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VOLUME 42, NO. 4

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The benefits of PBA membership are almost too numerous to detail in this special report looking at what makes this your union of choice. From legal defense and protection to collective bargaining for pay and benefits to the way members feel about the Love Fund's impact, the South Florida PBA does more than all the other unions in the state combined. And for those members who say they never use the PBA, this report will make them realize they use it every day.

COVER DESIGN BY GINA CROTCHFELT

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INSIDE STORIES



The privilege of membership: You bet your...



STEADMAN
STAHL

My initial appreciation for the importance of PBA membership came shortly after my first day of my 34 years on the job. A PBA rep walked up to me, handed me an application and said, "Fill this out. Hopefully, you won't need the representation, but fill it out and turn it in."

I knew a little bit about unions. My father was a member of the pipefitters union. I worked for Continental Airlines, which didn't have a union, nor did they entertain it. And I saw how bad it could be if you didn't have somebody looking out for employees' best interests. I knew the importance of a union to make sure that you had safe working conditions and also when you were going to need representation.

I got involved my second year. I remember sitting through a contract negotiation with the city of Homestead, where I started. We were given a choice of a \$1,000 signing bonus or a 25-cents-an-hour raise. And after sitting through that, I said, "I think we can do better." Our rep was stepping down at the time, so I put it in forward and was elected to represent the members. From there, I learned very quickly that the PBA was about a lot more than just contract negotiations.

Here is my read on the premium benefits of being a PBA member:

Getting involved in politics: I was taught early in my career that everything in life that's going to affect me is conducted through politics. And that's when I started getting more involved with the PBA. Back in my municipal days, we had a pretty radical city manager who gave us an ultimatum during contract negotiations that either we took concessions in the contract, or he would lay off police officers. Once we got the mayor and City Council members involved, he certainly changed the position when he found his job on the line over making threats like that without checking with his bosses. Two officers were going to be laid off, and by us stepping in, we prevented it. And from that point on, I learned the importance of what the union can do.

Legal representation: The days of thinking that you're never going to need legal representation are long gone. Which is why the PBA has grown its legal team into perhaps the most premium benefit of union membership. And why when we go to academy classes, I tell recruits, "Before you end your career, you will at some point need to use the legal representation."

Collective bargaining: When members think about what the PBA does, I think they all say contract negotiations. A lot of what we do goes into getting contracts. I don't remember any government official ever coming forward and saying, "Listen, we want to give you money." They always seem to not have any money at contract time. Then, when you settle a contract, they seem to find extra spending monies, or we find monies throughout for different projects. So when it comes to contract negotiation time, we are able to find money and other compensation opportunities that members don't see and even don't know to look for.

The Love Fund: When members or their family members find themselves in financial hardship or their most difficult times that aren't created by them, we have the Love Fund to step in. It could be suffering a catastrophic injury, a death in the family or a horrific disease of a child so that absolutely no matter how much you work, you can't keep your head above water. And that's why we do all these events to raise money so the Love Fund can help in extremely difficult times.

One of the biggest misconceptions I think you hear is, "I've never had to use the PBA." When you pick up your paycheck and see the shift differentials, you're using the PBA. Those were not given to you out of the kindness of government. Take-home cars were not given to you because of the kindness of government. Those were negotiated benefits. So if you've ever had something as simple as overtime, know that there was a time when we didn't get overtime.

Which brings me back to elections and politics, because there are consequences to all elections, and so it's important to be engaged. We try to drill into politicians why public safety should always be front and center. A lot of these elected officials we sit down with, we've seen them have a change of perspective. We went through a terrible time a few years back about defunding, reallocating and all this nonsense. I was really shocked by how many politicians actually were considering it. When we had a chance to speak with them or because of the relationships we built with them, we were able to prevent it here in South Florida.

This is just some of the work from the PBA you don't see. When I became president, I saw the deficiencies that had to be corrected, that we had to go in a different direction. And it's been positive. I think we've become certainly a loud voice for law enforcement throughout South Florida.

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The President's Gallery



Showing support at a community fundraiser on June 24 for Monroe County Deputy Julian Garcia, who lost a leg in an incident that started with a traffic stop. Center, the fundraiser included Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay, to my left, going in the dunk tank. Pictured right, from left, Key West Rep Frank Betz, Monroe County Mayor Holly Raschein and Commissioner Jim Scholl are also on hand to support Julian.



Signing new collective bargaining agreements for our members with Sweetwater Mayor Jose "Pepe" Diaz and Key Colony Beach Mayor Joey Raspe.

STAHL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

The PBA speaks for officers when they can't speak for themselves. If people are upset with the police over different issues, we can ask who put the police in the position? When we see these negative things across the country, we can delve into how it got to that point. Was there a lack of training? Was there a lack of support? That's why we are very big on training. People don't see how we push for that when we talk to our elected officials or the command staffs of our different departments. We push for training so that we are perceived in a positive light. And that's why I think we've been very successful here in South Florida, because training is important, we invest in it, and we support it.

This is what you don't see and why I go back to when members say, "I've never had to use the PBA." I think that's a misguided statement because if you have a pension, if you have overtime, if you have retirement benefits, those things have all come through negotiations and through a positive working environment. And that's what separates us. That's the importance of being a part of the PBA, and at some point, you will need it in some form or fashion.

One of the issues I ran on for president is that the PBA is a great organization. We just lost our way. And one of the main reasons why the dinosaurs aren't around is that they didn't learn to adapt. I try to adapt. I try to see when a situation is starting to brew and stay in front of it. If we can stay in front of it, then we can stay on top of it and fix it. We tell our reps from the agencies we represent, "The time to let me know is when the water is simmering." Not when it's boiling over. Not that we can't fix it then, but it's a lot harder.

It's very important also to be an organization that listens, because sometimes, members just need to vent. They just need somebody to reach out to, to talk to. I know the importance of the hours I spend on the phone talking to people who are just having

a tough time and trying to get them to take a deep breath. Putting things in perspective brings them back by helping them understand that it's not as bad as we are perceiving it to be. So just pick up the phone and speak to, if not me, one of our board members to understand why something's happening.

If I didn't have a strong team around me, your membership would not be nearly as strong.

We are a union of all religions, races, colors. We're not all D's. We're not all R's. We're not all independents. We have a good group that represents us. Our strength comes from our board of directors, who reach out to our members and work with them.

It's OK to have different views and different thoughts. To me, this is what makes this union unique and strong. And that's the track record we will put up against anybody or any organization. Are we perfect? No. But do we put out a consistent product? Yes, we do.

The PBA also has a very dedicated group of employees who go above and beyond what's expected of them, and I'm very proud of that. We have a board of directors that goes above and beyond what they have to. We choose to stay engaged in the game, give of ourselves and give of our time to make working conditions better.

And so as we strive to deliver excellence, the bottom line on what makes the PBA the union of choice is something I learned from that very first day when I signed up and saw what happened with our contract. Our members understand the challenge, and the requirement is very simply to leave this union better than you found it.

Steadman Stahl
South Florida PBA President
steadman@sflpba.org

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Catch 'Em All

Another great day for all who came out for the PBA fishing tournament and Love Fund



DAVID GREENWELL
EXECUTIVE
VICE
PRESIDENT

The South Florida PBA fishing tournament was held on June 22 at Mathe-son Hammock Park Marina. We kicked off the tournament with our captain's meeting on Thursday, June 20, which in my opinion, was very productive and a lot of fun!

Captains, anglers and sponsors gathered to go over the details and rules of the tournament while optimistically participating in our raffles, silent auctions and 50/50 cash prize events. Because of their enthusiasm and generosity, we raised a significant amount for the South Florida PBA Love Fund at the captain's meeting. A huge success. In addition, everyone enjoyed food and drinks while bantering about who would land the largest dolphin.

The tournament itself was a blend of competitive spirit and community bonding while supporting a cause close to their hearts. Despite bad weather reports leading up to the event, the sun emerged, and the anglers were successful. We had 23 registered boats and more than 100 anglers.

Retired Officer Paul Kuiper and Retired Reserve Officer Mark Siegel, who served MDPD for 36 years, came to officiate as weighmasters. While everyone waited for the official results, they all got a chance to hang out, socialize, eat and drink, as well as enjoy the music provided by Hammocks Station Officer Danny Torres.

The PBA would like to congratulate the following winners:

First place went to Michael Barrios, from Team BluFox, with a 6.6 lb-dolphin. This dolphin was worth \$3,000 (\$2,000 for first place and \$1,000 for being a PBA member). Great job, Michael.

Second place went to Art Fernandez, from team Sea Cup, with a dolphin that weighed in at 6.55 lbs. The competition was fierce, with the first-place team winning by a razor-thin margin of just 0.05 lbs, which made for more excitement at the weigh-in!

Jeff Archer, from team Nasty Fishing, took third place with a 5.1-lb dolphin.

The Top Female Angler division was taken home by Yvette Guzman, from team Only Fin, with a dolphin that



weighed in at 5.1 lbs.

In other categories, the Best of Three Dolphins went to Woody Boyle, from team Sealion Trollers, who had a combined weight of 13.45 lbs. The winner of first-place Junior Angler division was Brody Portal of team High Trollers, with a 3.7-lb dolphin. Second place in the Junior division went to Steven Fernandez, also from High Trollers, with a 3.6-lb dolphin.

The winner of this year's Fun Fish was Michael Barrios, from Team BluFox, with a 25.8-lb tuna.

There are many people to thank who helped make this a great and successful event for the PBA Love Fund, including:

Mr. George Joseph, president and CEO of the Dade County Federal Credit Union; Al Germi from ACCO Terramar Foreign Shipping; Lili and Karl Crook from Crook & Crook Electronics and Marine Supplies; the Williamson Buick/GMC Dealership; Albert and Yadira Creighton from Oliva Cigars (Official PBA Cigar Sponsor); Bass Pro Shop; Bill Archer from Big Cheese restaurant; Eric's Outboard Marine Service; Eduardo Barreto from Sea Tow; Andy Antelo from Palmetto Bay El Capitan Marine and Fish Center; Clifton Event Group; Floridian Dental Group; Ray Crego from Excalibur Towing Service; Justin Landau from El Carwash; Turner Burwick from StarBrite Products; Nick Christian from Lou's Police Distributors, Inc.; Jaws Lures Corp.;

Sachin Kumar from Stretch Zone; Injured Response Pharmacy; Yunior Dominguez from Piros Bait & Tackle; Al Scaletti from ASA Boat Trailer Rental; Integrity Tech; Jon and Mary Greenwell from the Greenwell Family Foundation and AvMed. Remember to support those who support the police.

I would also like to thank the PBA Fishing Committee, Steadman Stahl, Juan Villalba, Mike Barrios, Orlando Reyes and Tom Bogaards. And a big thanks to all the PBA volunteers, including Kim Gregson, Margarita Vasquez, Elvira Garcia, Mimi Pena, Kelly Boyle, Orlando Sosa and Devyn Maher.

In conclusion, the Love Fund Saltwater Fishing Tournament was a monumental success, not only in terms of funds raised but also in fostering a sense of community and support for our law enforcement family. We are grateful to everyone who participated, donated and supported our event and our initiative. The Love Fund supports PBA active members and their families in their time of need, in addition to always supporting the families of our fallen officers. This is a fun event, and I hope that we can have even more participants next year to help support this great cause.

As always, stay safe out there. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 305-593-0444 or greenwell@slpba.org.



Thin Blue Fishing Line

Catching the winners and the sights that show how the good times rolled at the 2024 South Florida PBA Fishing Tournament

Photos by Linda Carta



First place: Captain Michael Barrios and Team BluFox, with a 6.6 lb-dolphin.



Second place: Captain Art Fernandez and Team Sea Cup.



Third place: Captain Jeff Archer and Team Nasty Fishing 1.



Best of Three Dolphins: Captain Woody Boyle and Team Sealion Trollers.



Top Female Angler: Yvette Guzman of Team Only Fin.



Junior Angler Division First Place Brody Portal of Team High Trollers and Junior Angler Division Steven Fernandez of Team High Trollers.



Fun Fish: Michael Barrios and Team Blu-Fox.



Weighmasters Paul Kuiper and Mark Siegel.

A strong leader must always have an open mind



**NIZAM "ISH" ISHMAEL
VICE
PRESIDENT**

Organizational change from within involves a deliberate and strategic approach to transforming processes, culture and practices to adapt to new challenges or opportunities. As we approach an elected sheriff in Miami-Dade, there are several key strategies that we must employ to foster effective change.

Change must begin with leadership that is committed to and actively champions the transformation. Leaders set the tone and direction for the organization, articulating a clear vision of where the organization needs to go and why change is necessary. This vision should be inspiring, credible and communicated consistently throughout the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO). Effective leaders also empower others to act on the vision, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for the change process.

MDSO culture plays a pivotal role in shaping behaviors, attitudes and norms within the workplace. To effect meaningful change, leaders must assess the existing culture and identify areas that support or hinder the desired changes. Culture change involves aligning values, beliefs and practices with the organizational vision. This often requires engaging employees at all levels, encouraging open communication and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration.

Change initiatives should be supported by a robust strategic plan that outlines specific goals, objectives, timelines and resources required for implementation. This plan serves as a roadmap, guiding the organization through each phase of the change process. It should include clear milestones and metrics to measure progress

and adjust strategies as needed. Effective planning ensures that change efforts are systematic, proactive and aligned with broader organizational objectives.

Empowering employees

Successful change initiatives involve engaging and empowering staff at all levels of the MDSO. Employees are often the driving force behind innovation and improvement, possessing valuable insights and expertise. Leaders should create opportunities for staff to contribute ideas, provide feedback and participate in decision-making processes. Empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the change effort, enhancing overall MDSO agility and adaptability.

Organizational change is an iterative process that requires continuous learning and adaptation. Leaders should encourage experimentation, risk-taking and learning from both successes and failures. This adaptive approach will allow MDSO to respond effectively to unforeseen challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Continuous improvement becomes ingrained in the MDSO culture, promoting resilience and long-term sustainability.

Communication and transparency

Effective communication is essential for building trust, managing expectations and mitigating resistance during periods of change. Leaders should communicate openly and transparently about the rationale behind change initiatives, potential impacts on stakeholders and steps being taken to facilitate a smooth transition. Two-way communication channels feedback mechanisms, enabling employees to voice concerns, ask questions and pro-

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THE ALVAREZ LAW FIRM

Alex Alvarez

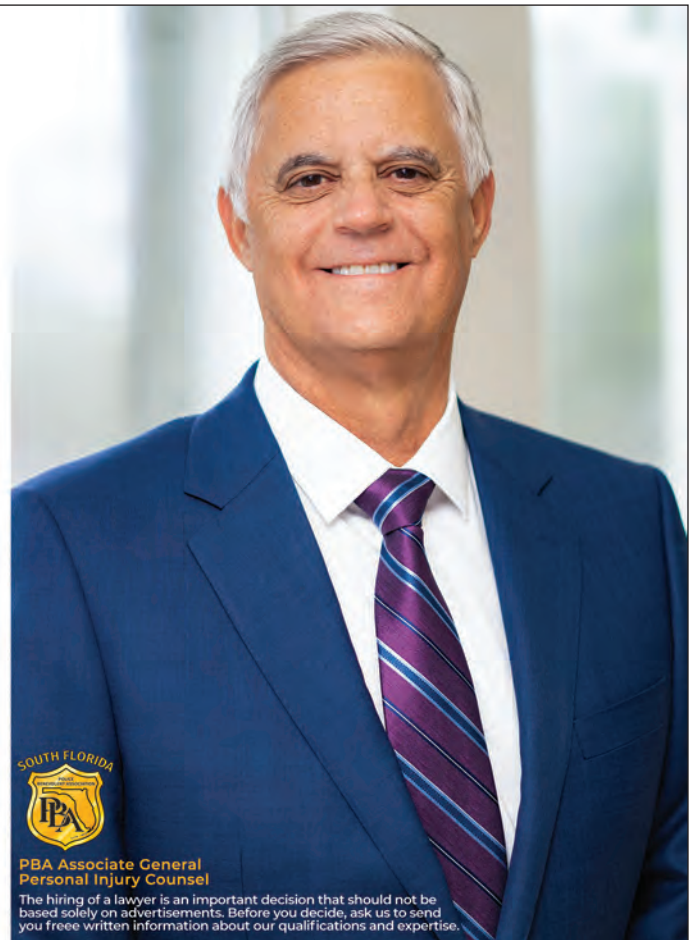
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Thinking like police officers can help us work better as correctional officers



KARLOS RAMOS
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Throughout the course of my career, I have been told by many police officers who were once corrections officers that the training and experience they received in corrections better prepared them for the risks and challenges they face in the streets. The purpose of this article is to open the minds of my fellow officers who are confined within the walls of our detention facilities.

Within these facilities we are many times outnumbered — one versus 64, with most of us only in possession of a radio, pepper spray and handcuffs. Our department not only works in the trenches of these jails, face-to-face with inmates, but also have specialized units such as our Monitor Release Bureau, Ward-D, Court Services, K-9 and the Transportation Unit that work beyond the walls of our facilities.

The collaboration between thinking like a police officer and reacting like a correctional officer involves a blend of proactive and reactive strategies, combining law enforcement techniques with correctional facility protocols. Here's a breakdown of how these roles can complement each other:

Proactive thinking

- **Police officer perspective:** Police officers are trained to anticipate and prevent crimes. They use their investigative skills to gather intelligence, assess situations and make decisions to prevent incidents.
- **Correctional officer perspective:** Correctional officers also need to anticipate potential problems within a facility, such as inmate conflicts or security breaches. Their proactive measures include regular inspections, monitoring inmate behavior, and enforcing rules to maintain order.

Reactive skills

- **Police officer response:** When an incident occurs, police officers respond with appropriate force and tactics to control the situation, protect the public and apprehend offenders.
- **Correctional officer response:** Correctional officers react swiftly to incidents within the facility, such as fights or escape attempts. Their training focuses on de-escalation, using force when necessary and ensuring the safety of both staff and inmates.

Investigation and documentation

- **Police investigation:** Police officers conduct thorough investigations to solve crimes, gather evidence and prepare cases for prosecution.
- **Correctional documentation:** Correctional officers must document incidents, inmate behavior and any use of force. This detailed record-keeping is crucial for legal compliance and facility management.

Interpersonal skills

- **Police interaction:** Police officers interact with the community,

victims, suspects and other law enforcement agencies. Effective communication and community relations are key aspects of their role.

- **Correctional interaction:** Correctional officers interact with inmates, visitors and other staff members. They need strong communication skills to manage inmates, resolve conflicts and maintain a safe environment.

Security and safety

- **Police safety measures:** Police officers ensure public safety through patrols, checkpoints and emergency response.
- **Correctional security:** Correctional officers maintain the security of the facility through surveillance, searches and strict enforcement of rules.

Combining these approaches enhances the overall effectiveness of both roles. For instance, a correctional officer with a police mindset may be better at identifying criminal activity within a facility, while a police officer with correctional experience may be more adept at handling a subject. This collaboration fosters a safer and more efficient environment both within correctional facilities and in the broader community.

While working in the facilities has fostered situational awareness, as officers we have a clear understanding when it comes to honing in on threat pattern indicators. I still feel that there is room for improvement when it comes to our overall training.

I would like for my department to be more proactive versus reactive. The men and women of MRB are out in the streets dealing with situations that need a police-like mindset. The MDCR K-9 unit is constantly in the streets driving unmarked police vehicles and can easily become a target for anyone who is looking to harm an officer.

MDCR transportation unit is responsible for the transportation of inmates throughout Miami-Dade County. I truly believe that with the support of our command staff and proper training, we can develop more of a police-like mindset department wide.

With that being said, let me be clear by saying that it's unfortunate that throughout my career I've heard many times that "we're not the military and we're not the police." Yes, while I understand that we are neither of those two entities, we are a law enforcement agency that has the responsibility to uphold law and order within our facilities.

I encourage everyone to have an open mind, as my intentions are to promote positive change that will better serve our department. Training in areas such as how to handle a close-quarter shooting or active shooter, hand-to-hand combat, real-life scenario training, room-clearing training with the support of our police counterparts simulation training will make us stronger. The priority is the safety of our officers inside and outside the walls our facilities. By creating training that is specific to each unit's responsibilities, we can help develop a better correctional officer/detention deputy.

ISH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

vide input throughout the change process.

Recognizing and celebrating milestones and achievements along the change journey reinforces positive behaviors and motivates continued progress. Leaders should publicly acknowledge individuals and teams who contribute to the success of change initiatives, demonstrating appreciation for their efforts. Celebration events, awards and informal recognition programs foster a sense of accomplishment and pride within the organization, reinforcing the value of collaboration and collective achievement.

MDSO change from within requires proactive leadership, cultural alignment, strategic planning, employee empowerment, continuous learning, effective communication and celebration of successes. By adopting a holistic approach that engages stakeholders at all levels, MDSO can navigate change more effectively, foster innovation and achieve sustainable growth. Embracing change as a catalyst for improvement and adaptation enables organizations to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment.

As a reminder, do not let the job and supervisors overwhelm you. Please feel free to contact me at ish@sflpba.org or at 305-593-0044.

You are going to die, so be prepared



ANDREW M. AXELRAD
GENERAL COUNSEL

Well, everyone is going to die, and we can only hope it is after a long, well-lived life. However, there are no guarantees of that, and either way, why wouldn't you want to make sure your affairs are in order as soon as you can? While it can be a difficult thing to face, or to talk about with loved ones, it is necessary. The alternative is to pass away without making necessary arrangements and leaving those difficult decisions to loved ones who are better served celebrating your life and grieving your death than having to figure out what you want done with your remains.

As first responders, you are used to controlling situations. So why would you not want to control this particular situation, when, once again, it is a sure thing that you will not live forever? As a PBA member, we can get you started as part of your membership benefits. We are happy to offer simple wills and living wills free of charge. Your particular situation may be more complicated — for instance, if you own multiple homes, have step-children, special needs children and the like. For that, we can refer you to attorneys who specialize in family law matters who we have absolute trust in, and who will provide discounts to PBA members.

A simple will is generally where you will be leaving all assets for which you have not already provided a named beneficiary. It's most often to your spouse, and if your spouse passes away before you, to your children to share in whatever percentages you dictate. Assets for which you have a named beneficiary, such as your FRS account, deferred compensation account, life insurance, etc., are not listed as assets in your will so as to reduce probate costs.

A living will is the document that tells health care providers and your loved ones what you want to happen if you are alive but have no chance to recover. It provides whether you want to be artificially kept alive with machines or allowed to pass away peacefully while kept comfortable. Remember that the default would be for doctors to keep you alive. This is an important decision that you do not want to leave to your loved ones.

As stated earlier, you may have a more complicated situation, such as a special needs child. You want to make sure that child's needs are attended to after you pass away. That would likely require a trust. You may own multiple properties and want to protect those assets with a trust.

There is also something called a "ladybird deed" which is only found in Florida and four other states that provides for

2024 Pending Grievances

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of **June 30, 2024**. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

CITY OF MIAMI PD		4
MIAMI-DADE CORRECTIONS		
ASSOCIATION	1	
TOTAL		1
MIAMI-DADE POLICE		
NORTHSIDE	1	
TOTAL		1
MIAMI GARDENS PD		4
MCSO (DETENTION)		1
NORTH MIAMI PD		2
SWEETWATER PD		1
<hr/>		
TOTAL GRIEVANCES		14

the transfer of property without the need for it to go through probate. While the examples provided in this paragraph are something we can provide in-house and therefore free of charge, as we are primarily labor lawyers and not family lawyers, we will recommend those attorneys I mentioned previously.

Bottom line, you are going to die. There is nothing you can do about it. We hope that it is after a long, happy and healthy life, but that is unfortunately not always the case. Take control of this certainty of life by getting your affairs in order now, not later. While circumstances may require you to amend these documents down the road, that should not be a reason not to get them completed now. We are happy to help you through this. Just give the Legal Department a call, and you'll be well on your way.

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POAT invests in the future with its scholarship awards



SERGEANT KENNETH HORGAN
POAT COMMITTEE CHAIR

It's that time of the year when parents get ready to see their children take that next step in their education and go to college.

The Police Officers Assistance Trust takes great pride in being able to play a small part in that journey. During the June 2024 monthly meeting, Scholarship Committee Chairperson Sergeant Jodi Wright announced our 2024 scholarship recipients.

A total of eight scholarships were awarded. This year, we received a record number of applicants. Once the applications are received and evaluated by the Scholarship Committee, selections are made, and the fun begins. Notifying the recipients of their scholarship award makes the hours of work worth it.

The Scholarship Committee had its hands full in processing all the applications that were received. Jodi and her committee process them in the appropriate category and review, discuss and select a recipient. The rest are reviewed by the families for whom the scholarship is named.

The competition was so fierce that two recipients were selected for the Chris Todd Scholarship. President Carothers provided each winner with a check in the amount of \$2,000, part of a total of \$16,000 awarded. It is very special for us to have the families be the ones who decide the winners of these scholarships. This year, the Chris Todd family could not decide on a single winner and therefore funded an additional scholarship, awarding two, bringing our total to eight scholarships awarded. These scholarships would not be possible without the generosity of our donors. Congratulations to all the winners, and we look forward to hearing about the amazing work our scholarship recipients are doing.

The 2024 POAT scholarships winners are:

Mike Byrd Scholarship: Isabel Perea, daughter of Sergeant Henry Perea (Miami-Dade Police Department)

Roger Castillo Scholarship: Christopher Gil Ortiz, son of Officer Noel Gil (Sweetwater Police Department)

Amanda Haworth Scholarship: Chloe Luna, daughter of Officer John Luna (Coral Gables Police Department)

Paul Janosky Art Scholarship: Mackenzie Bukens, daughter of Lieutenant Robert Bukens (South Miami Police Department)

Paul Janosky Criminal Justice Scholarship: Amanda Ferrin, daughter of Lieutenant Daniel Ferrin (Miami-Dade Police Department)

Chris Todd Scholarship: Adrien Gobin, son of Officer Gary Gobin (Miami-Dade Police Department)

Chris Todd Scholarship: Evan Garcia, son of Chief Eric Garcia (Miami-Dade Police Department)

Chuck Duncan Scholarship: Andreina Vega-Perina, daughter of Officer Lori Pernia (Miami-Dade Police Department)

On Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2024, the 9/11 Ceremony will be held at the Law Enforcement Memorial site in Tropical Park at 9:30 a.m.

The POAT sponsors this ceremony every year in conjunction with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue and SOUTHCOM. We will come together to remember those heroes who ran into danger that fateful day and died trying to save the lives of others. We will never forget the immeasurable sacrifices made by the many heroes during America's darkest hours. Our police, fire and military made a commitment larger than themselves in the face of death. Their service will never be forgotten. Please make every effort to attend.

Thanks for your support, and stay safe.

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Time to think about electing a new executive board



JOHN FRALEY
RPOC
PRESIDENT

We are well into summer, and I feel it's necessary to remind everyone to stay hydrated, drink water, eat healthy and take your meds. I try to do some sort of exercise almost every day, I enjoy walking and I do a lot of it. I find it very helpful in dealing with the aging process, which sometimes can be quite dreadful.

On April 1, 1976, we lost three brothers to an ambush in Miami Beach. These men were great detectives doing what they enjoyed, working auto theft. Tom Hodges was a "Class 50" classmate. Clark Curlette and I worked on the road and on motors in the north end. Although Frank Dazevedo and I never worked together, I knew that he was a tenacious investigator.

In the end, the subject was shot and killed as he tried to flee by Dazevedo before succumbing to his injuries. All three of these men paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving the people of Dade County and will never be forgotten.

Incidents like this one were all too common back then, and they're more frequent now than ever. Remember our fallen brothers and sisters in your thoughts and prayers, as they gave it their all in their careers and service to the people of Dade County.

Election Notice

Please take a moment to review the following information:

It is time to elect a new Executive Board for the RPOC. A general meeting open to all members will be held on Tuesday Oct. 8, 2024, at 10 a.m. in the conference room on the ground floor of the PBA Hall, for the election of officers.

In order to run for office, or second a nomination, one must be a current dues-paying member of the RPOC for at least one year and be present at the Oct. 8, 2024 meeting. A "letter of intent" must be submitted and mailed to the RPOC at P.O. Box 570790, Miami, Florida 33257-0790, expressing desire to run for office, designating the office you wish to fill, and must be received no later than Oct. 1, 2024.

The new term will begin Jan. 1, 2025. This is an election year for the RPOC officers and directors. The incumbent board, including myself, has indicated a willingness to serve another term. If anyone is interested in running for an office, a letter must be submitted listing qualifications to: The Retired Police Officers Council, PO Box 570790, Miami, FL 33257-0790 prior to the Oct. 8 general membership meeting.

It is with great sadness that I must report that the wife of our RPOC Secretary Barry Savage, Patricia Savage, lost her courageous battle with cancer. As the president of the RPOC and on behalf of our Board of Directors, we offer the entire Savage family our most sincere condolences. I just received this information as I was writing my article for the next *Heat* publication. As of this time, no information has been published regarding services, etc. Additional information will be posted on our website.

I wish to say that Patty took a no-nonsense approach when dealing with her duties within the organization and her dedication to the RPOC. Patty will be missed and will always be in our



Kaitlyn Jorgensen, left, and her grandfather, retired MDPD Lieutenant Ron Carey.



Mackenzie Bukens, granddaughter of retired MDPD Officer Barry Savage, the RPOC Board secretary.

hearts. May she rest in peace knowing that she fought a valiant battle.

Here is an additional report from Chaplain Reba Miller:

Special summer greetings to all. It seems impossible that this is already July and we are racing through 2024. These past few months have brought blessings as well as overwhelming concerns. We humans are resilient. Without hope and gratitude, we would be completely depleted. Gratitude is the quality of being thankful and grateful. It is a readiness to show appreciation for and return kindness. It is recognizing that something good has happened to you. It also consists of acknowledging that someone is responsible for it — whether it is a specific person in your life, an impersonal source like nature or a divine entity. Melody Beattie shares, "Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

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.



Angela Staton
Miami-Dade Police Department



Daniel Pena
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



Henry Torres Jr.
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation



Joseph Naranjo
Miami-Dade Police Department



Ray Rodriguez
Miami-Dade Police Department



Selma Curtis
Miami-Dade Police Department



Wayne Blackwood
Miami-Dade Police Department



William Luster
Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation

FRALEY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.”

With regard to gratitude, I would like to honor and recognize all the people who love and support law enforcement and first responders — our families, our friends and extended families. Without your strength, your encouragement, your commitment, your support, your determination and your abiding hope and prayers, our very lives and work and duty would most certainly fail. The hardest job in this world today is to ensure law and order in a world of chaos and moral failures.

With extreme sadness, we are sending our most heartfelt condolences to family and friends on the passing of the following friends and brothers...


- Alexander “Alex” Gordo: May 2024

- James “Jim” Eising: June 2024
- Theodore “Ted” Kowaleski: July 2024

It is with extreme love and affection that we share the passing of Patty Savage, Barry Savage’s beautiful wife and life partner. Patty was an integral part of our RPOC family. Her life and what she represented were the pivotal source for the topic of gratitude.

There are not enough words to describe the gifts Patty brought to so many. Her legacy of kindness, welcoming acceptance, love and strength was planted in her beautiful family and the multitude of people she encountered. Her greatest loves were her husband, her children and their families. She shared her life through love, service and joy.

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In the Spotlight



Get this detailed read about why your union shines so bright

By Mitchell Krugel

Back in his days as a Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation officer, Alex Munoz faced some turmoil over use-of-force incidents in the jail. Truth be told, he followed orders, but the blowback came in his direction. For a few moments.

Then, the South Florida PBA legal team stepped in to ease his fears and put out the fire. The attorneys' questioning of the process led to backing off the charges — and now, lasting recollections from Munoz about how that saved his job.

"I never thought I was going to be in the position of being part of the executive board, but as I reflect back on my early years as a young officer, I'm like, 'Wow, I'm here today because of the great work of those attorneys who saved my job,'" submitted Munoz, now the PBA treasurer.

From that perch, Munoz sees the PBA's saving grace nearly every day. One of those days recently began with a call from a department about an officer who was navigating through a stretch of being homeless. A single parent, the officer had been scammed out of a rental situation. The officer hadn't wanted to ask for the help, which is often the case.

The PBA's Love Fund has been created exactly for this: to support members in tough times.

"So right now, we're happy to say that because of our assistance, we were able to get that officer out of homelessness," Munoz noted.

Accounts of how members benefit from their union flow from every rep in every department the South PBA represents in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Not that these are well-known, because the PBA rolls on a "mission over recognition" mantra.

But even amid the often-heard statement from members about whether they ever need the PBA, it's time for a little recognition about how they use it every day. And to articulate for members, in the words to follow, how much benefit flows from PBA headquarters on NW 25th Street in Doral.

Into the light

With the mission of bringing some recognition, or at least some definition, a question went out to select members asking, "What is the essence of what the union provides?" The responses could run on like one of those presidential campaign speeches, so the highlights come here in the author's cut. (Full-length versions are available on demand.)

Starting with some opening statements. Frank Betz, the Key West PBA rep, did well to offer something close to 140 characters.

"Obviously, we have the legal protection necessary, whether it be for discipline or anything more serious," Betz stated. "And having a bargaining unit represent you allows every

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

member to have an equal voice into what's happening."

The insurance analogy came through from many members, noting that the PBA is something you need to have but never want to have to use. But the way the law enforcement profession has become, there are so many ways members can get screwed, as Munoz almost did at the start of his career.

So nobody should be caught going into any situation without protection.

"Well, it's definitely peace of mind and being able to sleep at night with both eyes shut because I know I basically have a figurative shield around me at all times," Christopher Rodriguez, a PBA rep with MDPD, said for openers. "Because I know I'm not doing anything wrong, but things happen. Sometimes, there are things that are out of my control, and I could use a little extra help or protection during certain incidents. I know that I have the protection of the union."

PBA General Counsel Andrew Axelrad has been making opening statements on behalf of PBA members for 27 years. He heads up the union's unparalleled six-person legal team and reasons that beyond negotiating collective bargaining agreements that are getting members paid these days like they never have, the legal team also contends with the fact that the average career is now paved with body cameras, cell-phone cameras, Ring cameras and so much that is going to lead to some allegation of wrongdoing.

But that defines what the PBA does best.

"A comfort level, an understanding of knowing that they've got not just the team of attorneys, but the PBA in its entirety to back them up," Axelrad declared.

Turn on the light

A profound study of what makes the PBA shield the protection of choice comes from Key Biscayne. For many years, the International Union of Police Associations (IUPA) served as Key Biscayne's collective bargaining agent, but after completing a recent contract, members began looking over the hedges.

They were content with IUPA, but approximately five months ago, several officers began getting more information about the PBA's vast benefits. Many of them had already been individual members, and through a relationship with PBA Executive Vice President David Greenwell, they saw that the grass was definitely greener.

"We have some officers that came from different cities, and they all had different types of experience with PBA, which were all positive," Key Biscayne Sergeant Pamela Buchanan reported. "We know they're one of the biggest unions, and why wouldn't you want to feel more secure and better represented?"

Key Biscayne officers heard some rumors that the PBA might not want to take a small agency. Such was not the case, as they heard from Greenwell and Vice President Nizam Ishmael. Apparently, the PBA had confirmed that size did not matter when it comes to every officer who wants one having a voice.

Buchanan added that they were able to see some of the benefits other agencies have received in their contracts. And that everything else they could get with the PBA was going to be a step up from what they had. So at the beginning of 2024, Key Biscayne started the process to make the PBA its collective bargaining agent, and that switch now has been completed.

"We heard good things about PBA legal representation in case you get into problems, even to including some civil problems," explained Buchanan, who has been on with Key Biscayne since 2016. "I think for us, as a small agency, we needed to feel secure and protected. But they have so many things to make us feel, 'You got my back.' We all want a lot of things, but one of the top priorities was that we want to feel safe."

Come to light

Polling the thousands of active and retired members who have used the PBA about the union's benefits might elicit thousands of different answers. The most valued by consensus would have to be the legal representation, the collective bargaining expertise and the political/legislative influence.

It's very much a proposition of not being able to please all of the members all of the time. And some interactions that have a lingering effect may have taken place with a previous leadership or administration.

"Some people may not be the biggest fans of how the PBA has done or what they have done in past regimes," Rodriguez shared. "But it's pretty solid across the board that everybody knows they have to be a member of the PBA."

And here is the spotlight on the benefits that make it so:

Legal Representation

A great definition of the legal team's impact is how Axelrad describes the de-stressing he sees when he, or any of the other attorneys, shows up at a critical incident, especially an officer-involved shooting. And an IA investigation, too.

"That kind of, 'The cavalry has arrived,'" he stated. "And it's palpable."

A great definition of how important the legal team is to the PBA is this: You would be hard-pressed to find another law enforcement labor union of approximately 10,000 members with six full-time, in-house attorneys. Because there aren't any.

As for their expertise, dedication and track records, Chief Assistant General Counsel Simone M. Lopez, Assistant General Counsel Cristina Escobar, Staff Counsel Michael Hellman, Staff Counsel Daniel Vazquez, Staff Counsel Griska Mena and Axelrad make a profound impact on members. They each have had the same experience Axelrad recounts about responding to a shooting.

A member had been involved in a shooting and apparently hit a suspect in the head. Axelrad said the officer was "torn up" about what he described as a "truly, truly unfortunate" incident. Axelrad quickly found a police psychologist to come to the scene.



“When I finally was able to tell the member that it was a good shoot and it was nothing more than a graze, my gosh, the tears of relief that came from that officer.”

FYI, it’s a 24/7 service for members. Certainly, all legal team members can share experiences like Axelrad has had because he typically covers Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day and has been called away from family more than a few times to be on scene at a shooting.

“Obviously, PBA legal gives us one extra layer of protection when, not if, things go bad,” Betz commented. “Because whether it be a car crash or a use of force, there’s always going to be something where we need some sort of representation. And we have our own attorney from the PBA who knows exactly what we do rather than hiring someone off the street.”

Collective Bargaining

The images of President Stahl sitting side by side with a mayor, simultaneously signing a new collective bargaining agreement with members standing behind them smiling, begin to paint a picture of the PBA’s contract negotiating prowess. Two more came within the last month and show Stahl signing alongside Sweetwater Mayor Jose “Pepe” Diaz and Key Colony Beach Mayor Joey Raspe.

Betz also attests

to this by saying, “Monroe County, especially, has made some huge steps thanks to the PBA after switching from the FOP.” Then he referenced the recent Key West agreement that netted members a significant increase that they might not have been able to negotiate without the help of the PBA.

If you want to check the scoreboard, Axelrad has numbers from negotiating a reopener for a member unit in mid-July. The PBA went in with a proposal for a 15 percent increase. Axelrad noted that the town did not perceive the 15 as outrageous because the union is renowned for not gaming with unreasonable proposals.

Many members have benefited from that credibility. Many more will.

“We go in with reasonable expectations, and maybe we don’t have as much maneuverability to negotiate, but thankfully we have enough experience to know generally what’s too high,” Axelrad explained. “You’re going to lose your integrity if you do that. You’re going to lose everything that you’ve built as far as your reputation and how you bargain.”

Members should be confident that the PBA knows most of the players who come to the other side of the negotiating table. Axelrad said that they even encounter new players who the PBA winds up advising about how these negotiations work. And that’s a rep that gets the deals done for members’ benefit.

“You’re not dealing with a small union. You’re talking about a union that’s been established for a lot of years with reputable attorneys,” Munoz added. “And when we sit down at the table, they know we’re amicable, but we’re no pushovers. We know what’s at stake and we know what we want. That goes a long way.”

Political Action

See Steadman in a photo with Governor DeSantis asking the PBA to join him at the announcement of another big program or a new bill he’s rolling out to support law enforcement. See Steadman and the executive board at the PBA Hall at a press conference with Attorney General Ashley Moody that she asked the union to host. See Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniela Levine Cava and all of the county commissioners wanting to take photos with PBA members.

These are more than mere photo ops and social media posts. These are the fruits of a labor union that realized the power of building relationships with elected officials beginning at least 20 years ago. That action has become the foundation of gains for every PBA member, from their paychecks to working conditions to supporting members’ fundraising efforts.

The view from the members immediately defaults to how much the PBA’s relationships and its vetting of candidates who then get endorsed and elected contribute to successful contract negotiating. And that’s just the tip of the spear.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



“Really setting the tone of our negotiations are the elected officials. That goes to the screenings and to the endorsements and making sure we’re electing people who are going to be pro-law enforcement,” Axelrad proclaimed. “So members will take the endorsement card and vote how the PBA advocates.

So when we go into bargaining with municipalities or the county, we’re doing it with the backdrop of a number of friends who are the elected officials.”

Stahl points the political campaign inward at first, constantly reminding members that they need to have relationships with their elected officials to get anything accomplished. He takes it upon himself and the executive board to constantly drill into elected officials why public safety should always be front and center.

“I cannot stress that importance when it comes to working conditions, when it comes to trying to explain why we need different benefits,” the PBA president declared.

“And then for them to not only listen to you but support you by making it a priority to fund things, to fund programs, to fund contracts.”



We'll leave the light on for you

It’s all been said at this point. Well, almost all of it.

A closing statement examines how the members view the PBA. Rodriguez offers this perspective, qualifying that he benefited when facing discipline in his younger days.

“The attorneys were able to come out — not representatives, but actual attorneys, which not every union like FOP and IUPA provides. I had all discipline removed from my file and never turned back,” he recalled.

Since becoming a rep four years ago, Rodriguez has addressed some rumblings from members about why the PBA makes certain decisions. And he noted how he has always been able to get clarity and answers to deliver to members.

“Sometimes, we haven’t liked the answers, but it wasn’t because the PBA and the people I spoke to were wrong,” Rodriguez added. “They’re always there to be a reminder of what the facts are. They don’t coddle us and just tell us what we want to hear. It’s, ‘Here’s the facts. Here’s the SOP. Here’s the contract. Here’s how the numbers work.’”

Let’s give the last word, then, to the PBA president who is one of the longest-standing active members at 34 years on.

“If you don’t have people in there fighting for your benefits or fighting for your working conditions, it’s only going to get worse,” Stahl stated. “And sometimes you find you have an administration that may want to veer off, and you have to step in and say, ‘You can’t do that.’ And that’s what we pride ourselves on at the PBA.”



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Higher Education

South Florida PBA College Scholarships provide welcome support for members' children to pursue their dreams

■ BY DAN CAMPANA

Without a doubt, every law enforcement officer breathes easier knowing someone has their back.

The same can be said for the children of South Florida PBA members who know the organization that backs their parents on the job is helping them further their education through scholarship opportunities. This year is no different as a total of 79 scholarships were awarded.

The South Florida PBA awarded its 2024 scholarships to gold recipient Ryan Arocha, silver honoree Jason Hammond, and Sydnee Watson, who earned the bronze scholarship.

Each recipient offered nothing but gratitude for being recognized, as each plots their future. Similarly, their parents expressed deep appreciation for the PBA's commitment to the families of members by providing much-needed funding that helps students pursue their academic goals.

"It's a weight off my shoulders," submitted Arocha, who described being "pleasantly surprised" when he was notified about the gold scholarship.

"I've applied for this scholarship a couple of times, and although I've been fortunate enough to have been awarded the base scholarship those few times, finding out I had been given the gold this time around felt very rewarding," he added.

Arocha, a senior at Florida State University pursuing a degree in information technology, is still deciding his career course but said he could



Gold scholarship recipient Ryan Arocha with his mother, Freya Arocha, of the communications bureau, his family at the PBA scholarship awards event.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



The family of silver scholarship recipient Jason Hammond, including his father, Jason, who is on with MDPD, who is holding the plaque give to the silver recipient.

HIGHER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

see himself going into cybersecurity or user-experience design. The gold scholarship will help him with the costs associated with obtaining a few IT certifications he wants to complete during his senior year.

Proud parent Freya Arocha, who has spent 22 years in the communications bureau with the Miami-Dade Police Department, said the scholarship is a point of pride because of Ryan's hard work, but also for the bureau itself.

"I am proud to represent them as the parent of a 2024 PBA scholarship [winner]," Freya Arocha related. "I am extremely thankful for the hours that members of the PBA spent reading through the many applications and for honoring Ryan for his hard work."

Ryan found the process of applying for the scholarship itself rewarding. And it brought him closer to the world that his mother works in.

"The world of law enforcement nowadays feels so uncertain that it sometimes feels difficult to truly grasp the challenges they face in reference to their career," he explained. "To be able to not only write about it but also receive an award makes me proud of not only myself, but also them for sticking with it for so long."

For silver scholarship recipient Jason Hammond, law enforcement and the importance of education have been two constants in his life. Hammond's father, also named Jason, has spent 25 years with MDPD, and his mother, Tonjera, is a teacher.

"He always looked up to me as an authoritative type of dad, where he didn't want to get in much trouble, which was great. And ... we always push the education envelope in our family," the elder Jason Hammond explained.

Jason is heading into his sophomore year at the University of Virginia as a student-athlete who plays defensive tackle on the football team.

"Something about UVA, it's not your typical college. They're more like your Ivy League public school, so he knew right there that really, it ain't all about football. He's going to have to dig in a little bit more, so he understood the assignment," Hammond described. "He's doing rather well up there."

Seeing his son earn a PBA scholarship had a powerful impact on Hammond.

"It meant the world, knowing that you've done something great for your son," he said. "And then, he actually did some-



Bronze scholarship recipient Sydnee Watson, whose mother, Gloria Packingham, is a sergeant with MDPD.



thing great for himself, that he took the time and focused on what he wanted to do to get the scholarship. It's a blessing for us for him to feel that way. I'm very appreciative to my union for that."

Sydnee Watson, who earned the bronze scholarship, is heading toward a career in healthcare.

"I decided to do nursing because I truly admire the bedside care they engage in and their role in helping people," Watson, who is in her second year at Hampton University, explained. "The impact nurses have on their patients is incredible."

As she continues to figure out what her nursing specialty will be, she's thankful for the boost a PBA scholarship offers.

"Being a college student who constantly applies for scholarships and plays the waiting game with if I received them, the most rewarding part is getting what I put my hard work into," she shared. "The fact the PBA chose to award me the bronze scholarship means a lot to me, and I appreciate the organization's support."

That's because both of her parents are law enforcement veterans. Sydnee's mom, MDPD Sergeant Gloria Packingham, has been on the job 27 years; her father, Sergeant Michael Watson Jr., is in his 17th year. Both work in the department's Professional Compliance Bureau.

"As parents, we are always supportive of our children and show them in many ways, but to have the PBA show their support for our child's education is a rewarding experience and of great financial assistance," Packingham noted.



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Landing the big one

Florida Keys PBA Dolphin Tournament reels in great participation and great support for local autism organization

BY DAN CAMPANA

The 4th Annual Florida Keys PBA Dolphin Tournament came down to the closest finish ever for first place overall. But a local charity that works to improve the lives of those with autism once again walked away the weekend's biggest winner.

A total of 25 boats headed about 30 miles off the Keys to the Florida Straits, where hundreds of fish and dolphins were caught during the three-day event in late June that fortified the \$25,000 donation the PBA made to the Autism Society of the Keys from the tournament's proceeds.

Although many of the catches weren't big enough to be weighed, plenty of excited participants posed with what they snagged and the top finishers still fared well, according to Key West PBA Representative Frank Betz.

Team Off the Rock tallied the catch of the weekend with a 34.3-pound dolphin to secure this year's championship. Team Triple J finished second with a 33.28-pound catch.

"This was the tightest race between first and second," Betz confirmed. "Catching dolphin can be easy. Catching large dolphin, that's a whole another ball game. There's skill involved once you hook a big one."

Other winners included Key West Lieutenant Matt Haley, who topped the competition's PBA category; Marilyn Deno taking first in the women's division with a fish just under 14 pounds; and 11-year-old Corbon Liechty leading the juniors division with a 13.4-pound dolphin.

"Got to love it when the kids win it," Betz quipped.

The Liechty name was prominent at this year's tournament, as Liechty Marine of Marathon served as title sponsor. Betz credited Liechty for stepping up when the event's previous top sponsor dropped out. A chance meeting proved to be serendipitous.

"They said they owned a few things down



Key West PBA members present the \$25,000 donation to the Autism Society of the Keys on behalf of the Dolphin Fishing Tournament.

here. As soon as I mentioned what we're doing, he's like, 'We're in,'" Betz said.

More sponsors overall meant bigger prize money and plenty of donations for giveaways and a live auction that took place during Sunday's awards dinner. The cause continues to be well supported through it all, and for good reason.

Betz described the growing relationship between the PBA and the Autism Society of the Keys as a driving force in continuing to grow the event. While the money raised helps support ASK in its broader work with families, the organization also does its part to help in the community by supplying sensory boxes to police in Key West and Monroe County to better prepare officers for interactions involving autistic individuals.

Knowing the great work ASK is doing made it all the better for Betz when he presented the check for \$25,000.

"Every year is awesome. We're their biggest fundraiser of the year, so that's kind of nice," Betz shared. "It stays right here in Monroe County. They do a lot of things for the families. They do a lot for law enforcement training. They sent three boxes to us in the Monroe County Sheriff's Office so ... we have tools that are given out to some of the officers."

Maintaining the event's atmosphere and even expanding support to the community through money raised as part of the tourna-



Dolphin Tournament first-place winner Team Off the Rock.



Key West Lieutenant Matt Haley won the PBA members division.

ment are priorities for Betz as he eyes 2025 and the fifth anniversary.

"It's family oriented. It's about a good time and everyone having fun, weighing their fish, taking some pictures — that's kind of the whole point of it. That, and raising some money," Betz explained. "Autism Society will always be the number one, but as we grow ... we're always looking for other organizations that service the kids in Monroe County to help them in their cause."

The goal is to grow in the water, as well, with a target of 50 boats on Betz's mind.

"Year five is coming up next. My partner, Mike Petty, and I are trying to come up with some big deal because, to us, five years' success is a big deal," Betz added. "We don't know what we're going to do yet, but we'll make it extra special for those who participate."

Hooked

Some of the best reels from the Key West PBA Dolphin Tournament





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The Fleet Is On

Takeaways about take-home cars and other info about the MDPD Fleet Management Bureau

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Quick check on your take-home Dodge Durango, Charger or maybe even a Ford F-150 before rolling out: Lighting. Consoles. Lock box. Radio. Computer. Cage. Maybe take the push bumper and the graphics on the vehicle for granted, but South Florida PBA members should never underestimate what it takes to get you from point A to point B.

Bring on the Miami-Dade Police Department Fleet Management Bureau, which puts officers throughout the county in the driver's seats of the approximately 4,000 vehicles it runs. And since this operation affects almost all 3,200 MDPD officers and then some, here's a look at some of the nuts and bolts that go into keeping the department on the road.

"I think that it is a great incentive to get officers here to work for our agency," Senior Bureau Commander Carlo Hollis-Brown states about the definitive connection most officers have to the Fleet Management Bureau in the way of the take-home car. And how that value drives this nine-person op of one sergeant and eight civilians to keep on rolling.

"Our responsibility is to make sure



MDPD's new Thin Blue Line SUV, which honors officers lost in the line of duty.

that we are providing vehicles and equipment for our officers to use on a daily basis in a safe manner, and basically to help them to serve the public," Hollis-Brown continues. "We're always trying to keep the workflow going, to get the vehicles where they need to be. At the same time, we're also still trying to make sure that the vehicles are functional and that they're ready once we do

have them fully equipped."

Given the complex mechanics of making the Fleet Management Bureau run, there might be no better person to manage it than Hollis-Brown. To say that cars are in her DNA can be confirmed by the picture she references of her in diapers underneath a car in the yard, with her father working on it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



An MDPD vehicle that promotes autism awareness.

THE FLEET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

But he was more than a backyard mechanic. He owned Hollis Automotive and also served as a lead mechanic doing training on school bus maintenance for Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

“After school, I would go and hang out with my dad at the shop,” Hollis-Brown relates. “He would always teach me about the tools and what makes different components of the vehicle run.”

So while some kids in the neighborhood were building cars out of Legos, Hollis-Brown was building them for real. That led her to Miami Gardens, where she helped start a fleet section.

Now, Hollis-Brown has just completed her seventh year at MDPD. Seven years dedicated to leading the Fleet Management Bureau back from the days when it became stagnant, when vehicles weren’t even being ordered. Budget constraints led to civilianizing the unit, and now the biggest hurdle is working within the shortages of manufacturing materials that cause delays in receiving vehicles and the equipment to properly upfit them for safe operation and many miles.

The flow has improved to the point that the bureau can do all the work necessary to put up to 10 new cars on the street on a good day. That includes internal support staff — radio shop personnel and technicians — who equip the vehicles with lighting, consoles, Tuffy lock boxes and radios. And also contracts with outside vendors to assist with specialty units, like K-9 vehicles.

“My goal when I joined was to basically get a newer fleet and to make sure that we had contact with everyone who was a stakeholder in the process,” Hollis-Brown reports. “I wanted them to share their ideas to basically get out of the mindset of we’re stagnant and we’re the stepchildren.”

Taking a look at what residents in the county see on the streets shows how the Miami-Dade police fleet rolls high and mighty. Hollis-Brown reminds that the fleet does have to go in the direction the automotive industry dictates, which is pushing toward SUVs and away from sedans.

Dodge recently decided to do one more redesign of the Charger for 2024, and some of those will show up as marked and unmarked units as maybe the last of the new sedans. But the SUVs, and especially the pickups, have proven to be a plus when hurricane rains flood the roads.

And the fleet does not end with the sedans and SUVs that officers take home. The department is also running BearCats and now MedCats, which, with their ballistics and special armor, enable SWAT and tactical teams to penetrate areas that can’t be accessed with traditional vehicles.

The fleet also recently added a mobile command center for tactical operations in the Special Patrol Bureau. And Hollis-Brown is looking to upgrade the department’s incident command center.

In the meantime, they have added mini command centers in some of the districts, which are not as big as the bus-sized incident command centers. Think, rather, of a minibus that could be a shuttle to and from offsite parking at an airport.

Still, members might ask why there aren’t more new vehicles on the road. The answer is that purchasing is ongoing through the virtue of state contracts with the Florida Sheriff’s Association. But just like any family shopping for a new or used car, the bureau has been hit with those skyrocketing, post-pandemic prices.

“I used to be able to buy pickup trucks, I kid you not, for about \$14,000,” Hollis-Brown details. “And now I’m

spending close to, I’ll say anywhere from \$30,000 to \$40,000 for just a basic pickup truck before I can even start with upfitting.”

Getting maintenance and repairs done is not unlike the family van. Oil changes, brakes, tires and the like are coordinated through the bureau but done through the county’s district shops, which close at 6:30 p.m. Bigger jobs are outsourced to dealerships that are on county contracts.

The latest pride of the fleet has become some of the specialty vehicles on the road. Perhaps you have seen the Thin Blue Line SUV that honors MDPD’s fallen officers. There are also vehicles promoting breast cancer and autism awareness.

Now, there’s no complaint window at the fleet bureau, and officers don’t really complain about their fleet access. Well, not much, anyway.

But there are some rumors and misconceptions that Hollis-Brown can clear up about how the bureau best serves officers.

Starting with noting that take-home cars are issued by assignment. Not every position gets one.

“We basically have to always keep an eye out for what’s going on outside of the four walls of this department because we are trying to avoid the hiccups that can occur,” she adds. “In other words, when it comes to a marked patrol unit, we have to equip it complete. We definitely want it to have its marking because the graphics also took a hit with 3M. They had an issue, too, with material as well.”

So patience, officers, because the bureau has heard the stories about how they were riding in vehicles with 200,000 miles. But sometimes Hollis-Brown has to laugh at some of the stories she hears.

“The funniest ones, of course, are the newbies, the rookies, because they



An MDPD car promoting breast cancer awareness.



don't understand the process, and a lot of times, it's misinformation," Hollis-Brown reveals. "For example, one of the biggest misconceptions is as soon as they are done with training, they're thinking that they get a car. But they have to pass probation."

With the influx of rookies — and compensating for some of the accidents — the Fleet Management Bureau is currently targeting six months or less to get the vehicles issued to them. With one final warning.

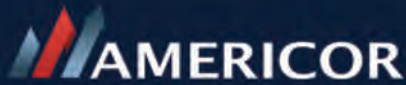
"Just to be clear, they do not get a brand-new car as soon as they clear

probation," Hollis-Brown confirms. "Unfortunately, we can't afford that. We need you to get some driving, get that road experience down pat before we can officially hand over a new car."

The commitment to meet officers' needs compels Fleet Management Bureau personnel to do whatever it takes. Hollis-Brown shares that she would even like to get back to her roots and work on some of the cars herself. But with other planning, purchasing and administrative priorities, the closest she has come is helping her husband fix the brakes on his car.

Still, that is the type of expertise that should give officers confidence when they get behind the wheel. And fuel pride in the work coming out of the MDPD Fleet Management Bureau.

"Ultimately, we take a lot of joy in being able to get vehicles when other agencies struggle to get them," Hollis-Brown declares. "And, ultimately, that leads to success for my team because we are making sure that we are equipping these vehicles in a way that helps our officers do their jobs."



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REFLECTIONS

A conversation with a renowned South Florida PBA member

Rick Kolodgy, former PBA executive vice president and retired Miami-Dade PD sergeant

The Vitals

- On the job for 31 years
- Retired from MDPD Special Patrol Bureau in 2005
- Promoted to sergeant in 1985
- South Florida PBA executive vice president 1996–2005
- Elected to PBA board in 1984; also served as secretary and sergeant-at-arms
- Worked in MDPD Journal Investigations and homicide
- Following retirement, moved to Tallahassee and opened private investigative agency
- Retired permanently in 2022, moved to South Tampa to be with daughter, son-in-law and two grandkids

How I started in law enforcement

I started in 1974, working at the jail. Back then, it was the Dade County Public Safety Department. I had just finished training for the Florida National Guard active duty, and I applied to the police department. They weren't hiring a lot there. They suggested that I go over and get some experience working at the jail. So I took their advice, did that for two and a half years, reapplied to the police department and got hired.

The Conversation

What did you like about working in PBA leadership?

I always liked the legislative aspect of it, and that was one of the things that I always felt if I got a bigger role in the PBA, I would want to expand and just see how far we could take it. We came up with a system to interview politicians at every level when they were running for office. I remember interviewing Marco Rubio when he was a city councilman in West Miami. He certainly seemed to have his act together, and even then, he was pro-police. With our legislative agenda, we found out that would help us with some things we had to get through collective bargaining. And there were other things that we could achieve by going to the Florida State Legislature.

How did the PBA build its legislative presence?

It's a slow process, especially when you're just getting started and have to get involved in individual campaigns. You build a relationship with legislators, and sometimes they move up through the ranks. And you have more pull as they move up. We also got involved in gubernatorial races. I think the first one that we really got into was Jeb Bush when he first ran. He lost, and then we stuck with him. The second time was the charm, and it paid off. Once we got him in there, we were able to get a huge municipal retirement bill passed. We got the DROP passed for all the state employees. We passed enhancements to the Police Officers' Bill of Rights. Then, they made me the Florida PBA legislative chairman in 1995, and I went to Tallahassee and spent the entire 60-day legislative session there.

What was that like?

The process isn't exactly the way it is in the civics books. At one point that session, the whole idea was to pass the Evelyn Gort Career Criminal Act. She was a Metro-Dade officer who had been killed in an off-duty incident. During the course of that, it looked like some of our opponents were playing some games, and we put out a letter that made one of the senators incredibly unhappy. But we convinced



him that we were right and ended up getting the bill passed. It was an enhancement of criminal penalties for different crimes.

How important has it been for the South Florida PBA to understand the power of politics and being involved with legislators?

Without a doubt, it's really one of the foundational principles of any union. As a matter of fact, that's why we're PBA instead of the FOP. Back in the early '60s, the FOP would not let their lodges be involved politically, and so the officers said, "Well, that's not going to work." They broke away and started the PBA so that they could be active in politics.

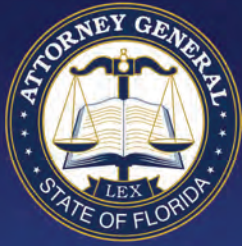
For all current PBA members, can you explain to them the importance of having a union?

The significance is that you have a voice. That's always been the motto of the PBA: the voice of law enforcement. And instead of being told by people downtown or at police headquarters what you're going to do and how things are going to be, you actually have a say through the PBA. The PBA goes in and puts out fires here and there, and then if there's policy change, they take an active role to make sure the perspective of officers is included in any policy changes.

Do you have a specific memory of how that voice was really influential?

One time, we were sitting in the county commission chambers, just talking about different things, and a commissioner was talking about the police director. I said, "Do you know who is the most responsible for forming the public opinion about our department?" And she said, "Oh yeah, the director." I told her that the director might come in contact on a good day with maybe 100 people. I said, "We have 3,200 officers out there making contact with maybe 20 or 30 people a day. That's tens of thousands of contacts. It's how the members interact with the public that actually molds people's perception of our department."





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Members Only Section

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

Hope Floats



Key West officers rescue 76-year-old woman from the water

The men and women of the Key West Police Department have been put to the test lately. For the second time in two months, officers were called to rescue a resident in the ocean.

On the morning of June 22, Officer Mike Beerbower was just getting off of his shift when a call came in from a man staying at a local hotel who said he could hear a woman screaming in the water nearby. Beerbower was the closest, so he responded.

When he arrived, he saw a woman holding on to a rope, repeating, “No swim, no swim.” Beerbower later found out the 76-year-old woman was Haitian and only spoke Creole.

Beerbower called for help, which is when Officer Gus Medina and Officer Corey Vanderhoof, who was responsible for saving a man’s life after he drove his car into the water in April, showed up.

Because the dock was too high to get the woman up and out of the water, Beerbower got into a boat and motioned for the woman to come to him. Once she was able to get to the boat, he instructed her to put her foot onto the motor, but she didn’t understand and was too weak to do so.

That’s when Beerbower turned around and called to his fellow officers for help.

“Unbeknownst to me, Officers Medina and Vanderhoof had al-

ready stripped down their gear and dove in the water immediately,” he described.

The two officers stayed in the water to comfort the woman while Beerbower and other members of the Key West Police pulled her up the ladder of the boat to get her to safety. From there, they carried her onto the dock, where EMS and other first responders were waiting to take her to Lower Keys Medical Center.

“Once we got to the hospital, we came to find out her family was looking for her. She was an elderly dementia patient who had walked away from home,” Beerbower explained.

To make this story even more heroic, the previous day, Key West officers had responded to a call of someone who had been bitten by a shark.

“And even with that knowledge fresh in their minds, [Medina and Vanderhoof] jumped into that water in the dark and didn’t think twice about it,” Beerbower praised.

Beerbower sums up this act of bravery in one word: selfless.

“If my officers are willing to do this for someone they don’t know, it’s tenfold for me,” he said. “It gives me extreme confidence that no matter what position I’m in, there are people coming, and they’re willing to risk their own lives.”

Sunny Isles Beach officer praised for his rescue

Sunny Isles Beach Police Marine Patrol Officer Mark Britton joined the department in early 2023 as its second officer focused on marine duties.

In June, Britton had perhaps his biggest moment when he responded to a sinking vessel at Haulover Cut and carried out a water rescue, according to a department Facebook post. Britton was praised for his “swift actions” that “exemplified his dedication to ensuring safety” on local waterways.

The department said the incident and Britton’s actions highlighted the importance of the Marine Patrol Unit, which safeguards the water year-round. The unit issues citations, provides boating safety information and assists in other operations.

Britton helped support a Department of Homeland Security investigative operation in August 2023 that targeted illegal activity between the Bahamas and South Florida.



MDCR officers always finding new ways to serve

Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation officers serve in one of the most difficult capacities in all of law enforcement. And on July 1, they served in another impactful way.

The department joined the Chapman Partnerships Homeless Assistance Center to provide unhoused residents of Miami-Dade County some delicious food, games, live music and gifts. Additionally, they provided the men with free haircuts in an effort to help them become more confident

in their appearance and offered shoes they had collected to those who needed them.

As MDCR posted on social media, Chapman Partnerships isn't a typical homeless shelter. It helps vulnerable populations create an action plan to get back on their feet. The facilities come with dental clinics, classrooms, WiFi and even basketball courts to help residents become self-sufficient.



MDCR officers recognized for their heroics

Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation officers just keep going above and beyond the call.

At the end of June, the department honored Officer Cesar Bautista from the Monitored Release Bureau with not just one, but two Lifesaving Awards.

While on duty, Bautista found a young woman injured in a scooter accident and immediately requested assistance. Using the first-aid skills he has developed, Bautista quickly rendered aid and provided comfort to the woman.

Additionally, Bautista and his partner responded to a car accident, quickly asking for additional assistance. He was able to safely get the victims evacuated from any further harm and managed the scene until additional help arrived.

Bautista was joined by Lieutenant Juan Mendez, Corporal Tiffany Desir and Officer Theresa Dobson, who were recognized for de-escalating a situation where an inmate was in crisis. According to a post on Instagram, their techniques and compassion allowed the event to end without incident.

With these officers and more, MDCR is proving that law enforcement officers are everyday heroes.



Honoring those who make sure the kids cross safely

Miami-Dade Police Department's heroes come from all walks of the profession. Including those who walk the county's kids through the intersections and roadways on their way to and home from school.

And so on June 9, MDPD recognized the outstanding service and commitment to the community exhibited by school crossing guards at the School Crossing Guard Annual Awards Ceremony.

The department noted in a post on social media:

"These exceptional men and women keep our children safe daily, rain or shine. A majority of these unsung heroes consist of senior employees, who display a genuine passion for their duties and a dear affection for the children they protect. Thank you for all your hard work and for a successful school year!"



North Miami members ensure the safety of a special resident

Law enforcement officers are used to protecting and serving in scary moments — and even preventing those scary moments from happening.

While deploying light towers after a severe round of flooding, North Miami police officers were greeted by a community member and his toddler. That's when Officer Enrique Rivero noticed that the toddler's car seat was positioned incorrectly.

Rivero and other traffic safety officers took the opportunity to educate the father on the dangers of positioning a car seat improperly before fixing it so the toddler could be safe.



Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation goes gold in First Responder Games

Right now, some of the greatest athletes in the world are going for the gold in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, but they're not the only ones.

In late June, Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation did likewise when participating in the First Responder Games.

Officer Hughie Graham brought home the gold, and Officer Anthony Collins took silver in the powerlifting events. Meanwhile, the department's bowling team took first place, and its men's basketball team went home with the silver medal. Finally, Sergeant Beverly Hickman acted as MDCR's own Simone Biles by winning multiple medals, including gold in women's doubles bowling.





FIU PD member honored for his peer support

Only a police officer knows how physically and mentally taxing the job can be for other officers.

Florida International University Police Officer Q. Powell was honored at the end of June for showing kindness and empathy toward North Miami Beach police as a regional peer support member when their department was going through a rough time. Powell became a member of the peer support team in February.

In a Facebook post, the department noted:

“FIUPD is committed in supporting and standing in solidarity with other law enforcement agencies in their time of need.”



PBA members kick it with kids in Pinecrest

Kickball is not just for gym class or recess. That was certainly the case on June 9 when Pinecrest police partnered with Hopeful Haven and Voices for Children for their annual kickball tournament. South Florida PBA members from Miami-Dade joined officers from Coral Gables and the city of Miami to participate in the event.

Officers were able to provide a full day of fun for children in need. Hopeful Haven supports foster children in need, while Voices for Children provides a voice for abused and neglected children in Miami-Dade County.

Hurricanes players help out Miami-Dade Animal Services

Football players from The U might have met their match when visiting Miami-Dade Animal Services in June. The University of Miami players would have been flagged for holding with the way they handled some of the animals at the animal services shelter.

The players took a day off from getting ready for the season to volunteer at the shelter, hang out with some four-legged friends looking for a home, and give them some much-needed extra love. They took the pets for walks, fed them treats and gave plenty of belly rubs.



Homestead police shed light on gun violence

June marked National Gun Violence Awareness Month, a time to highlight the ways we can prevent senseless violence. On June 7, Homestead police traded in their blues for orange to show support for gun violence awareness at their pop-up event for the community.

Children and their families came out to enjoy music, games and food while getting good reminders about gun safety. The event was part of the Start Off Smart program to serve the community by inspiring education and hope.



Bay Harbor Islands police go for a bike ride

Leading by example came to the residents of Bay Harbor Islands on July 12. Chief Lindsley Noel, Deputy Chief Donald Blanchard and Captain Joseph Locke took leadership to the streets by going out for a bike ride to promote health and connect with the community.

See SPOT run for MDPD

A dog's life was on display during the Southeast Regional Domestic Security Task Force conference on June 15. Sergeant Victor Milian of the MDPD Homeland Security Bureau had the honor of presenting during the meeting. He was joined by SPOT, the robotic dog used by the department's Special Response Team.



Working at the car wash with Homestead members

Like Rose Royce once sang, “You might not ever get rich, but let me tell ya it’s better than digging a ditch.” Recently, the Homestead police and their Youth Explorers held a car wash to raise money for their program. Through this event and many others, the department is able to keep alive the initiative to connect with the community.

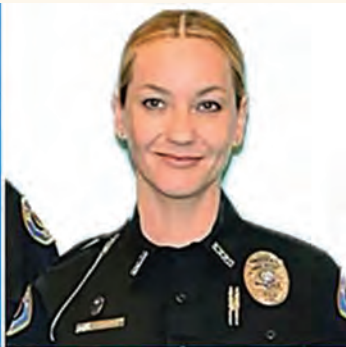


Long-distance commendation for Key West member

Proving the positive power of social media, a YouTube viewer from Fairfax, Virginia, felt compelled to commend Key West Police Officer Andrea Bernatova for her professionalism in the handling of a DUI stop. Moved by the way Bernatova managed the traffic stop and arrest of the 18-year-old driver, the viewer wrote to Key West Police Chief Sean Brandenburg, who in turn posted his own praise for Bernatova on the department’s Facebook page.

Message from Fairfax, Virginia

Chief Brandenburg, I am watching the You Tube Video of Officer Andrea Bernatova’s DUI Arrest of an 18 year old, and I wanted to send you an email. Officer Bernatova did a very good job, remaining professional throughout the arrest process! I am sure that she is a valuable member of your Police Force. She should be commended for her fine work!

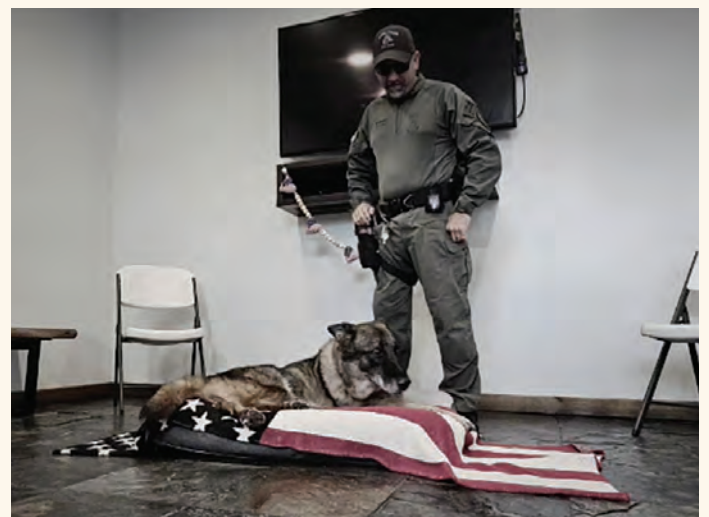


Thank you for your continued professionalism.
 You have shown a positive light on yourself, the Key West Police Department, and the City of Key West through your continued efforts to combat drunk driving and make Key West a safer place.
 Keep up the good work,
 Chief Sean T. Brandenburg

Doral members mourn loss of a beloved partner



Doral police officers recently said goodbye to one of their loyal servants, K-9 Deemo. He passed away on June 24 after nine years of service, during which he worked tirelessly on the job to keep the community safe. Deemo was renowned for curling up on his dog bed in the department, draped in an American flag.



MCSO deputy raises the flag

Does it get more patriotic than this?

In a truly serendipitous moment at Veterans Memorial Park, Monroe County Sheriff's Office Deputy Tyree Robinson came upon an American flag that had been damaged by the weather the previous night.

On June 14, which is Flag Day.

Deputy Robinson repaired the flag and raised it back up the flagpole. Happy Flag Day!



Key Largo squad raises a glass to help local boy

Apparently, MCSO deputies know how to play ball.

On June 25, Key Largo Sergeant James Hager and his squad encountered a unique opportunity to take a break. A local boy had set up a lemonade stand to raise money to go to Tennessee for a baseball tournament.

The squad stopped to share a glass and perhaps toast the young man, who figured out to turn lemons into lemonade.

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Bike rodeo keeps 'em rollin' in South Miami

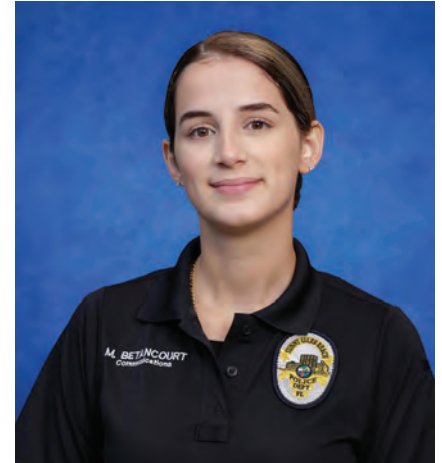
There's nothing better than a summertime bike ride — except for a safe bike ride, of course. That was the mission of the South Miami Police Department's 2024 Bike Ridin' Rodeo, held on July 13. Along with community partners, South Miami officers helped youngsters with proper helmet fittings, talked about safe riding and escorted the kids through rodeo challenges on a beautiful South Florida day.



Tech-savvy Sunny Isles Beach officer commended

The modern era of policing means technology is a valued partner when it comes to cracking cases. For Sunny Isles Beach Communications Officer Mia Betancourt, her use of advanced technology platforms led to an arrest of a vehicle theft suspect. It started when a license plate reader alerted the department to the stolen vehicle in June.

Betancourt quickly used programs such as Hiperwall to help the department recover the vehicle and arrest the driver, who had a lengthy criminal history. Betancourt received a department commendation for her exceptional awareness and professionalism in her work on the case.



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Debt: Your retirement plan's Achilles' heel



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In the realm of financial planning, advisors often focus predominantly on one side of a client's balance sheet: assets and investments. While growing wealth through savings and investments is undeniably important, it is equally crucial to manage and reduce liabilities, especially credit card and consumer debt. For law enforcement officers, who may face unique financial challenges and stresses, having a handle on debt is vital for overall financial health. This essay delves into effective strategies for managing and reducing credit card and consumer debt, emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach to financial planning.

Debt, particularly high-interest debt such as credit card balances, can severely hamper financial well-being. It not only drains current resources through high monthly payments and interest charges but also limits the ability to save and invest for the future. For law enforcement officers, managing debt effectively is essential due to several factors:

Financial stability. Unmanaged debt can lead to financial instability, increasing stress and affecting job performance.

Career risks. Excessive debt might impact credit scores, which can be a consideration in background checks for promotions or special assignments.

Future planning. High levels of debt can hinder the ability to plan for major life events, such as buying a home, funding education, or preparing for retirement.

The first step in managing debt is to understand the extent and nature of the debt. Here's how law enforcement officers can assess their debt situation:

List all debts. Compile a list of all outstanding debts, including credit cards, personal loans, auto loans, and any other consumer debt. Note the balances, interest rates and minimum monthly payments.

Calculate your debt-to-income ratio. This ratio compares your total monthly debt payments to your gross monthly income. A high debt-to-income ratio indicates a need for immediate action to reduce debt.

Review credit reports. Obtain copies of your credit reports from the three major credit bureaus (Experian, Equifax and TransUnion) to ensure accuracy and understand your credit profile.

Once you have a clear picture of your debt situation, the next step is to implement strategies to manage and reduce it effectively. Here are key strategies tailored for law enforcement officers:

Create a budget. Establish a realistic budget that outlines your income and expenses. Prioritize essential expenses and allocate a portion of your income towards debt repayment. Budgeting helps you live within your means and avoid accumulating additional debt.

Prioritize debt repayment. Use one of the following methods to systematically pay down debt:

- **Debt snowball method.** Focus on paying off the smallest debt first while making minimum payments on other debts. Once the smallest debt is paid off, move to the next smallest. This method can provide psychological motivation by achieving quick wins.
- **Debt avalanche method.** Concentrate on paying off the debt with the highest interest rate first while making minimum payments on others. This approach minimizes the amount of interest paid over time.

Consolidate debt. Consider consolidating multiple debts into a

single loan with a lower interest rate. Debt consolidation can simplify payments and potentially reduce the overall interest rate. Options include personal loans, home equity loans, or balance transfer credit cards with promotional interest rates.

Negotiate with creditors. Reach out to creditors to negotiate lower interest rates or more favorable repayment terms. Credit card companies and lenders may be willing to work with you if you demonstrate a commitment to repaying the debt.

Use windfalls wisely. Allocate any unexpected windfalls, such as tax refunds, bonuses or overtime pay, toward debt repayment. Applying these extra funds directly to debt can accelerate your progress.

Avoid accumulating new debt. While focusing on paying down existing debt, it is crucial to avoid taking on new debt. Limit the use of credit cards and refrain from making large purchases on credit.

Seek professional help. If debt becomes overwhelming, consider seeking help from a credit counseling agency. Certified credit counselors can provide personalized advice, help create a debt management plan and negotiate with creditors on your behalf.

Effective debt management is not only about reducing current debt but also about adopting habits that prevent future debt accumulation. Here are some long-term strategies to maintain financial health:

Build an emergency fund. Establish an emergency fund to cover unexpected expenses, such as medical bills or car repairs. Having a financial cushion reduces the reliance on credit cards during emergencies.

Invest in financial education. Continuously educate yourself about personal finance and debt management. Understanding financial principles can help you make informed decisions and avoid debt pitfalls.

Plan for major expenses. Anticipate and plan for major expenses, such as home improvements or vacations, by saving in advance. Avoid financing these expenses with high-interest credit.

Utilize employer benefits. Take advantage of benefits offered by your employer, such as retirement plans, health savings accounts, and financial wellness programs. These benefits can contribute to overall financial stability.

Monitor your credit. Regularly review your credit reports and credit scores to ensure accuracy and identify areas for improvement. Maintaining a good credit score can result in better interest rates and loan terms.

For law enforcement officers, managing and reducing credit card and consumer debt is a critical aspect of financial well-being. By assessing their debt situation, implementing effective repayment strategies and adopting long-term financial habits, law enforcement officers can achieve a balanced and secure financial future.

Nicolás Valdés-Fauli is the founder and CEO of Thin Blue Line Financial (www.tblfinancial.com). Call 305-798-1842 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, nor is it intended to be a solicitation for business. Investment advisory services offered through Main Street Financial Solutions LLC.

Fueling the force: The role of a high-protein diet



DEBBIE ROSEN

In the high-stakes world of law enforcement, physical fitness isn't just a desirable trait — it's a necessity. Law enforcement officers face demanding situations that require peak physical condition to navigate safely and effectively. One crucial component of maintaining this level of fitness is a diet rich in protein. Here's why a high-protein diet is essential for law enforcement officers and the benefits it offers in the line of duty.

Sustained energy levels: A high-protein diet provides the body with a steady supply of energy throughout the day, especially since our bodies cannot store protein for later use. Unlike simple carbohydrates, which cause energy spikes followed by crashes, protein-rich foods like lean meats, eggs and legumes provide a more stable source of energy. For law enforcement officers, whose shifts can be long and unpredictable, maintaining consistent energy levels is paramount for staying alert and focused during critical moments.

Effective weight management: Maintaining a healthy weight is not just about aesthetics; it's about ensuring optimal physical performance. High-protein diets have been shown to promote satiety, reducing the likelihood of overeating and aiding in weight loss or weight management efforts. For law enforcement officers, maintaining a healthy weight is essential for agility, speed and overall mobility.

Combating aging: The demands of law enforcement can take a toll on the body over time, accelerating the aging process. A high-protein diet can help mitigate some of these effects. Protein

is essential for muscle repair and regeneration, helping to maintain muscle mass and strength as officers age. Additionally, protein-rich foods are often packed with antioxidants that combat oxidative stress, a major contributor to aging at the cellular level.

Enhanced physical performance: Whether chasing down a suspect or engaging in hand-to-hand combat, law enforcement officers rely on their physical prowess to keep themselves and others safe. A high-protein diet supports muscle growth and repair, improving strength, endurance and overall physical performance. Additionally, adequate protein intake is essential for injury prevention, as strong muscles and connective tissues are better equipped to withstand the rigors of law enforcement.

The importance of a high-protein diet for law enforcement officers cannot be overstated. From providing sustained energy to aiding in weight management, combating aging and enhancing physical performance, protein plays a vital role in keeping officers fit for duty. By using a protein supplement daily, like TruBUILD, which contains 25 grams of pure isolated whey protein and no sugar or artificial ingredients, law enforcement officers can ensure they have the strength, endurance and resilience needed to face the challenges of their profession head-on.

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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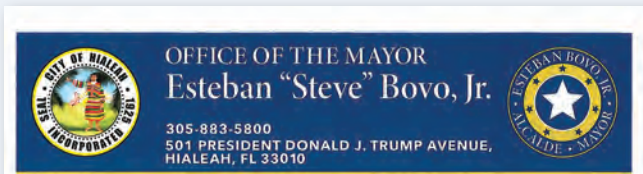


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Thank-You Notes TO THE PBA



Dear Steadman Stahl,

On behalf of the City of Hialeah, I extend my sincerest gratitude for your generous support of the 2023 Mayor's Gala, which benefited our Edgar J. Hall Special Populations program. Your contribution significantly impacted the lives of individuals with special needs in our community. Together, we raised over \$222,000. As promised, matching funds from the City of Hialeah were allocated.

Your dedication to our city and its residents was genuinely commendable. By supporting the Edgar J. Hall Special Populations program, you demonstrated a deep commitment to enhancing the lives of individuals with special needs and promoting inclusivity within our community. Your contribution helped us improve the center, provide accessible recreational programs and educational opportunities, and empower them to lead fulfilling and independent lives.

Once again, thank you for your generosity and unwavering support. The success of the 2023 City of Hialeah Mayor's Gala would not have been possible without sponsors like you.

I ask for you to please mark your calendar for our 2024 City of Hialeah Mayor's Gala on **Saturday, October 5th, 2024**, at 7:00 PM as we come together once again to make a meaningful impact. The evening promises to be filled with entertainment, camaraderie, and, most importantly, an opportunity to contribute towards a cause that truly matters.

Your unwavering dedication to our city and its residents has been exemplary, and we are deeply grateful for your continued support. Together, we can continue to create positive change and foster inclusivity within our community.

Formal invitations with further details will follow soon. We can't wait to have you join us for another unforgettable evening dedicated to making a difference.

Sincerely,

Mayor Esteban Bovo, Jr.
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