftentimes, corrections officers can't help but feel that those outside the walls only see the bad times that come from dealing with those doing time.

Seeing some of the vast good coming from one of the best corrections department in the U.S., however, spotlights the work of the MDC&R Monitored Release Bureau (MRB). This group of 52 officers managing offenders under house arrest creates a face-to-face with them that those inside and outside the profession should know as the best of times in corrections.

"We all see the bad inside of the facilities day in, day out, but this program, you see the good," explains MDC&R Officer Tovarish De Oleo, who has worked in monitored release for the past eight years. "You get to see the look on their faces when we drop them off at their homes and their families are waiting outside with signs and they first meet, and they hug each other. The families are thanking us for taking them home and being good officers to their family members. That really does feel good."

MRB is a three-shift unit working out of TGK in which each

officer serves as a case manager handling 25 to 35 files at a time of offenders who have been released to house arrest wearing a GPS ankle monitor. The cases are assigned geographically, and case managers are in the field every day. Their office is on wheels. The shifts can run 10 hours or more.

Processing offenders through MRB is a strict regimen. Once they are granted house arrest, an officer in MRB picks up the inmates and escorts them to TGK, where they change into their clothes to go home and have the monitor placed on their ankles.

"Once they're at home, they will be contacted by their assigned case manager," details De Oleo, who has been on with MDC&R for 16 years. "Whatever shift the officer works, the offender waits until they speak with their assigned case managers. And also pertaining to the court order as far as the condition of what they're allowed to do."

In addition to checking every one of their cases daily via phone, MRB officers visit them every other week at school, on the job or at home, depending on the case. The visit lasts about 10 minutes, and, yes, it is to check the ankle monitor first and foremost, because there are always a few who are trying to beat the system.

But as much as confirming there are no signs of tampering



From left, Officers Alexander, Williams, Hernandez and Fernandez



Officer Hill, left, and Officer Bozeman



From left, Officers Garcia, Lafail, Bozeman and Murray-Downs

with the device – maybe cut marks or trying to pull out the pins – MRB officers are making sure to keep their subjects safe. Going into the homes is where working under the scope of probation officers adds a different element to the job of being in corrections.

“Now, there’s much more we have to be very wary of or endure as far as the community and what’s going on because we’re working in the capacity of law enforcement,” De Oleo adds. “We are all officers, and we conduct ourselves as officers, but now we’re doing service to our community out in the neighborhoods.”

As part of that, MRB officers drive unmarked cars to keep eyes on offenders in the program, making sure they get to work on time, back home on time and overall walk the straight and narrow. They help those in the program maintain the perspective of how fortunate they are to have been given house arrest.

“You ask them, ‘How does it feel being back home? What’s the first thing that you want to eat?’” De Oleo reports. “We remind them, ‘You could be sitting in jail or in the units eating bologna sandwiches, but instead you are fortunate where you’re now sitting here with your family, with your kids enjoying the holidays and home-cooked meals versus being inside.’”

The motivation for officers in MRB is to keep the offenders they manage from being sent back to the bologna sandwich and one sheet and one pillow in the facilities. There’s a definitive approach that helps them stick to the everyday life of getting the groceries, doing the laundry and making sure to be home by curfew.

“It depends on the case manager to provide them with the respect,” De Oleo comments. “We’re walking into their homes, meeting their families, and we don’t want to give off this vibe that we’re all tough and whatnot. They’re all adults. You treat them with respect.

The greatest reward comes when those in the program turn the page and move on because of the service of the MRB. The offenders are getting back into a community they wondered if they would ever see again.

And then comes the inherent good for those officers who work in the MRB.

“I’ve run into them at movie theaters, the mall or at Publix, and they will come up and say, ‘Hey, do you remember me?’” De Oleo notes. “They remember the respect and what we did for them. And it’s pretty gratifying.”



From left, Officers Perez, Hernandez and Bermudez



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REFLECTIONS

Catching up with a renowned South Florida PBA Member

Dishing It Out

Miami-Dade Corrections legend Luis De Los Santos never hesitated to go the extra mile and stand up for PBA members

■ BY DAN CAMPANA

Things started getting ugly. They often do in the world of corrections.

A fight broke out among several inmates while Luis De Los Santos — better known as Delo to friends and colleagues — was working solo with 30 or 40 prisoners in one area. As he tried to maintain control, hoping everyone would listen to his commands, Delo noticed “a tower of a man” aggressively yelling at inmates to return to their cells.

“This big guy, they call him trustee, and he runs the cell,” De Los Santos explained.

Now, this wasn't De Los Santos's first interaction with the man. De Los Santos previously helped ensure that he could see his daughter during a visit to the jail. That simple gesture of humanity by De Los Santos resonated with the inmate, who offered his thanks to De Los Santos as he returned to his cell.

“When he told me, ‘I thank for you allowing me to see my daughter,’ you realize it's these small things that people do that help you learn to appreciate the job,” he said.

Among the harsh realities of a correctional facility, De Los Santos realized the benefit of treating people the right way. And it paid off when the man helped prevent things from getting worse.

“Little by little, you build up your reputation like you cannot believe,” said De Los Santos.

Over 26 years working in corrections, De Los Santos saw almost everything on his journey from a rookie officer to eventually serving as a corporal. What kept him going during his career with Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation was a willingness to go to bat for people who deserved it. That approach also made him a stalwart within the PBA for many years.

None of it would have happened if not for a woman who helped De Los Santos get hired after he was rejected for failing his hearing test. Working in human resources, the woman navigated

the system to ensure that De Los Santos wouldn't be denied employment because of his hearing issue.

“They had to hire me with a hearing aid,” he said. “I was the first hearing aid person.”

In 1987, he started in the Dade County Jail, working intake. The first three years were “really tough,” he acknowledges, adding in words like “nasty” and “dungeon” to describe the scene. He was involved in fights, and an inmate bit him once.

“I never imagined that I would be in that environment. Everything was just awful,” the now-60-year-old De Los Santos bluntly shared.

He moved around within MDC&R throughout the 1990s, including time spent at the Dade County Courthouse escorting inmates around and providing security in courtrooms. Through it all, De Los Santos committed himself to communicating and being open-minded.

“I think the best thing was to be fair,” he said. “So if you have 30 inmates, and you have 29 apples, nobody will eat until you get the 30th apple.”

That strategy, along with a goal to move up the ranks, paid off in 1998 when De Los Santos passed the test to become a corporal in 2003, the role he served until retirement.

De Los Santos credits his success as a supervisor to being his authentic self with everyone.

“I didn't learn it from a book. I did it myself ... my reputation, my credibility with the inmates,” he offered.

In 2004, his efforts culminated in a surprise moment. Delo's supervisor, Captain Carol Culver, told him to report to headquarters. He was reluctant to do so.

“I say, ‘Come on, for what? I have too much to do,’” he recalled. “She said, ‘You need to go now.’”

It just so happened that the coming week was the beginning of National Hispanic Heritage month. Delo figured Captain Culver sent him to headquarters to



Luis De Los Santos's Record

- Hired in September 1987
- Served 26 years with Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation
- Promoted to corporal in 2003
- Retired in February 2013
- Named Hispanic Officer of the Year in 2004
- Appointed to full-time release to the PBA representing MDC&R from 2006-2012

represent as a native of the Dominican Republic. Turns out, she had nominated Delo for Hispanic officer of the year. And he won the award,

“I hadn't won anything my life before that,” he added.

De Los Santos also made his impact felt as a PBA representative for Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation. His three years inside the Dade County Jail gave him credibility among members, as did his work on behalf of members.

As a rep, he visited jails to understand working conditions. He sat at the table during mitigation hearings. He took pride in getting officers their jobs back.

He explains his devotion to PBA members by way of his actions on hearing that there was no detergent to do the laundry

in the jail. Delo called the warehouse to ask how that could be.

"They were like 'Are you f---king kidding me. You're calling me for what?' I said, 'Let me tell you something. Do you know what it smells like after a day or two without laundry?'" De Los Santos recounted.

With the help of the PBA Legal Department, whom he called his greatest asset in standing up for members, the laundry got done. That incident also became the subject of one of his first-ever "Delo's Dishes," a monthly column he wrote for the initial version of *The Heat*, as an outlet to share his opinions on PBA issues, bad jail supervisors and politics.

Delo's Dishes actually began when the PBA president asked all executive board members to write for *The Heat*. And in addition to the commentary the column included, Delo also used it to convey his love for great food to members. He would seek out what he called the mom-and-pop restaurants with the best food and review their best dishes in the publication. And many of Delo's Dishes included a picture of him with the dish he wanted to share, which is something many members remember most about him.

"I always checked my thoughts because I was very, very concerned about



everything I wrote and what members thought about it," he said. "So I would do my little research on every issue."

As much as anything, he's proud of the number of members he brought into the PBA. At one point, members who left the PBA had to pay back dues for time they left if they wanted to rejoin the union. Delo convinced leadership to grant amnesty to some corrections officers who wanted to come back, and that opened



the door for many members to join the PBA.

Through it all, De Los Santos learned what it took to be a great union rep. It wasn't anything he read in a book.

"The one thing that really helped me was that I never, never stopped going to the jail," he explained. "My people saw me. That brought me so much credibility. That kept me grounded because I never forgot where I came from."

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Members Only Section

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

Homestead's Hero

Police officer responds to save choking infant



On Aug. 21, a Homestead woman was in a panic. Her first response was to call for a first responder.

Homestead Officer Chris Cosio arrived at the scene to find a 10-month-old baby choking.

When Cosio got to the scene, baby Ruby wasn't breathing. Her mother said she was choking on a piece of paper and all previous CPR attempts had been unsuccessful. Luckily, Cosio was there and ready to jump into action,

"I couldn't feel a heartbeat, so I just reverted back to my training," said Cosio, who has been on the job with Homestead for 10 years. "I remembered that when it's an infant you have to hold them upside down and hold them with one arm while you tap their back with the other."

After three pats on the back or so, Cosio felt Ruby jump and regain her breath. Miami-Dade Fire Rescue then examined her before returning her to her mother's care.

Fast forward to October. Cosio was honored by Homestead Police as the department's Officer of the Month for his heroic actions. The award came as a surprise to Cosio, who said that even though this was the first call he had ever received like this, he was just doing his job.



"I did something any of my coworkers would have done," he commented. "I know coworkers who have been in the same situation, but it was nice to have the public be made aware of what we do day to day."

After the incident, footage from NBC6 showed Cosio holding baby Ruby. Since the incident, Cosio has not spoken with Ruby or her mother but wants to remind mothers like Ruby's that accidents happen, and the best thing you can do is call for help.

Help for heroes comes to FIU members

FIU members recently had the opportunity to work on life planning with the help of renowned law enforcement life coach John Kelly.

Kelly, a 30-year veteran of the Broward County Sheriff's Office and a retired sergeant, brought his "Sometimes Heroes Need Help" life leadership and wellness program to the FIU Police Department on Nov. 2. Kelly specializes in guiding and mentoring officers through life's critical stages and believes that those that have made it successfully to the other side (retirement) are

morally obligated to share their experience.

The session covered essential aspects such as financial, physical and mental health, emphasizing the significance of self-care and the impact of better decision making across all facets of our lives.

"How can we expect those tasked with protecting and serving the community to perform at the highest level of competency and professionalism when their personal lives are in turmoil?" Kelly notes on his website.



Monroe County Sheriff's Office honors award winners

At a ceremony in Marathon in the Florida Keys on Nov. 3, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office announced its quarterly member awards. Members of the third quarter of 2023 were recognized for exemplary and outstanding service to the agency and to the citizens of Monroe County, as well as for their years of service to the agency.

Pictured from left are Bureau of Corrections Deputy of the Quarter Osmel Cruz Nunez, Deputy of the Quarter Sergeant Joel Slough, DeShawn Battle, the support member of the quarter, Sheriff Rick Ramsay and Paul Pignataro, the reserve deputy of the quarter.



A North Miami member worthy of commendation

When the Facebook hashtags read "#makingapositiveimpact, #respect, #integrity, #professionalism, #courage, #unity, #empathy, it must be for somebody doing special work.

The person in this case is North Miami Officer Natalie Buissereth, whose work was recognized with a special commendation from the North Miami Citizens Investigative Board (CIB). A veteran officer in the department's community-oriented police section who oversees the PAL of North Miami, CIB honored Buissereth for her commitment and dedication to the citizens and the North Miami government.

The commendation given to Buissereth during a ceremony on Oct. 23 read:

"For your outstanding police service, which significantly impacts public safety and crime prevents, and brings credit to the North Miami Police Department, the citizens of the City of North Miami appreciate your exceptional contribution."



Driving Awareness

South Florida PBA members paint the town pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month

From male officers wearing pink to officers wearing pink badges to departments decorated with pink ribbons to department vehicles wrapped in pink, law enforcement throughout South Florida went above and beyond to support National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. For all of the survivors and those currently fighting this life-altering disease, South Florida PBA helped raise awareness with some of the following actions and events.

It's not every day that law enforcement officers get to participate in a photo shoot, but when it comes to a good cause, they're up for anything. Aventura police showed off their "breast cancer awareness vehicles" in a photo shoot on Oct. 26 at Shuckers Waterfront in North Bay Village. They even took us back to another decade with their pink buggy.

Bay Harbor Islands was a part of the same photo shoot. Officer Mirta Ortega brought the department's "breast cancer car" and even some special four-legged friends.

Pinecrest Police also got in on the photo shoot action. The department sent Officer Sean Rios who, like other officers, was there to show support and educate the community about getting screenings with these cars.

Florida International University also had the idea to wrap its vehicles in pink. FIU even had a special surprise from Miami Fire Rescue's boat, which released pink smoke into the ocean air on Oct. 28.

South Miami debuted a specially wrapped breast cancer vehicle thanks to First Class Autosports, joining South Miami Shores, Coral Gables and Bal Harbour in the convoy of vehicles wrapped to raise awareness.

Bal Harbour police brought their breast cancer awareness car to Miami Country Day School on Oct. 16 for the school's breast cancer event.

Breast Cancer Cars



Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation decked out its Metro-West Detention Center in pink. Staff members showed their creative side by decorating their doors with special designs in support of breast cancer victims.

MDC&R also attended the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk. The department's "Men Wear Pink" ambassador, Director James Reyes, was front and center on Oct. 30.

MDC&R's softball team competed in the Miami-Dade Parks Making Strides Against Breast Cancer tournament. They may have been "United in Green," but they were fighting for the pink ribbon.

Medley



October is not only Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it's also Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Medley police lit up their building in pink and purple to honor domestic violence victims. On Oct. 27, the department held the lighting as part of its "Shine a Light, Save a Life" initiative.

Miami-Dade



Throughout the month of October, Miami-Dade Police Department officers wore pink badges to show their support.

Additionally, on Oct. 28, the department's Police Power in Pink team showed up to the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk at Loan Depot Park.

A Spooktacular Halloween

South Florida PBA members bring out the treats

South Florida PBA members' duty includes an opportunity to enjoy a few tricks and treats. Here's a look at how they served on Halloween.



Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation

In the past few years, trunk or treats have become all the rage. Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation Sergeant Bridgett Johnson confirmed as much when taking her son to multiple trunk or treats. And she suggested it would be the perfect event for MDC&R to host for the community. On Oct. 30, the department held its own trunk or treat filled with candy, music, cool costumes and even an LED robot.

While the trunk or treat was all fun and games, Johnson says it served a greater purpose.

"When you think of Miami-Dade Corrections, you think of the jail, and it's always negative...but this type of event allows the community to see that not everyone is mean or nasty," she said. "We do give back to the community. We do have fun functions where the community can see the positive side of what we do."



Pinecrest

Pinecrest Police hit the ground running for Halloween. Officers got in the spooky spirit at Pinecrest Gardens on Oct. 15 for their Howl-O-Ween event featuring four-legged friends of all kinds in costumes.

Then on Oct. 22, officers dressed as Spider-Man and Batman went to the Pinecrest Elementary trunk or treat, protecting more than 500 families.

It turns out that Pinecrest's Batman was busy — on Oct. 31, he also made an appearance at St. Louis Covenant School's Trick or Treat.



Monroe County Sheriff's Office



Monroe County Sheriff's Office also got on board with the trunk or treat trend. Deputies visited Key Largo School for its annual trunk or treat on Oct. 28. Sergeant James Hager says that all the kids got to tour the department's boat, and plenty of candy was handed out.

Also at the MCSO Trunk or Treat, deputies had a chance to meet kids who chose to dress up as a police officer for Halloween.



Sweetwater

In Sweetwater, officers celebrated Halloween by handing out loads of candy to eager trick or treaters on Oct. 31.



Medley

Part of the fun of Halloween is engaging in all the spooky activities. In early October, Medley Police took their youth explorers to the House of Horror Haunted House.



Bay Harbor Islands

Bay Harbor Islands went to the schools to celebrate Halloween. The department's DARE Officer Megan Cabrera hung out with students at Ruth K. Broad Bay Habor K-8 Center on Oct. 31. Everyone from Things 1 & 2 to Audrey Hepburn was in attendance.

Serving those who served: South Florida PBA celebrates veterans

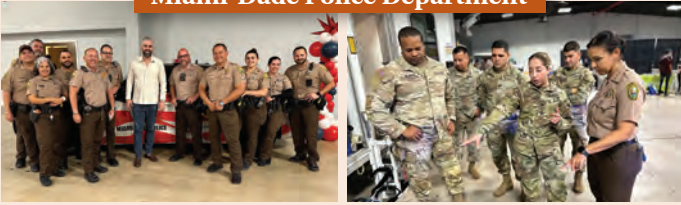
Nov. 11 is a day for the entire country to honor the men and women who have served in the military. It also serves as a time to honor the connection between the military and law enforcement.

Many law enforcement agencies in South Florida hosted or

participated in events on Veterans Day to recognize officers who have served or currently serve in all branches of the military, as well as members of the community who have served.

Here's a look at how some South Florida PBA members took part in Veterans Day activities.

Miami-Dade Police Department



MDPD held two separate events to honor veterans. "Veterans Stand Down" was an event to support veterans' mental health. The department partnered with Miami-Dade County Commissioner Anthony Rodriguez for the event on Nov. 2.



On Nov. 9, MDPD participated in a veteran and military appreciation luncheon held by the Cecil and Ana Milton Foundation to support first responders.



Doral

Doral Police went the more traditional route on Nov. 11, with their annual Veterans Day Ceremony at Veterans Park.

Veterans Day Thanksgiving Lunch



Pinecrest Police, North Miami Police and West Miami Police took the opportunity to combine Veterans Day and Thanksgiving with their 8th Annual Veterans Thanksgiving Lunch at Loan Depot Park on Nov. 14. Officers served up some turkey and all the Thanksgiving fixings to those who served our country, as well as sat down to play some dominoes with vets.



North Miami member recognized for lifesaving response

At the Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police Officer of the Month Awards Dinner on Oct. 30, West Miami Officer Serge Thevenot (pictured at right here) was honored for his successful lifesaving efforts for an infant during the month of September.



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This government-mandated requirement, embedded in the Internal Revenue Code, is a critical facet of retirement planning. RMDs serve as a mechanism to ensure that individuals with retirement savings accounts fulfill their tax obligations once they reach a specific age. In this comprehensive guide, we will unravel the complexities of RMDs, exploring their origins, calculations, tax implications and strategic approaches for effective retirement financial management. Additionally, we'll delve into the reasons some individuals might find RMDs challenging and explore strategies to mitigate these challenges.

Foundations of RMDs

Required minimum distributions are essentially the government's way of preventing individuals from indefinitely deferring taxes on their retirement funds. These mandated withdrawals become applicable when an individual reaches the age of 72. The intention is clear: retirees should start withdrawing a minimum amount from their retirement savings each year to contribute their fair share to the tax system. It's a mechanism designed to balance the tax advantages of retirement accounts with the government's need for revenue.

The RMD calculation process

The calculation of RMDs involves a relatively straightforward formula. It considers the balance of your retirement account at the end of the previous year and divides it by a factor known as the "life expectancy." This life expectancy factor is an estimation of the number of years you might continue to enjoy your retirement. The formula ensures that the withdrawals align with your expected lifespan, preventing you from exhausting your retirement funds prematurely. Please note, if I serve as your advisor and your assets are held at Schwab, we automatically calculate these for you annually.

Tax implications of RMDs

Understanding the tax implications of required minimum distributions is crucial for effective retirement planning. The money withdrawn as part of your RMD is treated as ordinary income, just like the earnings from a job. Consequently, these withdrawals are subject to income tax. Neglecting to take out the required amount can result in a penalty of 50 percent of the shortfall, underscoring the importance of fulfilling this financial obligation in a timely manner.

Reasons people might not like RMDs

While RMDs serve a crucial purpose in ensuring that individuals contribute their fair share to the tax system during retirement, some people find them challenging or frustrating for various reasons:

- **Loss of control.** RMDs force individuals to withdraw a portion of their retirement savings, potentially disrupting their preferred withdrawal strategy. Some retirees would prefer more control over when and how much they withdraw from their accounts.
- **Tax impact.** The tax implications of RMDs can be a source of frustration for retirees. The additional income from these mandatory withdrawals can push individuals into higher tax brackets, resulting in a higher overall tax liability.
- **Market fluctuations.** The timing of RMDs may coincide with market fluctuations. If the market experiences a downturn around the time of a mandatory withdrawal, retirees might be selling assets at a loss, impacting the overall health of their re-

irement portfolio.

- **Forced taxation.** RMDs essentially force individuals to pay taxes on their retirement savings, even if they don't necessarily need the money for living expenses. This can be perceived as an intrusion into financial autonomy.
- **Impact on Social Security.** The additional income from RMDs can affect the taxation of Social Security benefits. Some retirees may find it frustrating that the mandatory withdrawals contribute to a higher portion of their Social Security income being taxed.

Strategies for effective RMD management

Successfully navigating the landscape of required minimum distributions requires strategic financial planning. Consider the following comprehensive strategies as you consider this phase of retirement to optimize your income and minimize taxes:

- **Delaying Social Security benefits.** Delaying the commencement of Social Security benefits can be a strategic move. By doing so, retirees can potentially reduce the immediate need for larger withdrawals from their retirement savings, allowing more time for these funds to grow.
- **Roth IRA conversions.** A strategic conversion from a traditional retirement account to a Roth IRA can offer several benefits. Roth IRAs are not subject to RMDs, providing greater flexibility in managing withdrawals and potentially lowering your tax burden in retirement.
- **Strategic withdrawals.** Timing matters when it comes to withdrawals. Planning when and how much money to withdraw from different sources, such as taxable and tax-advantaged accounts, can help manage your tax burden effectively. Strategic withdrawals allow retirees to control their taxable income and potentially optimize their tax bracket.
- **Utilizing qualified charitable distributions (QCDs).** For those inclined towards charitable giving, QCDs allow individuals aged 70½ or older to donate directly from their IRA to qualified charities. This strategy can fulfill RMD requirements while providing a tax-efficient way to support charitable causes.
- **Reviewing asset allocation.** Periodically reassessing your investment portfolio's asset allocation can ensure that it aligns with your financial goals and risk tolerance. A well-balanced portfolio can contribute to sustained growth and stability in retirement.

Required minimum distributions may initially appear complex, but they represent a fundamental aspect of responsible retirement planning. By understanding the rules and implementing thoughtful strategies, individuals can navigate the intricacies of RMDs effectively. Make sure you work with a financial professional who will help you maximize benefits and minimize planning liabilities.

Nicolás Valdés-Fauli is the founder and CEO of Thin Blue Line Financial (www.tblfinancial.com). Call or text 917-428-9629 or email nvf@tblfinancial.com. Nicolás has served the LEO community in South Florida for 20 years and is dedicated to helping his clients make sound decisions before and during retirement. He is an expert in all matters related to the FRS, deferred compensation and local municipal retirement plans. This material has been prepared for informational purposes only and is not intended to provide, and should not be relied upon for, tax, legal or accounting advice. Investment advisory services offered through Main Street Financial Solutions LLC., an SEC registered investment advisor.



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Five essential strategies for LEOs to optimize their well-being



DR. SACHIN
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Law enforcement officers have one of the most demanding jobs in the world. Filled with grueling night shifts, unpredictable callouts and high-stress situations, the schedule and work environment can take a toll on your physical and mental health. Officers are constantly finding themselves seeking rest but still come up feeling drained, despite their best efforts. After the age of

30, fatigue can sometimes be related to hormone imbalances, which may require medical intervention. But some simple lifestyle changes can also make a significant difference. Let's review our five strategies for law enforcement officers to help you feel your best, both on duty and at home.

Prioritize rest and fight fatigue

It's no secret that law enforcement officers often face unpredictable schedules and sleep disruptions. Nevertheless, it's crucial to prioritize rest as much as possible. First, start by creating an optimal sleep environment that is dark, quiet and comfortable. Have a noisy house or need to sleep while everyone is awake? Consider using a sound machine or even earplugs. Another tip is to make good sleep non-negotiable by scheduling it in your calendar. This "meeting" with your bed can help ensure you prioritize it. Remember: you can't serve your community effectively if you're always tired. Adequate rest is essential for refilling your gas tank. If you still feel fatigued despite consistent good sleep, consider getting your hormone levels checked, as imbalances can give you debilitating fatigue that only hormone supplementation can correct.

Maintain a healthy weight

Studies have shown that individuals who are overweight are more likely to have imbalanced hormone levels. Maintaining a healthy weight and keeping up with a well-balanced diet can contribute to more balanced hormone levels and improved well-being. If you're experiencing chronic fatigue, brain fog, or sluggishness, reaching your goal weight might help. If you still struggle to lose weight and continue to experience these symptoms, consider hormone-level testing. Imbalanced hormones can contribute to weight gain and make it more challenging to lose weight, especially around the middle.

Minimize stress

Stress can take a toll on both your mental and physical health. For law enforcement officers, whose jobs often involve high-stress situations, managing stress is paramount. Consid-

er adding relaxing activities to your routine. Take up golfing or go for a walk with your family as a way to unwind. It's important to set time to relax and reduce stress, even if it's for a quick five-minute meditation. Persistent stress can impact hormone production, so if you continue to feel down, consider getting bloodwork done to check your testosterone and estrogen levels.

Regular exercise

Even with a busy schedule, allocating just 30 minutes a day for exercise can greatly benefit your physical and mental health. Exercise not only helps with weight management but also can boost mood. Each day, make an effort to engage in some type of physical activity. Getting active is not only an excellent stress reliever but also a natural way to increase testosterone levels. Not sure if you have the time? Get it done while you work. Stop at the park and chat with the families who are there. Get some fresh air, exercise and community policing done all at the same time.

Getting balanced

If you've made significant lifestyle changes — such as improving your diet, getting rest and exercising regularly — but you still don't feel your best, it may be time to get your hormone levels checked. Those who suffer from low testosterone or imbalanced hormones won't start feeling their best until their hormones get back to normal, or balanced, levels.

If you're considering hormone replacement therapy, our clinic offers special pricing for South Florida PBA members and same-day initial consults with our clinic director, designed to accommodate even the busiest of schedules. To get started, contact Lisa at 973-998-7770.

Dr. Sachin Shah, co-founder of Advanced Anti-Aging in Riverdale, earned his medical degree from the State University of New York in Syracuse and was trained at New York University Langone Medical Center. Dr. Shah began expanding his interests in pain management, venous medicine and, most recently, stem cell application for regenerative medicine. Dr. Glenn Foss is a graduate of New York Chiropractic College. During his 19 years of clinical experience, he has seen how musculoskeletal dysfunction relates to nutritional and dietary deficits, physical deconditioning and hormonal imbalances.



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The key to hydration isn't water, it's electrolytes



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There are some key elements in addressing obesity among police and the importance of hydration. Beyond drinking water, being properly hydrated entails a balanced intake of electrolytes, which are minerals essential for various bodily functions. Sodium, potassium, calcium and magnesium play critical roles in muscle contractions, nerve transmissions and maintaining fluid balance, and failing to replenish these electrolytes can lead to detrimental effects on your health.

Everyone knows that if you drop a toaster in a bathtub full of water while standing in it, it won't end very well. But do you know why? It's not because the water conducts electricity. In fact, if you fill the tub with distilled water, the electricity wouldn't be conducted at all (take my word for it, don't try it at home). It's actually the electrolytes, or electrically charged minerals, that conduct the electricity. So, if your brain is a giant toaster sending electrical signals all around your body and your body is 60 percent water, it's important that your body has sufficient electrolytes to conduct those signals to your organs, muscles, blood vessels and the rest of your body to keep it working properly.

One reason for proper hydration is its impact on cognitive focus and concentration. Adequate hydration ensures that the brain functions optimally, helping you stay alert and attentive during demanding shifts. Electrolytes like sodium and potassium are key in this process, facilitating the transmission of nerve signals.

Proper hydration is also instrumental in preventing headaches, which can be debilitating in high-pressure situations. When you become dehydrated, blood vessels constrict, reducing blood flow to

the brain, which can result in painful headaches. Consistent hydration, alongside essential electrolytes, keeps blood vessels functioning efficiently, minimizing the risk of headaches.

Hydration is also critical for maintaining overall alertness and ensuring the safety of both you and the public. Dehydration can lead to a decrease in physical and mental performance, making quick thinking and fast reaction times difficult. Calcium and magnesium are pivotal in muscle function and coordination, ensuring you can respond effectively to unforeseen situations.

You can get the electrolytes needed for proper hydration either by eating an abundance of whole foods every day, like leafy green vegetables and colorful fruits from organic, mineral-rich farm soil, or with an electrolyte supplement like TruSPLASH. TruSPLASH has balanced electrolytes in the right ratio, without any added sugar or artificial flavors or colors. One challenge of common sports drinks like Gatorade, Powerade, Pedialyte and Liquid IV that are in convenience stores is that they are loaded with more sugar in every bottle than is in two doughnuts and actually have few electrolytes and not in the right ratio to keep you properly hydrated.

So, remember: Plain water alone is not enough to stay hydrated. While water is crucial, it lacks the essential electrolytes necessary for balanced hydration, to carry those electrical signals from your brain around your body, and to prevent muscle cramps, fatigue and diminished mental focus.

Dr. Debbie Rosen is a performance psychologist with expertise in health and wellness, nutrition, and physical fitness. She is the founder and president of Truvidity Labs and Wellness Solutions, a high-quality all-natural nutritional supplement company and provider of anti-aging and wellness programs. www.truviditylabs.com.



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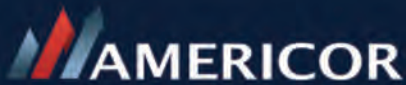


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