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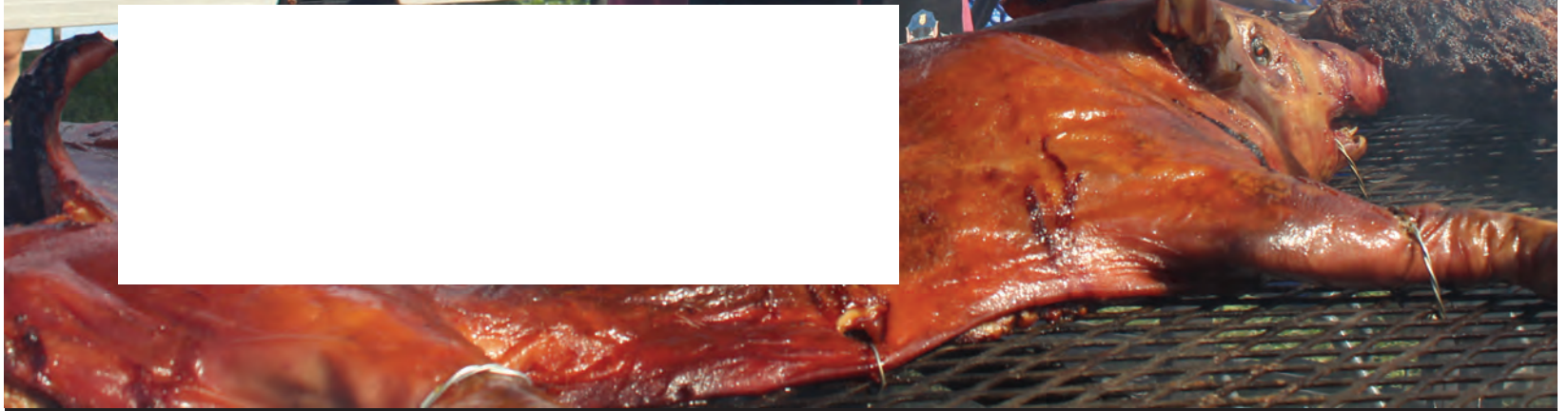
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024



## Feeling Swine



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Thursday,  
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## COVER STORY



**Page 18**

### THE DISH

Our special report on the 2024 South Florida PBA Pig Roast Bowl Series goes behind the pits to give members a taste of this incredible feast. More than 10,000 people attended and more than 130 teams participated to make the Pig Roast the best fundraiser the South Florida PBA has ever presented. The special seasonings, secret ingredients and all the trimmings were part of the spectacular support for the PBA Love Fund. The teams that served up the best of the best tell their stories in way that will make your mouth water.

COVER DESIGN BY JENNA RAMOS

## MESSAGES FROM THE PBA

- The Pres Says.....**Page 5**
- The Dish from Ish.....**Page 8**
- Corrections Corner.....**Page 10**
- South Florida PBA Legal Corner.....**Page 12**
- POAT News.....**Page 14**
- RPOC News.....**Page 16**
- Honoring Retired Members.....**Page 17**
- Reflections.....**Page 30**
- Thank-You Notes to the PBA.....**Page 39**

## INSIDE STORIES

**28**



**'Tis the season to check mental health**

**32**



**Storm Facers**



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## A perfect time for the PBA Pig Roast to bring us all together



STEADMAN STAHL

When it comes to the South Florida area, cooking pigs is something our law enforcement, our community and our members all agree on.

Our third annual Pig Roast Bowl Series Championship and fundraiser for the PBA Love Fund could not have come at a better time. Right after the elections. The politics were behind us. No party affiliations. Just a good, wholesome, beautiful day. The weather was great. The participation was just overwhelming.

None of it could have been done without the ton of volunteers. The PBA board of directors led that effort by stepping up and wanting to be part of it. And even though the event starts early in the morning and goes to sunset, in addition to having to pick up the pig a couple of days early, getting it marinated and seasoned and getting the tents set up, it was just a great turnout from everyone.

Even with all the teams that entered the competition for best-tasting pig, best pig presentation, best chicharron and many other trophies — more than 130, I think — not everybody was there to compete. There were numerous people just partaking in it, like a big tailgate party. People were not only cooking pigs. We had some members cooking briskets. Some were cooking turkeys. It's whatever you wanted to cook.

Hialeah Gardens came again with their car that has the pit for the pig in the trunk and the barbecue grill under the hood. They not only had kebabs on the engine part, but they brought all the trimmings and the side dishes for the spectators. Yeah, it certainly has become the best fundraiser we have.

But the best part is all public safety and all the elected officials coming together to make sure there is support for the event. I mean, it couldn't be done without them. And it couldn't be done without the community that comes out and wants to be a part of it. I was in the middle of it to see the kids throwing footballs and having fun in the bounce houses. Wherever you turned, there was something for everybody.

I don't know if the Pig Roast can keep getting bigger. I mean, if it does, we're going to need a different venue. It's a good problem to have. A lot goes into putting together the Pig Roast. It's like the Super Bowl. It does not go off without a hitch. But everything somehow falls into place, and we could not do it without the partnership of the community, the partnership of other public safety agencies and the partnership of our elected officials.

We look forward to a successful relationship with one of our newest elected officials, Miami-Dade County Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz. We want to congratulate the first sheriff we've had in Miami-Dade in 60 years. Rosie is going to do a great job, and we look forward to working with her. We already are engaged with her team to make sure that public safety will continue to be out front and that this community is going to feel safe, as it always has.

When Rosie is sworn in on Jan. 7 and assumes the helm of the Miami-Dade County Sheriff's Office, we know how our members are looking ahead with anticipation and questions. We know the membership was divided in the election, but now we recognize that Rosie has made history.

The department itself is obviously going to change from being a police department to a sheriff's office, a full-fledged sheriff's office, something it has not been for 60 years. And the women and men of the Miami-Dade Police Department will make this a top-notch sheriff's office, one of the best in the state.

Obviously, there are a lot of moving parts to make this transition take place. The government as we know it at all levels has changed — everything from our tax collector to the election supervisor to the sheriff. Everything you've known in the past has changed, and I think for the better.

I was a big supporter of implementing these constitutional offices. The changes were part of the statewide referendum, and it passed overwhelmingly in Miami-Dade County. All counties in the state are now aligned.

The sheriff's office is going to be a new concept for everybody to understand the way it works, including the way the budgets will be done.

And I think we need to heed the sheriff's words that there will be little time to catch a breath because there is a lot to do. She has to do in 60 days what has not been done in 60 years.

The budget itself is a very complex proposition that has many subtleties. There are a ton of moving parts. The sheriff's office will need to sign interlocal agreements with all the municipalities it oversees. And from radio contracts to healthcare, she has the final say on everything. Rosie will have to get people in place that know how to do that. She chooses how to operate it. It'll be at her total control.

We certainly look forward to working with her and making the changes to the department that will come our way. From the different bureaus to the different specialized units, it will all be at the sheriff's discretion. Like the size of the Sheriff's Office. If we need to have more personnel, that's for her to determine. So again, it's a massive undertaking that the sheriff is going to have to work out.

We're all going to roll up our sleeves. We're all going to jump in to work together. And I think in the end, the



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CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



# The President's Gallery



A selfie at the Pig Roast shows how the community came together for the PBA's biggest fundraiser.



During an event at the University of Miami, PBA Executive Vice President David Greenwell, left, Hialeah Police Chief George Fuente and I hung out with Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nunez. Chief Fuente and I also had a photo op with Florida First Lady Casey DeSantis.



Congratulations to our new Miami-Dade Clerk of Courts, Juan Fernandez-Barquin.



Sharing a moment with Circuit Court Judge Christine Hernandez when she received her investiture from the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges.



Celebrating with a former president of Metro-Dade Firefighters Local 1403, Omar Blanco, who was elected to the state legislature as a rep from the 115th District.



At a recent event with our sheriff elect.

## STAHL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

citizens of Miami-Dade County are going to get not only the same service they have come to expect but even better service when it comes to public safety.

Listen, it's going to stay the same with the jobs police officers are going to do on the road, the calls they are going to respond to. The domestics and the traffic stops, nothing's changing the day she's sworn in. Citizens are still going to pick up the phone and call the police. We're still going to come. The investigations that are underway right now will continue under the sheriff's office.

This was obviously an election cycle that I think we can all agree nobody had ever seen anything like. And nobody was more excited than I was after Nov. 5 to put it all behind us.

That's another reason the Pig Roast event that came a couple of weeks after the election was such a celebration. We had thousands of people come together because we needed to put the elections behind us, no matter your party affiliation, no matter where you sit on the issues.

It was just good to see everybody come together, have a good time

and enjoy themselves. And I think that we can certainly say that as we move forward, the next year — and the next four years — look extremely promising.

I certainly look forward to working with all our elected officials, especially our sheriff, to make sure that this is still the best department, and we put out the best product in the South Florida area. I live here in this county. I don't plan on moving away anytime soon. And so we look toward the next four years with great anticipation that we will have so much we can all agree on.

**Steadman Stahl**  
**South Florida PBA President**  
[steadman@sflpba.org](mailto:steadman@sflpba.org)



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# It takes understanding to resolve our conflicts



**NIZAM "ISH" ISHMAEL  
VICE  
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The police workplace can often feel tense and contentious, with officers frequently finding themselves at odds with one another. The friction isn't necessarily due to personal differences but rather to a series of pressures and dynamics inherent to the profession. Police officers work in a high-stress, high-stakes environment where emotions can run high, and conflicts among colleagues can be inevitable.

Understanding the reasons behind these conflicts can provide insight into why disagreements and arguments are so common within law enforcement teams.

One key reason for frequent arguments among officers is the competitive, sometimes hyper-masculine culture found within many departments. Policing, historically rooted in strict hierarchy and discipline, places high value on toughness, self-reliance and resilience.

This cultural emphasis can create an atmosphere where officers feel pressure to prove their competency and assert their dominance. In such an environment, disagreements can quickly escalate, as each officer may feel compelled to defend their decisions, opinions or actions to maintain respect and avoid any perception of weakness. This competitiveness can make even minor disagreements feel personal and egos can quickly clash, leading to arguments that may seem disproportionate to the initial issue.

Another factor is the unique stress and intensity of the job itself. Policing is a profession that involves facing dangerous, unpredictable situations where split-second decisions are required. In the heat of these moments, officers often experience an adrenaline rush, which can heighten emotions and make arguments more likely. After handling high-stress calls, officers may not always have time to debrief or process what has happened, leading to unresolved tension.

Tension can build up and eventually spill over into conflicts with colleagues, even over small issues. In many cases, officers may argue over tactical decisions or responses because each one has a strong, ingrained sense of right and wrong on the job, leading them to critique one another's actions, especially in high-stakes situations.

Leadership dynamics within police departments also contribute to tension among officers. Police work is rooted in hierarchy, where chain of command and authority are critical. However, this structure can create friction, especially if officers feel micromanaged or overly controlled by higher-ups.

At the same time, junior officers might feel pressured to demonstrate their expertise or to resist feedback they perceive as excessive or unfair. Senior officers, conversely, may become frustrated with newer officers who they feel lack experience or discipline. These dynamics can lead to misunderstandings, cliques and even resentment between ranks, fostering an environment where disagreements are frequent and can quickly escalate.

Another contributor to workplace conflicts is the public scrutiny that law enforcement faces today. Police officers are frequently criticized in the media, and this heightened visibility can create a defensive attitude within departments. Officers may become protective of their actions, feeling the need to justify or rationalize decisions in the face of potential outside criticism.

This can extend into interactions with colleagues, as officers may argue over "the right way" to handle a situation, each one hoping to ensure their actions align with departmental expectations and public approval. Defensiveness can lead to disputes over how best



It's always great to work with PBA Representative Alexia Wilson, left, and Lisa Nesbitt Bell, a member of our board of directors.



A photo opp with a lot of great crimefighters at the PBA fundraiser Pig Roast Bowl Series on Nov. 16.

to handle calls, respond to the public or even complete routine tasks.

Lastly, the nature of police work requires officers to spend long hours together, often under challenging conditions. Long shifts, frequent overtime and close working quarters mean that officers spend significant amounts of time in one another's company.

Small annoyances can easily escalate when people are exhausted or frustrated, and it's common for officers to get on each other's nerves over time. Arguments can arise from minor personality clashes or differing work styles, which are then amplified by the pressure and stress that come with the job.

While conflict and arguments are not unusual in any workplace, the unique pressures within policing — such as the demands for constant vigilance, hierarchy, public scrutiny and competitive culture — can make disagreements more frequent and intense among officers. Recognizing these sources of tension is an essential first step for departments aiming to create a more cohesive, supportive environment. Reducing unnecessary friction and fostering respect and open communication can help officers focus more on their shared mission and less on internal conflicts, benefiting both the department and the communities we serve.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving, and to those of various faiths: Happy Hanukkah/Hanukkah Sameach, happy Kwanzaa/Habari Gani and merry Christmas. Be safe out there, and do not put on too much weight during this time of the year. Please feel free to contact me at [ish@sflpba.org](mailto:ish@sflpba.org) or at 305-593-0044.



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# The election is over. What's next for Corrections?



KARLOS RAMOS  
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

I want to briefly point out some factors that over time have created differing perceptions between police and corrections.

**Visibility and media coverage.** Police officers are frequently in the public eye because they work on the front lines, responding to incidents in real-time. This high-visibility role attracts more media coverage, especially when involving high-stakes situations or controversial actions. In contrast, corrections officers work within institutions, where much of their work is behind closed doors and rarely reported.

**Perception of action vs. containment.** Policing is often seen as more action-oriented, with officers responding to and actively preventing crimes, which can be perceived as “heroic” or immediate. The work of correctional officers, however, is more about the containment, rehabilitation and management of incarcerated individuals, which doesn’t attract the same level of public excitement or urgency.

**Public understanding of role and impact.** The public is generally more aware of what police do because encounters with police can happen anywhere, whereas correctional officers operate in controlled environments like jails or prisons, which the public rarely sees. As a result, people tend to misunderstand or overlook the impact of corrections on public safety and rehabilitation.

**Focus on law enforcement culture.** Police culture has been widely studied, discussed and sometimes romanticized or critiqued in popular culture and media, adding to the mystique or notoriety. Corrections, by comparison, lacks the same focus, leading it to remain less familiar or significant in the public’s view.

Despite the shadow that police work casts, both fields are essential for public safety — one handling prevention and response, the other focusing on rehabilitation and containment. Each role supports the justice system differently, but police often get more attention because their impact is more direct and visible to the public.

The famous introduction to the “Law and Order” TV series should say: “In the criminal justice system, the people are represented by *three* separate yet equally important groups: the police, who investigate crime; the district attorneys, who prosecute the offenders; and the *correctional officers, who maintain their safety and security.* These are their stories”.

With that said, I encourage Miami-Dade County and Sheriff-Elect Cordero-Stutz to help bring Miami-Dade Corrections into the spotlight and out from the shadows. Let’s elevate the department to the standard where the community gains a fresh perspective and renewed respect for those working within the county jails.

Now that we have an elected sheriff, I want nothing but success for her and for every officer serving in Miami-Dade Coun-



Congratulations to our new Miami-Dade County Sheriff, Rosie Cordero-Stutz, center.

ty. While many believe that merging both departments would result in a larger budget, enabling the sheriff to accomplish more, my focus is on the impact this change will have on every officer working in our county jails.

If we have correctional officers who are capable of writing police reports, adding charges and managing the administrative tasks that police officers typically handle, it could significantly reduce the time police officers spend in the jail processing incidents. This is just one of many ways to alleviate the workload on police officers, allowing them to focus more on their duties outside the jail.

Ultimately, our sole objective remains the success of our departments and the well-being of our members. I believe that this objective is best suited by Corrections transitioning to the Sheriff’s Office. But whether that happens now, in a few months or years, or never, we will always push to elevate the understanding and sacrifices correctional officers make daily, which are often lost in the shadow of our brother and sister police officers. Please feel free to contact me at [ramos@sflpba.org](mailto:ramos@sflpba.org) or at 305-593-0044.



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# From the chapel to the courtroom



GRISKA  
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Love stories can go from wedding bells to the slamming of the gavel in a courtroom. Most people enter marriages hoping to find their happily ever after, but in some instances you are left standing before a judge, going your separate ways. Couples that are deciding to end their marriage at all stages of their lives face several issues, and there are many misconceptions regarding the dissolution of marriage.

The primary concern in most marriages is the distribution of assets. What happens to the marital home? For some couples, neither spouse wants to leave the marital home because they believe that if they leave, they will not have a

claim to the marital property. In Florida, this is not the case.

If one spouse leaves voluntarily or involuntarily, they will still be entitled to a portion of equity and/or debt of the residence as part of the divorce. Credit may be given to the spouse that remains in the house when determining equity but will not give rise to abandonment of the property. The equity or debt will be divided equitably. This allows spouses who are not experiencing an amicable relationship to avoid having to reside together for fear of losing interest in their property.

But how do courts determine equitable distribution? The first way to determine distribution is to agree with your spouse. If you can come to an agreement, the court, in the majority of cases, will ratify the agreement of the parties. What happens if you can't reach an agreement?

Florida statute sets out the criteria for equitable distribution. The court will be tasked with looking at both the assets and the debts accumulated in the marriage and will decide on a fair and equitable distribution. This does not mean that it will be 50/50. The court will use it as a starting point.

There are several points of consideration within the statute that would play a role in the court's determination. Did you pay all the bills? Did you pay the mortgage? Did you contribute to the acquisition, enhancement of income or improvement to the property? What was your contribution to the acquisition of debt? Was there intentional dissipation, depletion or waste or even destruction of marital assets? People forget that it is not only about the money you make but the money you spend.

In some cases, it isn't about money. It's about the kids. For those couples that have children under the age of 18, custody, time sharing and child support will be present at every stage of the proceeding. The parents no longer want to continue with their relationship but must be mature enough to acknowledge their responsibility as a parent. It isn't the divorce that will affect the children but how the parents treat each other and the role they will play in their life.

You may not be a husband or a wife anymore, but you will forever be a parent. Determining how the kids will be raised and how each parent will participate in their lives is part of the process. Florida law requires the agreement and filing of a parenting plan. It's a plan to be able to face challenges as they come in the upbringing of the children.

The parenting plan will help avoid conflict by laying out the expectations of each party. It is in the best interests of the parties to reach an agreement on the parenting plan. Failure to

## 2024 Pending Grievances

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of **Oct. 31, 2024**. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

### DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

<b>CITY OF MIAMI PD</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>MIAMI-DADE CORRECTIONS</b>		
ASSOCIATION	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>MIAMI-DADE POLICE</b>		
NORTHSIDE	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>MIAMI GARDENS PD</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>MCSO (DETENTION)</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL GRIEVANCES</b>		<b>10</b>

agree on a parenting plan will result in the court intervening. This means that the parties will no longer have control over the basic things found in the parenting plan.

In establishing a parenting plan, the court will use several criteria to determine the best interests of the child. This is a review of each parent's ability to maintain a close relationship with the child.

Does the parent have the apparent ability to ascertain the needs of the child and take the appropriate action? The parents' location in relation to where the child goes to school and the child's everyday life activities is always a consideration. Can the parent provide a safe and stable residence and home life for the child? Will the parent be emotionally, mentally and physically able to care for the child?

The court will look to see if there was any evidence of abuse or neglect by either parent. The developmental needs of each child are also considered in the parenting plan. The factors are directly related to the impact on the well-being of the child.

A parenting plan in Florida is a court order, which specifies the entitlements and responsibilities of separating parents pertaining to their children. In order to avoid potentially negative parent-child consequences from the hostility that may exist between separating parents, the courts require the collaborative submission of these plans. The goal of the courts is to help



parents plan for every reasonable contingency. This extends to education goals, extracurricular activities and medical needs. The hope is that this preparation will result in fewer conflicts in the future. This means greater stability for the children involved, as well as fewer emotional and financial costs to the separating parents going forward.

What about your pension? If both parties agree that each spouse keeps their pension, the court will ratify the parties' wishes. What if they don't? In the state of Florida, there is a legal document that can be prepared by a lawyer that would determine what each party is entitled to receive.

A qualified domestic relations order (QDRO) is a legal document that allows a spouse to receive assets from their former spouse's retirement account or pension when they are getting divorced or separated. QDROs are issued by Florida courts and other state authorities. QDROs help spouses avoid tax penalties when dividing retirement or deferred compensation accounts. QDROs must meet specific requirements set by federal law and the Investment Plan. They must include the percentage or amount of the participant's benefits to be paid to each payee.

The key point of dissolutions is that the more issues you agree on, the more control you have over your future. If your dissolution is uncontested, come in to see us at the PBA. You will have



all of the necessary documentation completed and filed. The only cost to you will be the filing fee and, in some cases, the preparation of a QDRO. Your dissolution will be filed electronically, and you will not need to appear in court.

As a PBA member, we will represent you in any uncontested divorce. You do not have to pay any attorneys' fees, which could save you (and your spouse) thousands of dollars. It is easy for what you think will be an uncontested divorce to become contested, so we will work with you to navigate this with an eye on working everything out amicably in order to save you from having to hire a private attorney. As always, call the PBA legal department, and we will help in any way we can.



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When the Police Officer Assistance Trust (POAT) was created, it was meant for the families of officers killed in the line of duty. So they would know that their police family will never forget their sacrifice. These are not just words, but the deeds the Trust does on a regular basis.

As I write this article, we have been in contact with the daughter of an officer killed in the line of duty in 1952. She is now in hospice care at the age of 82. She was 10 years old when her father was killed.

POAT has assisted her through the years from time to time with medical or household expenses.

She has no additional family and asked if the POAT could assist one more time, with funeral expenses. The POAT will certainly help one more time — the POAT never forgets.

None of this happens without your continuous support of the Trust. Thank you all!

The Eleventh Annual “Homerun for Heroes” Kickball Tournament will be held at Kendall Indian Hammocks Park on Feb. 7-8, 2025. The park is located at 11395 SW 79th St. If interested in forming a team, contact Major Thamy Gonzalez at 305-216-6605 or [u302132@mdpd.com](mailto:u302132@mdpd.com) for team registration. The team registration fee is \$400, and team T-shirts are included. The deadline for team registration is Dec. 2, 2024.

# HOMERUNS FOR HEROES

## KICKBALL TOURNAMENT

### 2025

The Police Officer Assistance Trust invites you to participate in the  
Eleventh Annual

## “Homeruns for Heroes” Kickball Tournament

February 7<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Location: Kendall Indian Hammocks Park 11395 SW 79 Street

Team Registration Entry Fee: \$ 400.00

Deadline: December 2, 2024

Team T-Shirts are Included

For further information contact: Major Thamy Gonzalez at 305-216-6605 or [U302132@mdpd.com](mailto:U302132@mdpd.com)



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



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



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# A new sheriff in town



JOHN  
FRALEY  
RPOC  
PRESIDENT

On Election Day, I voted in Broward County. I kept track of the election in Miami-Dade County with a special interest in the election for sheriff. I knew Rosie Cordero-Stutz through my association with Kurt Stutz and his father Art Stutz from the early '70s, when we were on motors.

Being an elected sheriff will be distinctly different than it was under Purdy, Jones, Taylor, Parker, Loftus, Peres, Ramirez and Daniels. Experience is paramount when commanding a large police department, let alone a sheriff's department.

The RPOC sponsored lunch at Old Tom's restaurant in Kendall on Thursday, Oct. 24.

Twenty-eight people attended the lunch, including members Dave Greenwell, executive vice president of the PBA, and a married couple from Homestead PD and Coral Gables PD, respectively. By chance they stopped by to have lunch. Jerry Rudoff and I spoke with the couple, and they will become members of the RPOC. The food and drinks were great and, as always, the stories flowed freely. All had an enjoyable time.

Members will be notified via email for our Christmas Lunch on Dec. 12. Once you receive the email, please email me at [jfraley885@gmail.com](mailto:jfraley885@gmail.com) or call me at 954-651-0451 if you plan on attending, as we will need an RSVP for a head count.

Our RPOC officers have provided the following reports:

Vice President Jerry Rudoff: We pray that our newly elected state and national leadership stay mentally strong and perform their sworn duties for all the citizens of the USA and that our PBA remains steadfast in providing the very best of service in the interest of our membership, both active and retired. We would also like to remind you of all the many ways you can contact your RPOC regarding any issues of mutual concern.

Our website at [www.rpocpba.org](http://www.rpocpba.org) is an excellent starting place. There you can also renew your membership, sign up with a new membership and, for those who are 80 years old who now have gratis membership, complete the annual required informational form. We also have an area where our members and spouses who have a small business can place your business card free of charge for all to see. As we hope you all are aware, we do have a private Facebook page, and we can always be in contact via FB by leaving us a DM or PM. As we monitor that page closely, we will always respond back to you with little or no delay.

Speaking of our Facebook page, all requests to join are screened and vetted to ensure the person is a current RPOC member and that they have answered all the preliminary questions. If they don't, no access is granted. As we have many pertinent and relevant discussions on topics that our retired need to be aware of, we would encourage all our members to join. You can join using a pseudonym if desired, and all you must do is to notify us beforehand who you are and let it be known to the rest of the group. And finally, you can respond back to us directly by replying to one of the many notices we send out or email us directly at [rpocpba@bellsouth.net](mailto:rpocpba@bellsouth.net).

Treasurer Ed Spisak: I would like to thank all the members for being so generous with their donations to RPOC Membership Assistance and the Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund. You are the heart of our RPOC, and without you we would not be the success we are today.

There have been some questions about dues payments during the last dues payment season, relating to who pays dues and who is a "senior member" without the necessity of paying dues. Of course, members and senior members may donate to MA and OCSF at any time.

According to RPOC's bylaws, a member (anyone under 80 by the first of the year) who does not submit dues, together with the completed annual update form provided to all members at the beginning of each year, shall be removed from the RPOC roster, after the payment date specified by the update form.

It is also necessary for senior members to submit the completed annual update form, without payment (except any desired donation to MA and/or OCSF), in order that their continued participation in RPOC is updated. If all information from the prior year is still current, they may simply print their name on the update form and mail it back to RPOC in the self-addressed envelope provided. Seniors who do not return their update forms for a period of two years shall be removed for the roster.

Please know that if for some reason you stop receiving your *Heat* magazine and RPOC'S various correspondence because you are no longer on the roster, there is a procedure for reinstatement. In that event, please contact either John Fraley, president, at 305-594-2848, Jerry Rudoff, vice president or Ed Spisak, treasurer, for assistance in again becoming a current member.

Thank you and best regards to all!

Chaplain Reba Miller: We are witnessing this historic and life-changing year coming to an end. I and so many others look forward to a time of new beginnings. Many of the situations surrounding us try to discourage and destroy the hope and spirit within all of us.

God reminds us daily that we have access to an amazing array of gifts that will add to our lives. In Gal. 5:22-23, we find the gifts of "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

These gifts are free. They don't bring about pain, separation, anxiety, enmity, hatred, bitterness or antagonism. It is part of the unique gift of healing, to know that each day we experience is a new beginning. "God's mercies are new every morning and will never fail." (Lam. 3:22-23) We need to know and remember how great it is that the same God who created the mountains, the oceans and all the galaxies, looked at you and thought, "I will need one of you, too!"

It is with great respect and sadness that we recognize our warriors who have passed. We send special condolences to each of their loving families.

- Robert V. Stotler: September 2024
- Daniel Horgan Sr.: October 2024
- Tom R. Dunn: October 2024
- Jack McCann: October 2024

We remember and lift up all of our brothers and sisters and their families. We don't ever fully know what others are going through, but we ask for complete provision. Where there is brokenness, there would be healing. Where there is division, reconciliation.

May the New Year bring you joy, peace and abundant blessings. Wishing you a year filled with opportunities, good health and peace of mind, body, and spirit. God's blessings to you and yours!



# Congrats to retired members

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



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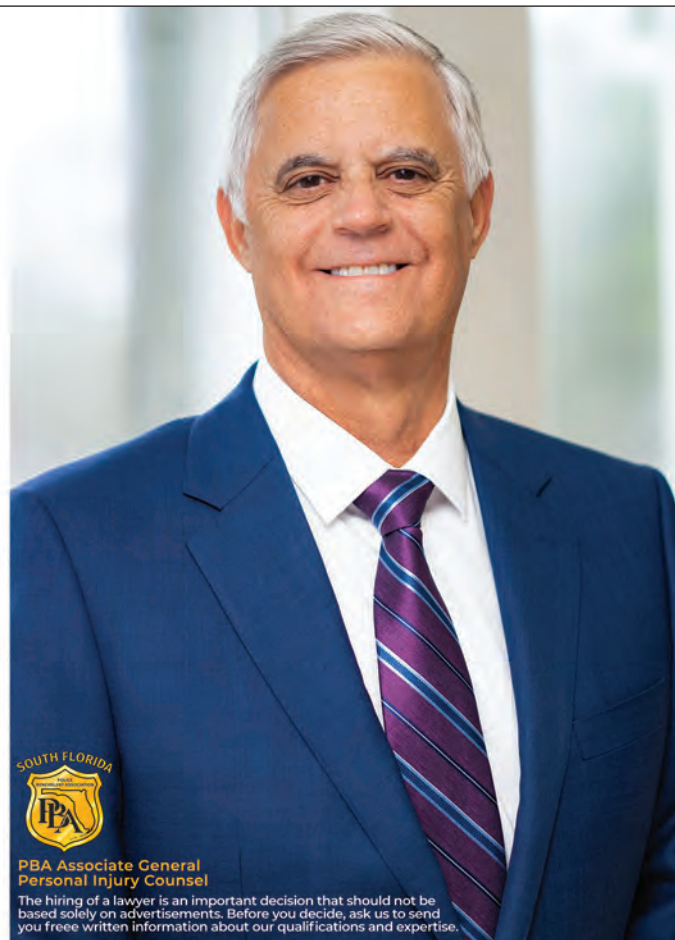
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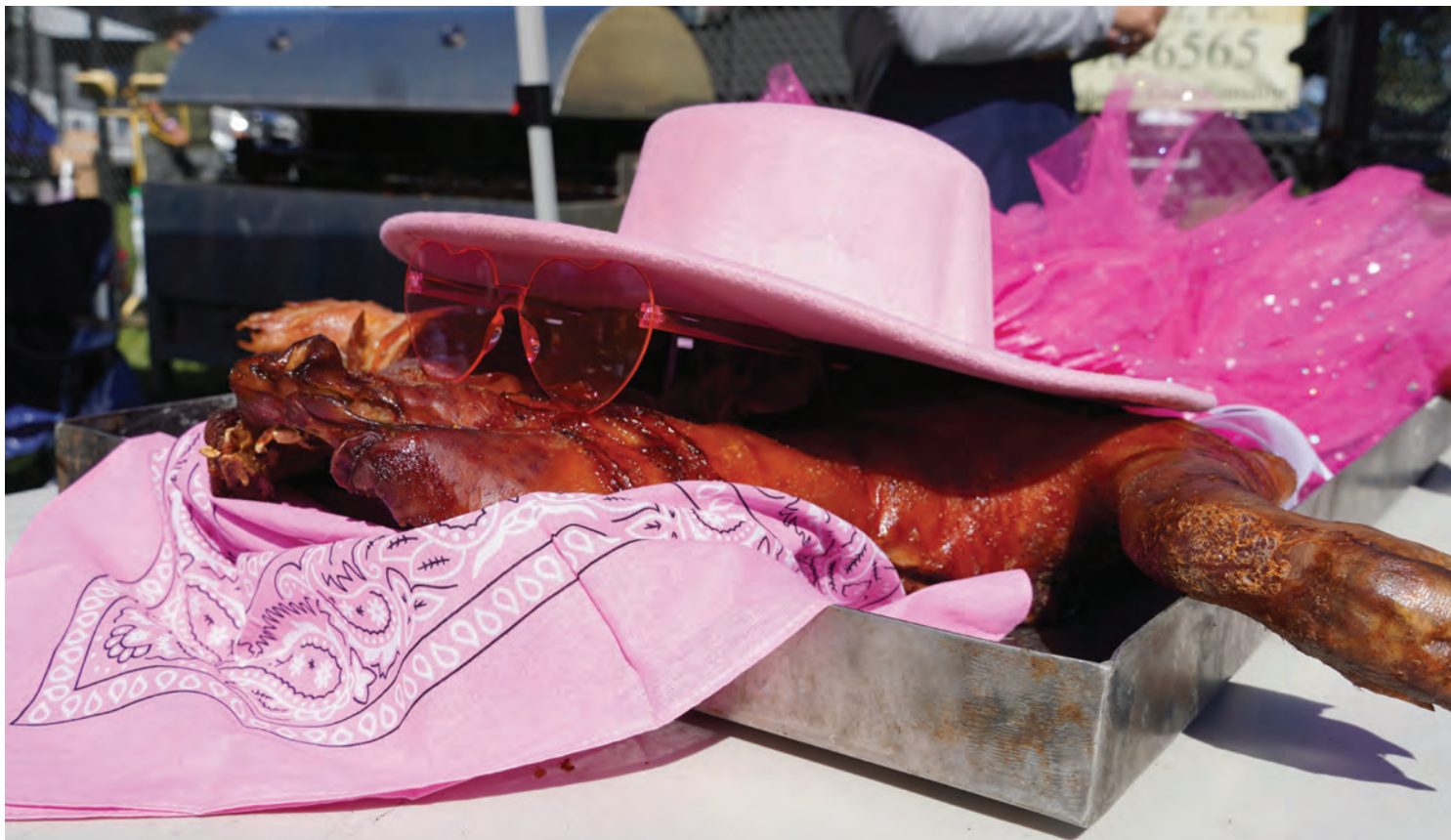
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# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES

A HEAT MAGAZINE SPECIAL REPORT  
PHOTOS BY LINDA CARTA AND YENISSET GONZALEZ



## ON FIRE

Pig Roast Bowl Series has the right ingredients to make it the PBA's hottest fundraiser

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

The spectacle — indeed, the phenomenon — that the South Florida PBA Pig Roast Bowl Series has become inspired something almost beyond words for the third annual competition on Nov. 16. A tent village filled much of Tropical Park, providing cover for the more than 130 teams entered in what has become an epic event for the 305.

Within the village, the Hialeah Police team built a house with a ranch motif, evoking the sponsor, Hialeah Ranch. And this exhibit, if you will, included a special pig.

“Listen to this, the pig blew fire out of the mouth,” described co-promoter Louis Fonseca, who, along with Kiko Suarez, masterminded probably the biggest pig roast in the Sun Belt. “So, when the judges went by to judge

their Best Pig Presentation, the pig blew fire — like a dragon.”

Fire was the showstopper and the emoji of the day. The estimated 10,000 people who jammed Tropical Park had never seen, or tasted, anything like this before. The Hialeah 🍷🍷🍷🍷 were recognized as Best Pig Presentation Champions, one of five trophies the team won at the 2024 Pig Roast, including overall winners and Grand Champions.

The nearly 30 more teams entering pigs this year than in 2023 verified that the event has grown as big as Tropical Park can accommodate. Suarez observed the latest uprising by noting that in 2023, three South Florida fire departments entered teams to support their finest sisters and brothers and help raise money for the PBA Love Fund. But in 2024, there were 25 fire departments backing the blue and



Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine-Cava presents a proclamation to Louis Fonseca and Kiko Suarez declaring National Pig Roast Day.





# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES

## Some Insta- and Snap-worthy photos from the 2024 Pig Roast



making the Pig Roast Bowl Series the biggest fundraiser ever for the South Florida PBA. Maybe for any PBA anywhere.

“It’s just been overwhelming to see the evolution of us coming together as a community, and in this case, backing our law enforcement community overall,” Fonseca declared. “This was a success for the community, for all of us together. It’s the result of teamwork, hard work and dedication, as well as backing the blue.”

Sergeant Jesus Garcia, who led Team Coral Gables Police, best explained how scrumptious and grand the Pig Roast has become. His team has competed each year of the event.

“We were there for the first year, and it was big,” Garcia stated. “But what it has turned into is crazy.”

The inside story suggests first and foremost that the beauty of the Pig Roast is the virtue of the Love Fund that provides support for families of fallen officers and members who have been catastrophically injured or are otherwise ill. In addition to that, it was a good day of fun — officers networking, mingling and playing dominoes with like-minded individuals around the *caja china*.

And, oh yes, there was the competition. With trophies awarded for best presentation, best taste, best chicharron, best spirit and so on, participating departments have taken on the guidance of pig-roasting experts and even professional chefs to turn up the fire on the competition.

“The competition is getting tougher, which makes you better, makes you a better chef,” noted Ozzy Jimenez, the leader of the Hialeah Gardens team, which has become famous at the Pig Roast with its car outfitted to roast and grill.

The ultimate winner, though, was the event. What it presented this year was more important than ever.

“You could tell that people put all the things that are going on in the community, all the things that are going on in the world, they put all that aside,” observed John Saavedra, a member of the PBA’s board of directors who also led the PBA team that placed in

the top 10 overall. “There’s no politics, there’s no agendas. All everybody does is have fun. And it’s great to see everybody coming together for such a great cause.”

If the Pig Roast continues to grow, maybe there will be a trophy for best team name. “Doral’s Swinest,” representing the Doral PD, could have won another prize in addition to being Best Chicharron Champions. Or the name fame could have been awarded to “Four Men and a Pig” from Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation or MDCCR’s “C-Block Pig Roast.” Or “I love it when you call me Pig Poppa” from Sweetwater PD, the Medley PD’s “Pork Patrol,” the North Bay Village PD’s “Porky’s Pit Crew,” or the North Miami PD’s “Hog Tied Heroes.”

But that might pale in comparison to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission entering as the Florida Pig and Wildlife Commission with the team name “The Notorious P.I.G.s.”

The Pig Roast Bowl Series has become so big that almost every Miami-Dade County commissioner attended, and several even sponsored teams representing PBA member departments. And so renowned that Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine-Cava presented a proclamation to Suarez and Fonseca proclaiming National Pig Roast Day in the county.

Fonseca reported that it describes what the 305 is all about and how it will enable the whole world to “know who Miami is.” And why he and Suarez were getting DMs, texts and calls that very night from teams that competed.

“They were messaging us, ‘Wait till you see what we’re doing next year,’” Fonseca added.

In the weeks and months leading up to the Pig Roast, Suarez and Fonseca were all over social media issuing challenges to be part of this phenomenon. That probably helped participation swell to record numbers this year, and so they are doubling down.

“You got to see it,” Suarez submitted. “No matter what anybody tells you, unless you see it, then you become more convinced.”





# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES



## GIVE IT UP

### Hialeah's winning ways inspired by being able to give love to the PBA Love Fund

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

As Hialeah police officers continued to step up to the stage to accept awards like Chris Stapleton at the CMAs or “Oppenheimer” at the Oscars at the third annual South Florida PBA Pig Roast Bowl Series, the other 130-plus teams in the competition began plans to replicate this winning playbook. Like chasing the Patriots in the NFL, the Panthers in the NHL, Georgia in college football and, well, you get the idea.

But what Hialeah pulled off at this year's Pig Roast will be hard to replicate. Or even duplicate. This group reached across the aisle to be part of the event and proudly displayed that championship belt with the pig in the police hat sitting on the South Florida PBA logo, which will no doubt be highly visible throughout the department for the next year.

“When we heard about it, obviously it was something where we said, ‘How are we not going to participate?’” Hialeah team leader Eddie Rodriguez declared. “The fact that so many people came together to do something so great. We know the PBA is going to end up helping so many people, officers and families of officers that come across a problem. So for me, once we heard about it, we knew that we had to be in.”

The Pig Roast's injection into the PBA Love Fund was a big reason Hialeah had to be there. Charities that divert funds into somebody's pocket are, of course, one of the greatest turnoffs for police officers.

So seeing that many people come together for the cause inspired Hialeah to pull out all the stops.

“Obviously everybody did have a great time,” Rodriguez confirmed. “And of course, Hialeah can never do anything small. We either go big or we go home. But at least for me, after going through what I've been through, what's more important is knowing that all this effort is going to such a good cause in this case.”

Rodriguez has endured his own battle with adversity, and he said he has a family member who currently is going through a battle with health. But that's not the start of the story.

The Hialeah PD had been doing Pig Roast competitions for more than 15 years, many of them squaring off directly against the fire department to see who has the best chef. Imagine what it was like for the fire house to lose that challenge.

The attraction to those competitions was raising money for children's charities, especially for children battling cancer. Apparently, Rodriguez saw the opportunity for Hialeah to participate in the Pig Roast that he had with supporting Children in Action and the Miami Power Team Foundation.

“People would always ask me why I was a member of so many of these charities, so they always assumed that maybe I had a child that was sick,” he explained. “My way of giving thanks and thanking







# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES

God for having a healthy, happy daughter was by volunteering to help children that were going through tough times.”

Fast forward to the Pig Roast, where Hialeah understood that this was not just police versus fire. With all other law agencies for South Florida in the fray, they decided to pick up their game by connecting with their lead chef, Chris George. He is of the famed Hialeah Ranch restaurant, and it was Chris’s wife who conceived the idea of creating the house decor bringing the ranch theme to the party.

That was the foundation of Hialeah winning the trophy for Best Pig Presentation. As for becoming grand champions, finishing second in Best Law Enforcement Tasting Pig and third in Best Chicharron, well they kept it simple, kept it real and kept it original.

“I don’t think any of us looked up any instructions on how to cook a pig or how to win one of these competitions,” Rodriguez related. “We all brought with us to the table everything that we’ve learned from our parents, our grandparents, our family. Think about it, this Cuban culture, we’ve been making pigs since we used to have to dig a hole in the floor and cover it with banana leaves.”

And that’s how it was done.

“What we did is that we took our original secret, which is the way we were taught on how to season a pig correctly,” Rodriguez continued. “And then we use modern technology like our thermometers to make sure that the pig is cooking at the perfect temperature and the perfect speed. And I think everything just worked out.”

Hialeah did a practice run with its original recipe, prepping part of a pig. And Rodriguez reported that George knew at that time their pig could taste like a game-changer. Just judging by the photo, Hialeah served up something mouthwatering.

“Believe it or not, it tastes even better than what it looked like,”

Rodriguez exclaimed.

So there is the Hialeah game plan for all to see. But like any grand champions, they are already working on how to replicate it for next year. And duplicate it. And then some.

“Whatever we did this year, we need to multiply that by 10, just in hopes of being able to pull it off again,” Rodriguez surmised. “Because we know that everybody did an outstanding job. We knew how close it was with all these other teams. So I don’t know what we’re planning on doing yet next year, but it’s going to be big.”



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# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES



## TAKE COVER

Doral's Swinest shows it has skin in the game with yet another powerful Pig Roast performance

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Amid the thousands of people who filled Tropical Park, a hue glowed from the crowd. It was more than pink, more than neon pink, more than hot pink, more than Starburst pink. The color seemed to cloak the Pig Roast almost like superhero suits. Or shirts, in this case.

If the Pig Roast Bowl Series has a Class A uniform, it might very much look like how the Doral PD team came out once again for the event. More than 50 people from Doral sported their Pig Roast pink shirts adorned with the picture of a pig wearing a police hat. And the words on the front proclaiming "Doral's Swinest."

"I had about 50 new shirts made for this year," Doral team leader

Ricky Arenas detailed. "And we ran out of them halfway through the day."

If you can judge a team by its cover, then Doral planned almost all year to stand out amid the stiff competition — which was even stiffer this year than last, when they earned the trophy for Law Enforcement Best Tasting Pig Champions. In fact, by dressing up their presentation with a dunk tank outfitted with a sign reading "Dunk the Champs," Doral seemed to anticipate the attention and competition.

The team has a relationship with Pig Roast promoters Kiko Suarez and Louis Fonseca. So Doral was primed and ready to achieve their initial goal of being part of the fun and supporting the PBA Love Fund.

"We had a good time last year, so we didn't want to miss out," Arenas added. "We took home a trophy last year, so we wanted to try to keep the tradition going."

At the Pig Roast, they do judge the pig by its cover. Trophies are awarded for Best Chicharron Champions, for the skin of the pig that is the crispiest, most tantalizing, most scrumptious.

Doral's Swinest was named best chicharron for 2024. Arenas shared that the chef who is part of their team had this part of the competition well covered.

"Well, we have a secret weapon that we use," Arenas quipped. "Our chef is very, very familiar with cooking pork. So he does secret ingredients. I'm not even sure what they are."

Doral's Swinest actually trained for this year's event. Well, training for the Pig Roast in the form of trial runs to lock down the formula for the taste of the pig and the chicharron.

That was in anticipation of the way the competition had heated up over last year. And when Doral arrived at 5:30 a.m. on Pig Roast day, the team saw pretty much what they had anticipated.

"We expected the turnout to be obviously more this year because of the way the world was spread out a lot more," Arenas added. "But it was an even better turnout than we expected."

Arenas also noted that the true colors of the event include attracting more and more people who keep coming back to get a taste of the swinest.

"The crowd makes the day," he said. "So we had an amazing time."

Expect Doral's Swinest to come back in full force again next year. They will be dressed for competition, as well as trained and prepared. And anticipating what it will be like.

"Let's see," Arenas stated. "We'll have to fight for that one."







# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES



BY DAN CAMPANA

Big event. Excellent cause. Strong competition.

For Coral Gables Police Sergeant Jesus Garcia, the third annual South Florida PBA Pig Roast Bowl Series was filled with highlights that go beyond the department's award-winning performance.

"The cause definitely motivated us," he asserted. "We're officers, and we understand how important it is to help families of fallen officers. So, that's the main reason. Then, just the community itself, how we all come together, seeing friends from other agencies."

And just being part of the event has become almost overwhelming and unprecedented.

"What it has turned into is amazing. You can see how big it's gotten," he added.

Amid all the fun, there was still a lot at stake when it came to the pig roast itself. The Coral Gables team took top honors in the Best Law Enforcement Tasting Pig category and claimed second place overall among the more than 130 teams that entered a pig.

Competing for the third year, Garcia and Coral Gables credit the help of South Florida restaurant owner and pig-roasting specialist Jorge Ramos. He offered civilian cheffing expertise and elevated his assistance by not only sponsoring their pig, but also helping the team take its roasting to a new level in 2024.

Garcia went to school, so to speak, to learn the Ramos strategy for making a great pig. Seasoning the day before and using cleaner-burning charcoal were among the key lessons he walked away with — and the result spoke for itself.

"The pig doesn't burn. He has this thing how he crisps the skin and he's able to cut it completely off. It's really nice," Garcia described in mouthwatering detail. "When he cut the skin, he was just handing it to us. We were like, 'Oh, God, this is crazy. This is amazing.' Then we tried the meat — the flavor was incredible. Jorge did it so easily. To me, it was like art. It was nice to see a master artist at work."

As proud as Garcia is of the awards the team picked up, he's also appreciative of how working with Ramos highlighted the spirit of the event by bringing the community together with the police officers who serve it.

"It's a good, fun-filled day of just networking and mingling with other officers and like-minded individuals — and we're all there for the same cause," Garcia added.







# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES



## YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR FIRST

### Miami-Dade's Midwest District shines in Pig Roast debut

■ BY DAN CAMPANA

Of all the ingredients used by teams in the third annual South Florida PBA Pig Roast Bowl Series, the Miami-Dade Police Department's Midwest District had a secret one as part of its first-ever foray into the event.

"I think it was love that we put into it," shared Miami-Dade Midwest Neighborhood Resource Unit Lieutenant Jeff Lugo.

Calling themselves "Guajiros" in honor of Cuban farmers who lived off the land and had an "old-school way" of roasting pigs, the MDPD Midwest District scored the Best Rookie Team championship at this year's competition. Their rookie effort also was honored as the third best in the Law Enforcement Tasting Championship.

Lugo called the accomplishment a true team effort. Officer Adnel Dominguez volunteered his experience gained from roasting pigs with his grandfather, and they sought out insider tips from those who have done big roasts. Needing a proper cooker, they turned to a friend named Elson, who came through with the proper equipment. The team was on its way.

"We talked to people who made a lot of big roasts before and used their guidance," Lugo explained. "The rest is just history. We got together and came up with ideas on how we wanted to make it.

We got out there super early in the morning, and we made sure we took our time with it,"

Over the 15-hour day filled with slow roasting, savoring the aroma wafting around Tropical Park in Miami and enjoying plenty of pork, Lugo and the squad soaked it all in to make their first Pig Roast memorable. The Midwest District's success was the icing on the cake — or the succulent skin on the pig.

"I was impressed by the turnout with the different sponsors and participants that were out there cooking the pigs. I didn't expect it to be on a big scale like that," Lugo described. "The smell of the wood, the fire, the smell of the spices, you could still taste it [days later]."

"It was exhausting, but rewarding," he continued. "The final flavor of the taste of the pork was amazing, so we got a lot of compliments. We were happy with that. I feel like it was worth it in the end."

And this was more of a beginning than a true end for the team sponsored by Miami-Dade County Commissioner J.C. Bermudez.

"I think we got inspired by this time around being the best rookie team for this year," Lugo added. "I think next year we're going to put more effort into it and hopefully try to win the overall prize. We look forward to doing this again."



Members of the MDPD Midwest District with trophies for winning Best Rookie Team Champion and finishing third in the Law Enforcement Tasting Pig Champions category.





# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES



## THE DRIVING FORCE

Hialeah Gardens Police car-traption cooker once again serves up a buffet of fun

BY DAN CAMPANA

Rolling into Tropical Park with its pig-roasting car-turned-smoker-and-grill, the Hialeah Gardens Police Department team has a reputation that precedes the squad itself at the South Florida PBA Pig Roast Bowl Series.

The cooking apparatus — a squad car built with a smoker in the trunk and a barbecue grill under the hood — is one of the event’s renowned showstoppers. Many of the thousands attending this year’s Pig Roast stopped by to see what Hialeah Gardens had cooking this year.

Much of that interest was left over from last year, when Hialeah Gardens actually roasted an alligator that they hunted and captured. For the third annual event, the team took things to another level by debuting a motorcycle that was converted into a barbecue grill, while also wowing the crowd with a rice-stuffed pig.

“We did the pig in the back from the smoker. It was a success. Our line was always full. We did the front grill with paella — people liked it,” revealed Hialeah Gardens Corporal Osiel Jimenez, the team’s head chef.

He noted that they also cooked up some pheasant for the festivities and grilled kebabs on the grill. By the time they were done cooking, Hialeah Gardens had a buffet set up under its tent that made for a party within the party.

The Hialeah Gardens team, featuring members of the criminal investigations unit, earned second place in the Best Big Presentation

category. The effort might seem to warrant a prize surpassing all past Pig Roasts. But Jimenez confirmed that the reward was way beyond any trophy.

“Just by going there and supporting the event, we were winning. It’s not about taking a trophy or whatever, it’s just making it happen and for people to have fun,” Jimenez described, noting the department had a contingent of at least 40 cops and family members.

That kind of support is an extension of what Hialeah Gardens leaders have shown over the last three years.

“Our mayor, Jose De La Cruz, is always supportive of the event — and our chief, Luis Diaz, as well,” Jimenez offered. “Our mayor ... he puts everything together. Whatever you guys need, make it happen, because we’ll be there.”

Speaking of support, like so many others, Hialeah Gardens is committed to the event’s cause of raising money for the PBA Love Fund. And that’s the win.

“We had a lot of fun. We get to disconnect from work, and it is really nice,” Jimenez explained. “And also because of what it means for the community, what it means for the fellow officers, the injured officers.”

Without a doubt, Hialeah Gardens will be back again in 2025, and you can expect the return of gator to the menu.

“We’ll be there. We’ll be there for everybody [and] we’re going to try to catch [a gator] at least a month in advance so we have it available,” Jimenez predicted.







# DISHING OUT THE 2024 PIG ROAST BOWL SERIES

## THE HOME TEAM

South Florida PBA enters the Pig Roast for the first time and savors the opportunity



BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

When reading through the guest list for the third annual South Florida PBA Pig Roast, one of the names on it seemed like a bit of a surprise. After all, when you're hosting the party, do you also invite yourself to the party?

Actually, the PBA wanted to be more than a great host. So the association sponsored a team to match pits with the other 130-plus entered in this unparalleled competition.

And the PBA didn't have to look far to find the right person to chef its team. On the list of the board of directors, longtime board member John Saavedra emerged as the right man for the job.

Saavedra, who works in MDPD's Special Victims Bureau, put together a crew of members from the department that might have exceeded expectations. The PBA team placed in the top 10 overall.

"We have a 10th place ribbon, and I can't wait to display it in the front of our tent next year," Saavedra commented. "I wasn't expecting this to be that big. So I was really proud of how we did. And not only that, but essentially we represented the PBA well."

In his post-roast debriefing, Saavedra revealed the team that included a Special Victims Bureau sergeant, a lieutenant in professional compliance and an officer from the Intercoastal district, really just set out to have a good time. And the 10th-place achievement was almost surprising.

The team really only came together about six weeks before

the event. Saavedra, who has taken some high-level chef classes, including one with a barbecue pitmaster, asked PBA President Steadman Stahl about sponsoring a team.

"A lot of these teams are actually competition teams that have come from different parts of the nation to compete," he commented. "I understood that it was actually a difficult task, but like I said, we're competitors."

To stand out among the well-seasoned competition, the PBA team had to find a tasty way to flavor its pig. Saavedra shared how they figured out a way to put a little mojo in their mojo.

"Our flavor profile was a little more on the sweet side, something totally different," he explained. "We said, 'Look, if we're going to have a chance to even stand out, we have to do something completely different, something these people here in South Florida have never tried. And that's exactly what we did.'"


Confirmation of their mojo magic came with reaction from what Saavedra called an extremely distinguished group of judges. Each team submits a box with its rendering by number. Judges don't know what team they're tasting, so as the heat of competition has picked up, the playing field has become more level.

"It eliminates people saying, 'Oh, this person won because they're a PBA team, or that person won because they're the PBA,'" Saavedra added. "So it's a big honor that we got 10th place."

### A LOOK AT THE JUDGING







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# Stress Rehearsal

Pointers and perspective to help you through this holiday season and beyond

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

It's that time of year. When something as simple as battling traffic on the Florida Turnpike, Dolphin Expressway or even the Don Shula can just piss you off. For no good reason.

'Tis the season when a lot can get to you. Peers, counselors, clinicians, clergy and the brilliant people at the MDPD Mental Health and Wellness Services Bureau would all remind us that the holiday season can pose a lot of mental health concerns.

"As much as it's all about happiness and joy and celebration, it can definitely be challenging for a lot of people," confirms Major Melissa Bermudez, who leads the MDPD Mental Health and Wellness Services Bureau.

South Florida PBA members and their loved ones will face the ripple effect of the season, with its effect on feelings, emotions and traffic jams that add to that day-to-day stress. Add in the aspirations, demands and even grief that come over the holidays, and it can be a struggle to maintain good mental health to just get from point A to point B.

"I think what's most important is just realizing stress is an ever-present part of our life in law enforcement," Major Bermudez continues. "We deal with it even more this time of year, so just recognize your limitations, practice that self-care and healthy coping strategies so that your baseline is good."

'Tis the season when too many law enforcement officers have felt that there is no way to get through. And then something drastic happens.

So the bottom line on this message to maintain your mental health and wellness during the season is this: When your baseline is good, you're able to deal with all these different stressors and the issues that you face in life and in the profession.

Fortunately, members have access to robust mental healthcare available especially for law enforcement officers. Since the pandemic, officers are more inclined to seek services and less resistant to the urging to get mental healthcare. Bermudez adds that more people are calling the MDPD unit on behalf of their colleagues and friends, so good on you all for doing so.

The holiday season will, for the most part, replicate the mental health issues officers present with throughout the year. That includes general stress from traffic and other irritants, work-related stress, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, substance abuse and grief, to name a few. Relationship issues are always a big initiator, too.

And those issues, of course, intensify this time of year. Hence, put out a BOLO for everybody's mental health and wellness right now.

"More awareness that has been spread through more education has helped us normalize the experience so many officers go through," Bermudez explains. "And so realizing that they're not the only ones going through something and that it's OK to reach out is why we're seeing that increased utilization of services."

The season also presents a fair amount of uncertainty and change, looking ahead to the new year. That, too, might intensify

for members in Miami-Dade with a new elected sheriff coming on in January.

Change professionally and personally, with day-to-day concerns and uncertainty about what might happen to benefits, would make anybody uncomfortable and uneasy. If only you could tell each other, "Don't worry." But how do you not worry at times like these with the impending unknowns?

"I think that when the worry gets the best of us, sometimes we just need to focus on the things that we can control and prepare for whatever the outcome may be," Bermudez notes. "Preparation and really focusing on the things that we can control may help to keep the worry and the anxiety under control."

If there is one way members can better navigate the stress of the season, it's by leaning into family. By nature, officers tend to keep things from their families. But better to bring it home than do something drastic.

That outlet, which is so important throughout the year, is even more significant this time of year. Including social support, presumably from a family member. But any support system is key.

If your agency has peer support, that can be the system. Chaplains are as supportive as anybody. And then, of course, there is clinical support from specially trained law enforcement therapists like the ones the MDPD Mental Health and Wellness Services Bureau offers, as well as other agencies throughout South Florida.

With regard to the stressors that come with the holiday season, be on guard against loneliness and isolation. Perhaps

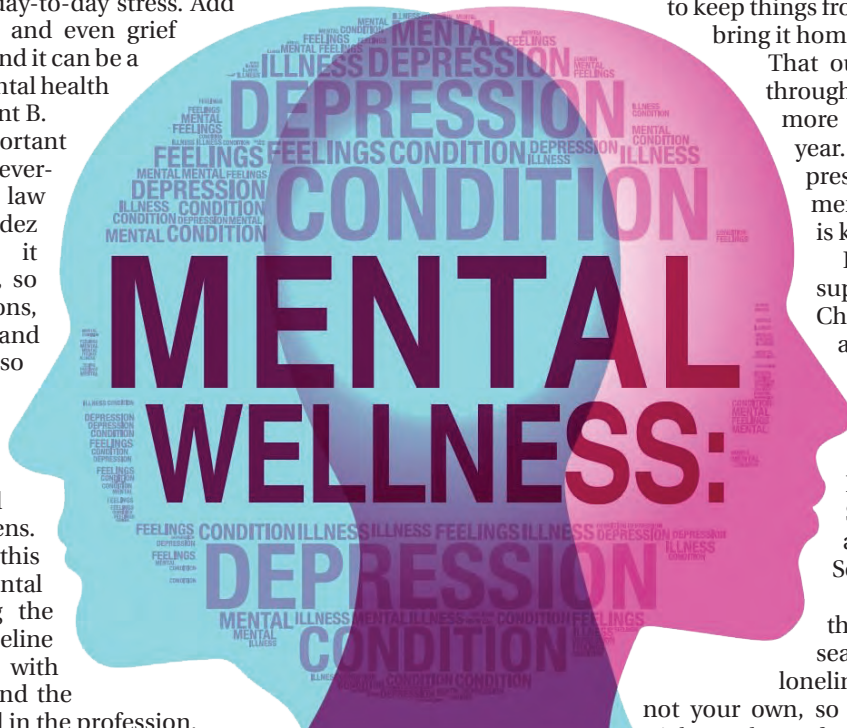
not your own, so keep an eye on others who might not be up for holiday celebrations.

"If you've lost a loved one in some way, whether through death, divorce or estrangement, they're not necessarily going to be feeling the way everybody else is at that celebration," Bermudez submits. "Or the anxiety of having to maybe buy gifts or get everything done, plan a vacation. We would recommend setting realistic expectations and boundaries, realizing that not everything needs to be perfect."

So continue normal self-care routines, like taking a walk to get out of the rat race. And even intensify them. And if ever there was a time to thicken boundaries for being on social media, baby, this is it. X marks the spot, and there may be no more of a cesspool for depression and anxiety to deepen than that Tok thing.

Most of all, don't be daunted by the future. Remember how well you have handled the cumulative stress that has been building, seemingly relentlessly, since the pandemic.

"We've been through so much in the past several years, and we'd like to think that there's brighter days ahead. But I think that we have become more resilient as a result of everything that we've had to face," Bermudez reminds. "We can find the resilience that we have built to make positive improvements in our life and continue to focus on personal growth, professional growth and spiritual growth and make 2025 better."







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# REFLECTIONS

A conversation with a renowned South Florida PBA member

## Julie Miller, retired MDPD major

### The Vitals

- Started with Miami-Dade Police Department in 1986
- Retired in 2016 as major in Cutler Bay for 10 years
- Served as captain in Cutler Bay for six months before being promoted to major
- Served as sergeant in patrol, working Port of Miami and Internal Affairs
- Worked patrol and investigations as an officer for 10 years
- Earned bachelor's degree from Union Institute and University
- Grew up in Miami-Dade County
- Mother to Noah, 28, and Dori, 22
- Partner to Debbie for 10 years

### How I started in law enforcement

I was in college, and a friend of mine who was a sergeant on the department, we were working out at the gym together. I was intrigued by what she did, and I said, "I want to try that." So I went down to sign up, and they said, "Well, you're only 18. You need to come back when you're 19." And I did. It was a crazy process. It took almost two years to get hired, but I knew I wanted to do it. Once I talked to her about her career, she let me do ride-alongs, and I was enamored from the beginning. I think it was the camaraderie. They brought me into the fold as a kid and made me feel like I was part of the team. And my whole career was like that. If you're not part of the family, you're doing something wrong.

### The Conversation

#### What was it like for a woman on the job when you came on?

We were just turning a corner. There weren't a lot of women at the time, but I guess when you get paired up with one of the women, they kind of bring you around all the other ones. They used to carry a different type of gun. When these female officers and sergeants were on the road, they had to have a little 2-inch snub gun. They couldn't even carry a full-size gun.

#### As somebody who worked your way up, what advice can you give for some of the female officers on the job now?

Keep your eyes on your retirement because there's life after police work. Keep a thick skin. Don't let anything get to you because in their heart of hearts, they want you there. The male officers want you there. Always remember who you are outside of work. Stay grounded.

#### What was it like working Internal Affairs?

There's not a lot of places on the department where you can actually help officers. And sometimes, well, a lot of times, the complaints that would come in were so far-fetched, and they weren't true. And there was no way to help officers know what their rights were, know what they should and shouldn't say and know when they should have an attorney present. And I could be that buffer, which a lot of times I was, to say, "Hey, don't say anything about this. Get your lawyer." It's just a way to help people instead of hurt people. Everyone thinks, "Oh, Internal Affairs, they're out to get

you." But for the most part, the Internal Affairs sergeants, we're there to help you. When I went to work there, I didn't realize that because I had never been there as a subject officer. Well, I did go a couple of times, but it was silly stuff. And I didn't have anyone there to show me that "hey, you didn't do anything wrong." So I made it a point when I went there to let the officers know that they have rights, and it is not a scary place.

#### When you were in IA, what were your dealings like with the PBA?

Fantastic. I met some of the greatest people there. Andrew Axelrad is an awesome guy. He was a new lawyer when I was in internal affairs. So I know he's been the PBA counsel a long time now. But yeah, I had dealings with the PBA lawyers all the time, and I never had a bad experience.

#### Did you have any other participation with the PBA as you worked your way up?

As you move up the ranks, you have to talk with the PBA regularly, and I was the type of person that I wanted to do the right thing. I didn't want to jump the gun and make the wrong decision that's going to violate some officer's rights. So I'd call [PBA President] Steadman [Stahl] and say, "I got this problem at work. I need to do something. What am I able to do? And what would you be comfortable with?" I loved that. And I never got one of those grievances because of it, because I tried to work with the PBA all the time.



Retired MDPD Major Julie Miller created this mosaic that hangs in the PBA Hall.



### What are some of your memorable moments from the job?

Do you have 10 years? So many good memories I have on the department. I was not one of those people who liked to sit in the office. When I had the time, which was almost every day, I'd call one of the guys up and say, "Come get me. I want to answer calls with you." So we'd go and jump in the car and answer calls.

### How important did you feel that was as a major, to stay in touch with the officers on the road?

Well, for me it was very important. I loved police work. But if I'd step back and say, wait a minute, how important was it for the officers to know that their major was out there doing the same thing, I would say it was just as important. There were a couple of people in my NRU, and they really helped run the station. We would go and get coffee, and we would call officers from the road to get their opinion. I thought it was important that they were sitting at the table with me because if I don't hear what they need, I don't know how to operate a station as the top person. You can't just run it blind. You have to know what the officers need and what they want. I had one officer who worked for me who was on his deathbed. He was dying of cancer, and his wife called and said, "Ron wants you to come to the hospital." I had been at the hospital every day, but he didn't know it. He was in and out of consciousness. But he wanted me to hold his hand with his family as he passed. There was no bigger honor. It still chokes me up to this day.

### How are you enjoying retirement?

Well, I jumped full time into my art. I've been a student of the arts since I was in elementary school, and that's what I do now. I'm a mosaic artist, and I'm starting to pick up a lot of commission work. I'm enjoying every minute of it. I've sold a lot of stuff, but my main client is the Greek Orthodox Church. You might have seen the work I did for the PBA. It's in their main hall downstairs. It says "Dade PBA."



Julie Miller with her officers in Cutler Bay.



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# Members Only Section

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

## Rapid, Ready and Responsive

### South Florida PBA members deploy to lend hurricane support

#### North Miami PD



As parts of Florida dealt with the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, South Florida PBA members came to the scenes of the damage to help out local departments. Helene made landfall in Perry, Florida on Sept. 26 with sustained winds of 140 miles per hour. Just two weeks later, Milton made landfall near Siesta Key as a Category 3 storm.

In the wake of Milton, North Miami Police headed to Tampa just a few days after the storm hit on Oct. 14 to offer support. On Oct. 23, North Miami officers were deployed to assist in the aftermath of Hurricane Milton on Florida's west coast. They spent a week on the ground, aiding recovery efforts and helping to restore a sense of normalcy.

Later in October, North Miami sent a new team on the scene in the hardest-hit areas, continuing to make a positive impact. On Nov. 12, Mayor Alix Desulme and the City Council honored our officers who responded to the aftermath of Hurricane Milton on Florida's west coast.

Pincrest Police also had boots on the ground after Milton, specifically in Holmes Beach. Officers witnessed sand-filled homes and collapsed buildings among other debris and aided in the clean-up efforts.

Finally, Miami-Dade Police enlisted their Rapid Deployment Force to head to Tampa to also help with Milton clean-up and give extra support to local officers. In Late October and early November, the RDE, along with partners from other municipalities, provided unwavering support to those affected by Hurricane Milton in Tampa.

As the tweet on MDPD's X account noted of all the agencies who responded to the hurricanes, "These incredible officers stand as a beacon of hope and resilience, showing the true spirit of service during challenging times."

#### Miami-Dade PD



#### Pincrest PD





# Rightful recognition for PBA members

For as difficult as the job can be at times, the good moments and the excellent work being done by officers remain undeniable. That was certainly the case for South Florida's finest, who received awards for their efforts within the community and for their agencies recently, including:



## NLEOMF Officers of the Month

Members of the MDPD South District were honored with the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund Officers of the Month Award. Officers Junior Clervil, Emanuel Walton III, Julian Reyes and Michael Montesino — as well as Sergeant Edward Webster — received this prestigious award for saving the life of a three-year-old boy who was trapped inside a submerged vehicle. The quartet removed the child and then performed two rounds of CPR to revive him.



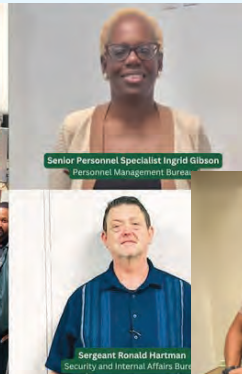
## Monroe County Sheriff's Office

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office honored its own during its Quarterly Member Awards ceremony in Marathon. The awards, which recognize years of service as well as outstanding service, went to Deputy Amie Szymanski, Corrections Deputy Catrena Belle and Colonel Lou Caputo, as well as staff support member Madison Jaynes.



## Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department

The stars of the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department were shining in November as Officer Amy Taylor, Officer Samantha Morrison, Sergeant Ronald Hartman and Senior Personnel Specialist Ingrid Gibson received Employee of the Month Awards for their hard work and dedication.



## Kendall Federation of Homeowners Association

MDPD's connection to the community was on full display in November when the Kendall Federation of Homeowners Association recognized several officers from the Kendall and Hammocks districts, as well staff from the Communications Bureau, for their ongoing dedication and work to support residents.



No officer goes to work to earn awards, but there are some who undeniably deserve to receive them. Miami-Dade Police Officer Marcel Vera epitomized that as he received the September Officer of the Month Award for a series of actions earlier this year. Between May and June, Vera was credited with locating a stolen vehicle; capturing armed robbery, kidnapping and carjacking suspects in separate incidents; and using a tourniquet to save the life of a shooting victim while working in the Northside District. Department leaders lauded Vera for apprehending violent felons and saving victims from danger.



## Miami-Dade Board of Commissioners

In November, the Miami-Dade Board of Commissioners recognized members of the Miami-Dade Police Agricultural & Environmental Crimes Section's Illegal Dumping Unit for their ongoing focus on eliminating illegal dump waste to help preserve the environment and safeguard public health in the community.



# Veterans Day

## South Florida PBA members honor Veterans Day

Celebrating Veterans Day in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties enabled South Florida PBA members to honor those who served in the military. And departments also took part in Veterans Day events to honor their officers who served their country before coming on the job.

Here is a sampling of how South Florida PBA members did their part to celebrate Veterans Day and honor veterans throughout the month of November:



### Miami-Dade

Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police held the 9th annual Veterans Day Thanksgiving Lunch at Loan Depot Park on Nov. 20. Members of the command staff served all the delicious, traditional Thanksgiving foods to local Veterans.



### Pinecrest

The Pinecrest Police department also participated in the Veterans Day Thanksgiving Lunch at Loan Depot Park. Chief Jason Cohen, Deputy Chief Derrick Bowman, Captain Edison Cruz and Community Service Aide Priscilla Brown represented the department.

The Pinecrest Police also held their own Veterans Day Ceremony on Nov. 11. The Pinecrest Police Honor Guard and Pinecrest Police Explorer Post 115 opened the ceremony at Wayside Veterans Park in honor of those who served in the military.

### Key West

It was a beautiful day for Key West Police's Veterans Day ceremony on Nov. 11. In addition to honoring veterans, the city of Key West unveiled its new Women in the Military Memorial.



### Doral

The Doral Police held a traditional Veterans Day Ceremony in front of Mission BBQ, a restaurant dedicated to honoring soldiers and first responders.





## Bay Harbor Islands members enjoy a game of chess with students

Chess is a complex game. But the students at Ruth K. Broad Bay Harbor K-8 Center have shown they are chess masters, so much so that they decided to challenge Bay Harbor Islands Officers to match wits and ability.

Chief Lindsley Noel and Corporal John Davilmar had to call in for backup because these kids were too legit to quit. So they asked their friends at Bal Harbour Police to join in on the game during an event in November.

In the end, the officers were not willing to be pawns in this game, defeating the chess masters.

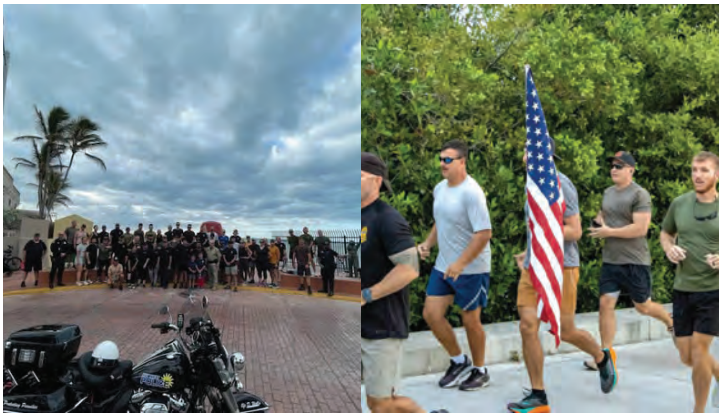


## Thinking inside the box for Key West members

The Autism Society of the Keys recently donated 10 autism boxes to the Key West Police Department.

The boxes contain several items to help officers de-escalate interactions with children and adults who have autism during situations in which they encounter law enforcement.

Autism Spectrum Disorder can present multiple challenges with social skills and communication. That's why the boxes have objects to soothe those on the spectrum and notepads for anyone who is non-verbal.



## Running with purpose in Key West

Two years to the date that U.S. Customs and Border Protection Marine Interdiction Agent Michael Maceda was lost in the line of duty, runners and walkers from the Keys honored him and other fallen officers during the "Michael Maceda Memorial 5K."

An Army veteran, Maceda supported the CPB's Air and Marine Operations with the Marathon Marine Unit during the surge of migrant activities in 2022. Shortly after his time in the Keys, he was assigned to the Mayaguez Marine Unit in Puerto Rico.

He was shot to death during a vessel interdiction on Nov. 17, 2022, when an occupant of a vessel off the shore of Puerto Rico opened fire on Maceda and two other agents.



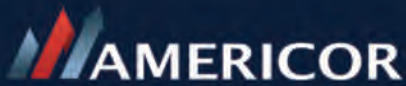
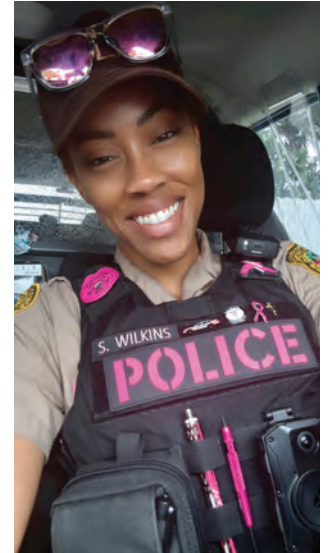


## Miami-Dade members think pink to support the fight

Closing out Breast Cancer Awareness Month on a high note, the Miami-Dade Police's "Power in Pink" team took part in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk at Loan Depot Park in Miami.

The event capped off the department's month of activities to honor those who have been lost to breast cancer and to continue supporting those battling the disease.

On Oct. 25, department members dressed up their uniforms with pink to honor their loved ones who lost their battles to breast cancer, as well as to stand beside loved ones fighting the fight. On Oct. 17, MDPD Communications Bureau members proudly dressed in pink to help raise awareness and spread hope.



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**John Kazanjian**  
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At the PBA, taking care of our members is our highest priority! As first responders, we are often more concerned with taking care of others than we are with ourselves. I, personally, had a health scare that required surgery, and luckily, I'm doing well. The best part is that it was fully covered by workers' comp with benefits provided under the Heart and Lung Bill. Navigating a workers' comp claim can be difficult, which is why I want to introduce you to Injured Response Pharmacy (IRP). They can help you navigate any workers comp claim such as a physical injury, Heart and Lung, PTSD, or Cancer, and deliver your meds directly to your home or office, and it's all free. I use their service and never have to worry about getting my meds on time. Also, everyone has direct access to Alberto Gil, the CEO of IRP and a long-time supporter of the PBA across the state. You'll never receive a bill from Injured Response Pharmacy. Don't use your health insurance for something that should be covered for you 100% for the rest of your life! If you have high blood pressure, heart disease, or an existing claim that you are receiving medications for, contact IRP today.



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As a financial advisor working with police officers, I often hear from clients who want to prepare their children or grandchildren for a financially stable future. Teaching teenagers and young adults about financial literacy is one of the best ways to set them up for success. Just as you approach complex situations with care and precision, helping the next generation understand money requires thoughtful and intentional guidance. These lessons will equip them to navigate adult responsibilities with confidence.

Teenagers are naturally more focused on friends, activities and discovering their interests than on financial matters, but this stage of life is ideal for introducing key concepts. By tying financial lessons to their real-world experiences, you can help them build habits that will serve them for years to come. The key is to keep the process simple, practical and hands-on, gradually layering on complexity as they gain understanding.

A great starting point is explaining what money represents. Most teens understand that money is needed to buy things, but they may not fully grasp that it also reflects time and effort. Discussing how income is earned — and exploring different sources, like wages, interest or dividends — helps them see that money doesn't always come from a paycheck. Teens with part-time jobs already understand the connection between effort and income, but expanding the conversation to include how money can grow through investments or savings is a valuable lesson.

If they are earning money, whether through jobs, babysitting or allowances, it's the perfect time to teach the importance of saving. Encourage them to set aside a portion of their earnings as a habit, emphasizing that small amounts add up over time. Setting financial goals, such as saving for a car, college or a special purchase, makes saving feel purposeful and motivating. Opening a savings account can also make the process engaging, allowing them to watch their money grow. This teaches patience and consistency — key ingredients for long-term financial success.

Budgeting, though often seen as an adult responsibility, is another skill that teenagers can learn early. It helps them build discipline and teaches them to make intentional choices. A simple way to introduce budgeting is to encourage them to track their spending for a month. They can use a notebook or an app to log purchases, which often reveals how quickly small expenses add up. Once they see where their money goes, they can create a basic plan for saving, spending and giving, learning to prioritize their financial decisions.

A critical part of budgeting is understanding the difference between needs and wants. Needs include essentials like food, transportation, and basic clothing, while wants are the extras, like the latest phone or concert tickets. Teaching teens to evaluate their purchases helps them make smarter choices. Encouraging them to ask whether something is a necessity or a luxury builds prioritization skills that extend far beyond financial decisions.

Teens also benefit from learning how to manage their spending wisely. Advertising and peer pressure often tempt them into impulse purchases. Introducing a "24-hour rule" can help. By waiting a day

before deciding to buy something, they learn to pause and reflect, often realizing they don't need the item after all. This habit fosters deliberate decision-making and prevents wasteful spending. Additionally, the discipline of delayed gratification teaches patience, which is invaluable in both financial and personal life.

As teens become more comfortable with saving and budgeting, it's essential to introduce the concepts of credit and debt. These topics may feel abstract, but understanding them early is crucial for financial health. Explain that debt involves borrowing money that must be repaid, often with interest, and discuss the importance of building good credit. Highlight how responsible credit use opens doors to lower-cost borrowing, while poor credit can lead to higher expenses and limited opportunities. Sharing personal stories or relatable examples can make these lessons more impactful.

Once they grasp the basics of managing their money, it's an excellent time to introduce the concept of giving. Financial literacy isn't just about accumulating wealth; it's also about using resources responsibly. Encourage your teen to set aside a small amount for charitable causes or community efforts. This helps them see the broader impact of money and teaches empathy. Understanding that financial resources can be used to create positive change makes their financial education more meaningful.

When they are ready for more advanced topics, consider discussing investing. While investing might seem daunting, a simple explanation can spark their curiosity. Describe it as a way to grow money over time by taking calculated risks. Introduce basic investment types, such as stocks, bonds and savings accounts, and explain the importance of patience in this process. Many schools offer simulation programs or games that let students explore investment strategies in a safe environment. These experiences help teens build confidence and develop a long-term perspective on managing their money.

Teaching financial literacy to teenagers is a gradual process that builds over time. Each lesson lays the foundation for more advanced skills, creating a pathway to lifelong financial confidence. Encourage them to be patient and consistent, reminding them that financial literacy is ultimately about making choices that align with their goals. Just as you've mastered the skills to navigate complex situations in your career, you can empower the next generation to handle their financial lives with responsibility and confidence.

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*Nicolás Valdés-Fauli is the founder and CEO of Thin Blue Line Financial ([www.tblfinancial.com](http://www.tblfinancial.com)). Call 305-798-1842 or email [nvf@tblfinancial.com](mailto:nvf@tblfinancial.com). Nicolás has served the LEO community in South Florida for 20 years and is dedicated to helping his clients make sound decisions before and during retirement. He is an expert in all matters related to the FRS, deferred compensation and local municipal retirement plans. 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.*



# Thank-You Notes TO THE PBA

TO Stadman:

Thank you so much for your generosity and kindness towards me and baby Thomas.

I appreciate everything you have done for us.

Love and blessings,

- Brianna Zumbo

SOUTH FL. PBA Legal Team,

Thank you for thinking of me and my firm when speaking to PBA members! Look forward to continuing to collaborate together.

Martha Mendez

**DANNY \* Republican \***  
**ALVAREZ**  
FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Danny Alvarez  
1509 E 9th Ave  
Tampa, FL 33605

DADE COUNTY PBA PAC  
30680 NW 25TH ST STE 202  
DORAL, FL 33172

DEAR DADE COUNTY PBA PAC,

I hope this message finds you well. I want to take a moment to sincerely thank you for your generous support of my campaign. Your financial contribution means the world to me, and it is instrumental in helping us bring our vision for our community to life.

With your support, we've been able to reach more voters, share our message, and build a strong foundation for the changes we want to see. Each donation not only helps fund our campaign activities but also sends a powerful message about our shared commitment to making a difference.

I am inspired by your belief in our cause and your dedication to creating a brighter future for all of us. Together, we can overcome challenges and work toward solutions that uplift our community. I love Florida and the freedom we fight for and protect. That means something to me and I know through your support it means something to you.

We are very lucky to live where we do. Thank you once again for standing with me on this journey to protect Florida and everything we cherish most. I am honored to have you as part of this campaign, and I look forward to what we can achieve together.

From the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU!

Danny Alvarez  
For State Representative  
District 69

*- Go PBA!!!!*

Paid for by Danny Alvarez, Republican for State Representative, District 69

**Thank you** for all your support in my re-election campaign. I'm incredibly thankful to have some of the most passionate and engaged supporters from across our community. This campaign is not possible without you.

I hope you can join us on Election Night as we watch the results come in. Dorothy and I look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you again,

*Ric*

Ric Bradshaw



**Sheriff**  
**BRADSHAW**





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