



# HEAT

**THE VOICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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

APRIL/MAY 2025



**FROM  
MOM to  
MENTOR:**

*Inspiring the  
Next Generation  
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# IN THIS ISSUE



## From Mom to Mentor: Inspiring the Next Generation of Officers

Cover photos by Fabian Alicastro, Sevilla Group Studio

We sat down with four remarkable law enforcement officers who not only serve their communities, but also inspired their children to follow in their footsteps.

## MESSAGES FROM THE PBA

- The Pres Says.....**Page 6**
- Message from the Executive VP .....**Page 8**
- The Dish from Ish.....**Page 10**
- Corrections Corner.....**Page 12**
- RPOC News.....**Page 14**
- POAT News.....**Page 16**
- Inside Story: Bridging the Gap .....**Page 18**
- South Florida PBA Legal Corner.....**Page 20**
- Honoring Retired Members.....**Page 21**
- Reflections .....**Page 30**
- Members Only Section.....**Page 34**

## INSIDE STORIES



**18**  
*Bridging the Gap*



**38**  
*Building Trust and Safety*

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**Main Number: 305-610-7008**

**Email: HEAT@sflpba.org**

**www.dcpba.org**

**NIZAM "ISH" ISHMAEL**

**PBA Editor**

ish@sflpba.org

**LINDA CARTA**

**Publisher / Advertising**

heat@sflpba.org

**MONICA MARULANDA**

**Art Director**

**LYAN BABILONIA**

**Staff Writer / Copy Editor**

**CHRISTINA CASTRILLON**

**Staff Writer / Copy Editor**

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## "Injured Response Pharmacy takes care of our PBA members."

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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### Looking Ahead: Strengthening Public Safety and Supporting Our Members

As we move forward, we remain committed to making this a great year for our members and the communities we serve. One of our biggest successes has been securing strong contracts in municipalities like Homestead, South Miami, and

West Miami, with more local governments currently in negotiations. Leaders are recognizing the importance of investing in public safety, and we strive that this momentum continues.

The competition for police officers is tougher than ever. Departments across the country are struggling to recruit and retain officers, forcing cities to improve contracts to remain competitive. The anti-police rhetoric of recent years, though it didn't always lead to actual budget cuts, took a toll on recruitment and we are still feeling the effects, making it harder to bring new people into this honorable profession.

Public safety must remain a top priority, especially as we approach upcoming budget cycles. When we negotiate contracts, we focus on pay, benefits, and working conditions—essentials not just for our members but for maintaining a strong force. The rising cost of living in South Florida makes competitive salaries even more critical. We don't just want to hire officers; we need to retain them.

Thankfully, we are fortunate to have strong leadership in our state. From our governor to our county and city officials, there is a clear understanding that beautiful homes and parks mean little if people don't feel safe in their communities. Law enforcement is evolving, and officers face increasing challenges, from traffic stops to domestic disputes—situations that require split-second decisions. Beyond policing, issues including drug addiction and mental health continue to impact public safety, and addressing these challenges is a top concern.

As we move into 2025, I remain hopeful that we will continue to focus on the positives and seek out the good in people. One of the most significant changes we're seeing is the way law enforcement engages with the public. Community programs are expanding, and partnerships with local leaders are strengthening, helping to reshape the perception of policing beyond just negative interactions. Public safety must always be front and center in negotiations. Our goal is to ensure that both our communities and our officers remain safe and well-supported.

### Commitment to Our Members and Community

One of the things I'm most proud of at the PBA is our deep commitment to the community. We actively engage in events that strengthen our bond with the people we serve. Recently, we hosted a successful cigar social, raising funds to support the family of an officer who had passed away. This is just one example of how our "Love Fund" provides assistance to members in their most difficult



## SOUTH FLORIDA PBA

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## The President's Gallery



\*\*\*\*\*ATTENTION NEWS MEDIA\*\*\*\*\*  
11-22-75  
CLASSIFICATION CHANGE  
DIRECTOR S. WILSON PURDY - WHO HAS LONG BEEN AN ADVOCATE OF WOMEN IN ALL STRATA OF POLICE WORK\* IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE A NEW POLICY OFFERING UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT.  
THE DIRECTORS PLAN WAS PRESENTED TO THE DADE COUNTY PERSONNEL ADVISORY BOARD LAST NIGHT\* NOVEMBER 21\* 1975\* AND WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.  
THERE WILL NO LONGER BE SEPARATE CLASSIFICATION FOR POLICEWOMAN\* I.E.\* POLICEWOMAN I AND POLICEWOMAN II.  
THE CLASSIFICATION OF POLICE OFFICER IS FOR MALE AND FEMALE PERSONNEL. FORMER POLICEWOMEN II WILL NOW HOLD THE TITLE OF SERGEANT.  
DIRECTOR PURDY STATED THAT PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE NOW THE SAME FOR WOMEN AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FOR MEN.  
PREPARED BY - SGT. DONG TAGAGERTY  
PUBLIC INFORMATION UNIT  
GREENE 12-25 PM



times—it's about standing together as a family.

In January, we also lost a pioneer in law enforcement—Officer Grace O'Donnell, one of the first Hispanic females in the Miami-Dade Police Department. Over 50 years ago, she broke barriers as the first female Cuban police officer in the U.S. I remember her telling stories of chasing suspects while wearing a skirt. We've come a long way since then. In honor of Mother's Day, I feel that women in law enforcement hold the most esteemed titles—Mom and Officer. In the '70's we were policeman/policewoman. Now these remarkable women are Officers where gender no longer defines their role. A perfect example of this progress is our new Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz, the first elected woman to hold this position.

### A Unified Effort for Public Safety

At the PBA, we prioritize our members, always looking out for their best interests. As The Voice of Law Enforcement, we advocate for officers when they cannot speak for themselves. They stand on the front lines, facing difficult and dangerous circumstances to protect the public. Programs like "Struggle Well" help officers recognize signs of stress and understand that

it's okay not to be okay.

On a more personal note, having started my career in Homestead and experiencing Hurricane Andrew, I learned an important lesson: we can live without power or running water, but we cannot live without public safety. It is the foundation of society. My goal is to continue working hand-in-hand with our elected officials to ensure public safety remains well-funded and at the forefront of our priorities.

I also have to reiterate that the success of our organization doesn't come from one person—it comes from the dedication of our Board of Directors and members who roll up their sleeves every day. Our top concern at the PBA remains securing the best pay, benefits, and working conditions for our members. Without them, society cannot function.

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

# STAYING STRONG FOR THE JOB AND LIFE



In the past few months, unfortunately I have had to attend too many funerals. Doing so always makes me reflect about how I can better take care of myself, so that I can not only be here for my family, myself, my friends, and my job, but I can do so to the best of my ability.

As we all know, unlike many other professions, police work is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding, making it extremely important for officers to prioritize their health. Here are some of the reasons why:

**1) Physical Readiness** – officers often face physically intense situations, from foot pursuits to restraining suspects. Being in good shape helps you stay quick and strong when it counts. **2) Mental Resilience** - the stress and trauma of law enforcement can take a toll on mental health. Regular exercise, proper nutrition, and sleep help manage stress, reduce anxiety, and prevent burnout. **3) Longevity** - studies show that cops are more likely to deal with heart disease, high blood pressure, and weight gain because of the job's demands. Taking care of yourself can help prevent serious issues, improve your quality of life, and extend careers. **4) Better Decision Making** – when you are exhausted, hungry, or stressed, your judgement isn't as sharp. Staying healthy helps you think clearly and react more quickly. **5) Job Performance and Safety** – a strong, healthy officer is better equipped to handle the demands of the job, from wearing heavy gear to responding swiftly in emergencies. Poor health can slow response times and increase the risk of injuries.

By maintaining physical and mental well-being, officers can perform at their best, protect themselves and others, and lead long, healthy careers. Here are some ways that law enforcement officers can prioritize their health despite the demands of their job.

To help maintain physical health, there are a variety of things that we can do. Just move your body. Workouts don't have to be extreme, but a mix of cardio, strength training, and stretching will keep you in top form. Healthy eating is another way we can help ourselves. We can choose lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, over foods that are high in fat, carbs and sugar. And for those who like to prep food ahead of time, that's a great way to keep you from grabbing fast food and/or unhealthy snacks during your shift. You should also make sure to stay hydrated because drinking enough water is important in helping you stay sharp and energized. Equally important for your physical health is getting enough sleep. We know that night shifts and long hours make this tough but, if possible, trying to stick to a sleep routine, using blackout curtains and avoiding screens such as TVs, computers, or phones before bed. Finally, preventative healthcare such as getting regular check-ups and/or screenings can help catch any possible health concerns before they get out of control.

With regards to your mental and emotional health, there are also some things you can do to combat any escalating issues in this area. Stress management practices such as deep breathing, meditation, or listening to music may help to relieve any job-related stress. Additionally, seeking counseling or looking to peers for support, can help with our mental health and possibly help prevent burnout. So whether it's a coworker, friend, or counselor, having someone to talk to can help you deal with tough experiences. Finally, outside of work, trying to prioritize time with family and friends, taking vacations, and enjoying things that interest you personally can help maintain your emotional well-being.

At the end of the day, your health matters—not just for the job, but for your life outside of it. Taking care of yourself helps you be a better cop, a better family member, and a better version of yourself. By focusing on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, we as officers can improve our physical and mental resilience, enhancing both job performance and our overall quality of life.

As always stay safe and if you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact me at 305-593-0044 or [dg@sflpba.org](mailto:dg@sflpba.org), be safe out there, and take care of yourself so you can continue taking care of everyone else!

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**Jason L. Fox, Esq.**  
**Jason@OliverFoxLaw.com**



Tonya A. Oliver

**Tonya A. Oliver, Esq.**  
**Tonya@OliverFoxLaw.com**

**13031 W Linebaugh Ave, Ste 102, Tampa, FL 33626**

# SEIZING EVERY OPPORTUNITY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT: A MESSAGE TO OUR OFFICERS



We know the job isn't easy. The long shifts, the unpredictable situations, the pressure to always make the right call—it's a tough but honorable profession. Officers, Corporals, and Sergeants are the backbone of every police agency, you are the ones

who keep the streets safe, respond to the calls, and ensure justice is served. Just look at every holiday and during the afternoon and midnight shifts, there are no command staff around and you continue to function without being micromanaged. You continue to get the job done. Without dedicated officers and supervisors on the front lines, no department could function. That's why it's so important that you take full advantage of every opportunity available in this profession—to grow, to learn, and to build a career.

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to keep learning. There are always training programs available to help you sharpen your skills—whether it's in de-escalation tactics, investigations, defensive driving, or leadership. Every bit of extra knowledge makes you a stronger officer and opens doors for promotions and specialty assignments. For example, if you take advanced investigative training, you could be on the path to becoming a detective. If leadership is your goal, supervisory courses can prepare you to take the sergeant's exam and move up in rank.

Speaking of moving up, career advancement is something every officer should think about. Climbing the ranks isn't just about making more money, it's about making a bigger impact. Corporals and Sergeants are the ones who set the tone for younger officers, provide mentorship, and ensure the job gets done right. The best

leaders start as great officers who take initiative, build strong reputations, and never stop learning. Consider joining specialized units like K-9, SWAT, narcotics, or community outreach. These assignments not only make the job more rewarding but also put you in a better position for future promotions. Get out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself.

Education is another tool that can set you apart. Many departments offer tuition assistance for officers who want to earn a degree in criminal justice, public administration, or a related field. A degree isn't just a piece of paper, it can make you a better decision-maker, help you understand the bigger picture of law enforcement, and open doors to leadership roles down the line. Officers who invest in their education often find themselves better prepared for supervisory exams, policy-making roles, and even post-retirement career options.

But the job is not just about work, it's also about taking care of yourself. Law enforcement is one of the most stressful professions out there, and if you do not prioritize your mental and physical health, the job can take a toll. Many departments offer wellness programs, peer support groups, and fitness incentives to help officers stay in top shape, both mentally and physically. Do not wait until you're burned out—use these resources to stay strong and healthy. A sharp mind and a fit body can make you a better law enforcement officer and ensure you go home safely to your family every day.

Building relationships is also key. Networking with fellow officers, attending union meetings, and getting involved in professional organizations can open doors you never expected. Law enforcement is a brotherhood and sisterhood, and the connections you make can help you throughout your career. Whether it's learning from seasoned officers, finding mentors, or simply having a strong support system, the people around you can make all the difference.

And do not forget about your financial future. It might seem far away, but retirement planning starts now. We at the PBA offer guidance on pension plans, investment options, and ways to ensure financial stability after your law enforcement career. Do not leave it to chance—make informed decisions now to secure a comfortable future.

## THE DISH FROM ISH

I wish when I was a young officer, I had a specialist to assist me to manage my deferred compensation. My fund balance could have grown much more with the guidance of a specialist. People often ask me, "Who do you use Ish?" After years of interviewing many financial advisors, I selected Nicolas Valdes-Fauli from Thin Blue Line Financial to manage my funds and my finances. While you are working (on the job) he charges you nothing for his service. Nicolas wants to prove himself and show you his expertise in the financial planning field. If you are happy with his performance, you will want to stay with him in retirement. And he does not sell any products such as life insurance and annuities. His only focus is to grow your wealth. His ad is located on the back of this magazine and if you are concerned about your financial future, you should speak with him.

At the end of the day, law enforcement is more than just a job, it's a career and a calling. As your union leadership, we urge you to take every opportunity that comes your way. Whether it's learning new

skills, seeking promotions, improving your health, or engaging with the community, every step you take makes you a better officer and strengthens the profession as a whole. You are the foundation of your agency, and your growth is what will shape the future of law enforcement. Take charge of your career, invest in yourself, and continue being the dedicated officers that our communities rely on every single day.

I hope all the moms have a wonderful Mother's Day. For all of you that are having difficulty to conceive and become parents remember God has not forgotten you. He could never forget you; God made you and he cares about every detail of your life. You might conceive next month, you might have children through adoption or fostering, you might find that God has something different in store for your life and marriage. Whatever the future holds for your family, you can trust God that the future is good. Please feel free to contact me at [ish@sflpba.org](mailto:ish@sflpba.org) or at (305) 593-0044.

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# BREAKING THE SILENCE: WHY FIRST RESPONDERS MUST SPEAK UP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



Every day, first responders—deputies, correctional officers, police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and emergency dispatchers—face life-and-death situations. They witness tragedies, comfort the wounded, and put their own safety at risk to protect others. But behind the badge and uniform, many fight an invisible battle: their own mental health.

## The Hidden Toll of the Job

First responders endure extreme stress, trauma, and emotional exhaustion. They witness the worst of humanity—car crashes, fires, violent crimes, child abuse, and death. Over time, these experiences take a severe toll. Research shows that first responders are significantly more likely to develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety than the general population.

Even more alarming, suicide rates among first responders are disproportionately high. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), more law enforcement officers and firefighters die by suicide each year than in the line of duty.

So why do so many suffer in silence?

## The Culture of Strength and Stigma

Law enforcement and emergency services often emphasize toughness and resilience. First responders are trained to remain composed and “have it all under control.” Many fear that admitting to mental health struggles will be seen as a weakness. Some worry about being deemed unfit for duty or even losing their jobs.

This stigma discourages many from seeking help, leading to isolation. Instead of reaching out, they suppress their emotions, often turning to unhealthy

coping mechanisms such as alcohol abuse, anger issues, or emotional detachment from loved ones.

## Recognizing the Warning Signs

Mental health struggles manifest differently in everyone, but some common warning signs may indicate a first responder is in distress:

- *Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or emptiness*
- *Increased irritability or anger*
- *Difficulty sleeping or recurring nightmares*
- *Withdrawal from family, friends, or coworkers*
- *Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc.)*
- *Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities*
- *Expressing thoughts of self-harm or suicide*

If you recognize these signs in yourself or a coworker, taking action is critical.

## Why Reaching Out Can Save a Life

Discussing mental health may feel uncomfortable, but it can be life-saving. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness—it’s an act of strength. Just as first responders are trained to save others, they must also learn to save themselves.

Confidential resources are available, including:

- *Peer support groups – Connecting with others who understand the challenges of the job can reduce feelings of isolation.*
- *Department wellness programs – Many agencies now provide counseling and mental health resources.*

- **Crisis hotlines – The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24/7 support.**
- **Professional therapy – Trauma-informed therapists can provide coping strategies and emotional support.**

### Breaking the Silence Together

Mental health in first responders is a shared responsibility. If you suspect a coworker, friend, or loved one is struggling, don't ignore the signs:

- **Check in – A simple “How are you really doing?” can make a difference.**
- **Listen without judgment – Sometimes, they just need someone to talk to.**
- **Encourage them to seek help – Remind them that professional support is available and effective.**
- **Be there – Consistent support can help prevent a crisis.**

### In Memory of Deputy Felicia Kinsey-Smith

We extend our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Deputy Felicia Kinsey-Smith, who tragically lost her battle with mental illness. Her service and sacrifice will never be forgotten. May her passing serve as a reminder that no one should suffer in silence. If you are struggling, please know that help is available and that hope is not lost. You are never alone.

### Honoring Those We Have Lost

The loss of Deputy Kinsey-Smith or any other officer/deputy to suicide is just as devastating as a line-of-duty death, yet historically, these officers and deputies have

not always been given honors. This must change.

Mental health struggles are a direct result of the job's relentless demands, and those who succumb to them should be recognized for their service and sacrifice. Departments must acknowledge that these individuals gave everything to their profession—including their mental and emotional well-being.

Every fallen first responder, regardless of how they pass, deserves to be honored with the same dignity and respect—not for the circumstances of their death, but for the service they provided. Their suffering does not diminish their dedication, bravery, or contributions.

By ensuring that officers and deputies who pass away receive honors of service from the honor guard, we send a powerful message: their lives mattered, their service was valued, and their struggles were not in vain. More importantly, it affirms to those still serving that they are not alone, that their pain is recognized, and that seeking help will never diminish their worth.

### Final Thoughts

First responders dedicate their lives to saving others, but they must also prioritize their own well-being. Breaking the silence about mental health can mean the difference between life and death.

If you or someone you know is struggling, reach out. Talk to someone. You are not alone.

It's time to break the stigma—not just in life, but also in how we remember and honor those we've lost. As I write this, I offer a prayer for every man and woman serving South Florida—whether patrolling the streets, maintaining order in jails and prisons, or serving as a lifeline over the radio as a dispatcher. I pray for God's protection, guidance, and strength as you wake each morning to serve your community.

In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

***Thank you to all who serve, and God bless you.***

## HONORING THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE



The recent lunch gathering of the RPOC took place in Inverness, Florida, at the charming Cove Restaurant. This event drew an impressive turnout, with 60 members and guests in attendance. A highlight of the gathering was the presence of former

director Fred Taylor, whose attendance was greatly appreciated by all. The lunch itself was a delightful affair, meticulously crafted by talented members Pete Carcara, Paul Law, and Madeline Pearson. Their efforts ensured that everyone enjoyed a memorable and delectable meal, contributing to the overall success of the event. Retired Police Officers Council President John Fraley was in attendance as was Immediate Past President Dennis Bambach and Chaplain Reba Miller and her husband, retiree Robbie Miller. John Fraley reminded members that the Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund is open and available to the children and grandchildren of our members. The program is inclusive of trade-related fields as well as nursing, police, fire services, and other career-focused skills. The program has awarded nearly thirty-five thousand dollars in scholarships so far. He also reminded members that the 35th annual RPOC reunion May 1, 2, 3 and 4, 2025 is fast approaching. Reminding everyone to complete the application process for reservations, golf, and meals. Please note that the lunch cruise on Saturday May 3rd is almost sold out. Please call me at 954-651-0451 or reach out to Reba Miller for reservations. We currently have 12 golfers planning to play in the golf outing. I have reserved twenty-four tee times for a shot gun start at 7:30 am. The course considers our times as being guaranteed. Please meet me on Thursday to pay the \$60.00 entry fee for those who haven't paid with your reunion package. I can make changes and if the event gets canceled due to the weather, we will refund your money. The reunion is put together by the RPOC board and has been very successful over the years. The time and

effort between the reunions continues and I under that we all have different lives that we live. We have a great way of supporting the comradery we had in the Brown Gown. I think we need more younger people to come forward, bring new ideas and ask to join our board.

On a somber note, we have lost approximately twenty-seven members since the last meeting. Please take care of yourselves, remember to check on each other and help where you can or call me. Everyone that knows me knows that I am deeply and emotionally involved with the health and welfare of the membership, as we all are. I want to keep working on the legacy of the RPOC. I always remember that we worked together back in the day and watched out for each other on the job. May God bless you and protect you every day. The men and women that served the people of Miami-Dade County were great people dedicated to serving. Being a retiree in law enforcement is something to be proud of.

Chaplain Reba Miller: Blessings to all our family, friends, and supporters. We are celebrating a new year and the upcoming events of Passover and Easter. Time for reflection and new beginnings. It does seem like so many things today try to block or dismiss the wholeness of God and our Creator. We are continually bombarded by the media, schools, organizations, entertainment, and world events emphasizing how great, independent, remarkable, and deserving all mankind is. However, in the middle of this chaos, this ill wind that blows around us, there is a very simple and unique truth. Each of us, though different and distinct, did not create ourselves. Your very existence is a miracle. We did not choose what year or era in history we would arrive on this beautiful globe. The important point to remember is your place in history is now- such a time as this. You did not choose your parents or your family, but your very creation and birth were a monumental happening. You could not control your life surroundings as a child, but further on in your life journey you developed skills and knowledge that provided you with the gifts of choice and change. What was that ingredient that is in every one of us that makes us who we are? It is our own DNA and the very piece of God himself that he placed in each of us. Psalm 139:13-14 in the NIV states "For you created my utmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb."

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made: your works are wonderful; I know that full well". Each of us has a destiny in this life. Keep reaching for the greatness within yourself, even in the midst of struggles and tragedies. Take time to recognize the wonders and miracles that surround us on a daily basis.

Special thanks to all our LEO's, their families and the entire supporting network of individuals that continue to respond and serve throughout their local communities in times of need.

It is with an extremely heavy heart that we advise the passing of the following brothers and sisters. May their families and friends accept our deepest condolences and prayers for each of their loved ones.

1. **William "Bill" Hein** 01/2025
2. **Robert "Bob" Brownlee** 01/2025
3. **Alan Saleeba** 01/2025

4. **Al Davis** 01/2025
5. **Grace O'Donnell** 01/2025
6. **Paul Manuel Hernandez** 01/2025
7. **Ronald "Ron" Sorensen** 01/2025
8. **Mariela Brundage** 02/2025
9. **Steve Roadruck** 02/2025
10. **Jack Deremer** 02/2025
11. **Bruce Morton** 02/2025
12. **Brian Brazill** 03/2025

May the peace and provision of Our Creator fall upon your lives and bring you truth and freedom in your mind, body, and spirit. Amen. Blessings to all!



### THE ALVAREZ LAW FIRM

**Alex Alvarez**

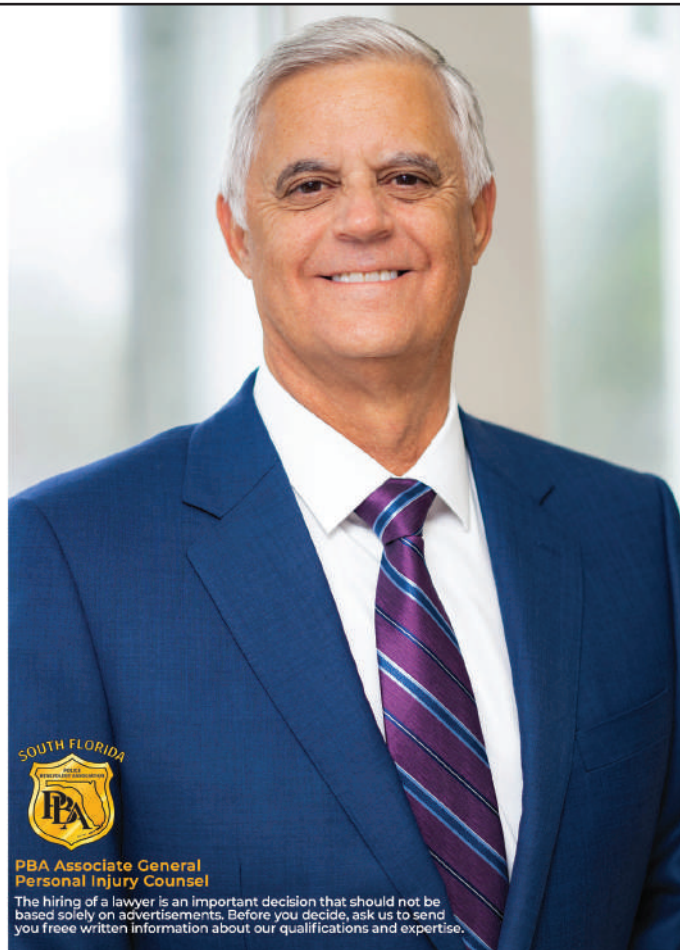
Former Metro Dade Detective,  
honorably retired.

Trial Lawyer handling  
Personal Injury and  
Wrongful Death Matters.

Victims of Medical Malpractice,  
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## POLICE OFFICER ASSISTANCE TRUST



As we approach this year's Annual Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony, we are so thankful that again this year No Officer's names will be added to the wall. While we are happy to make that announcement, we are also extremely saddened by the loss of 2 of our animal partners

this past year. The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office lost K-9 "Roxi" from injuries sustained in a car crash on 2/1/2025. The Sheriff's Office also lost Mounted partner "Jack" due to severe irreversible colic and passed on 2/7/2025. These special partners to Law Enforcement are heroes that should never be forgotten. They share a special bond with their handlers/partners. Their loss is always toughest on those individual Law Enforcement Officers that worked with them day in and day out. The POAT will do as it always does, Never Forget, these special Law Enforcement partners!

**The Board of Directors of the Police Officer Assistance Trust is proud to offer seven scholarships this year.** The following \$2000 scholarships are available to the son or daughter of any full-time law enforcement

officer employed by any agency in Miami-Dade County. *Paul Janosky Art and Criminal Justice Scholarships (two separate scholarships)*

*Mike Byrd Crime Scene Investigation Scholarship*

*Christopher W. Todd Law Related Majors Scholarship (also available to officers)*

*Roger Castillo Perseverance Scholarship*

*Amanda Haworth Perseverance Scholarship*

*Chuck Duncan Determination Scholarship*

One recipient for each scholarship will be selected and will receive a \$2000.00 check to use towards his or her college expenses. All applications must be received by May 2, 2025. Please visit our website at [www.poaat.org](http://www.poaat.org) for specific guidelines and requirements.

For further information, please contact the POAT office at 305-594-6662 or [poatoffice@msn.com](mailto:poatoffice@msn.com).

The Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony will be held at **Tropical Park beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 1, 2025.** This ceremony honors all Miami-Dade County law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty, dating back to 1895. It is our responsibility to honor and pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting and serving the citizens of Miami-Dade County.

Thanks for your support and stay safe.

## JOIN THE SOUTH FLORIDA PBA FOR THE FIRST JIU-JITSU TOURNAMENT

PRESENTED BY THE PBA & WHITELION PROMOTIONS



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JUNE 22ND, 2025

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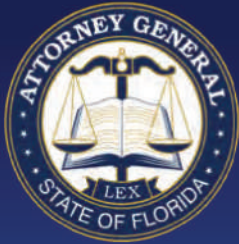


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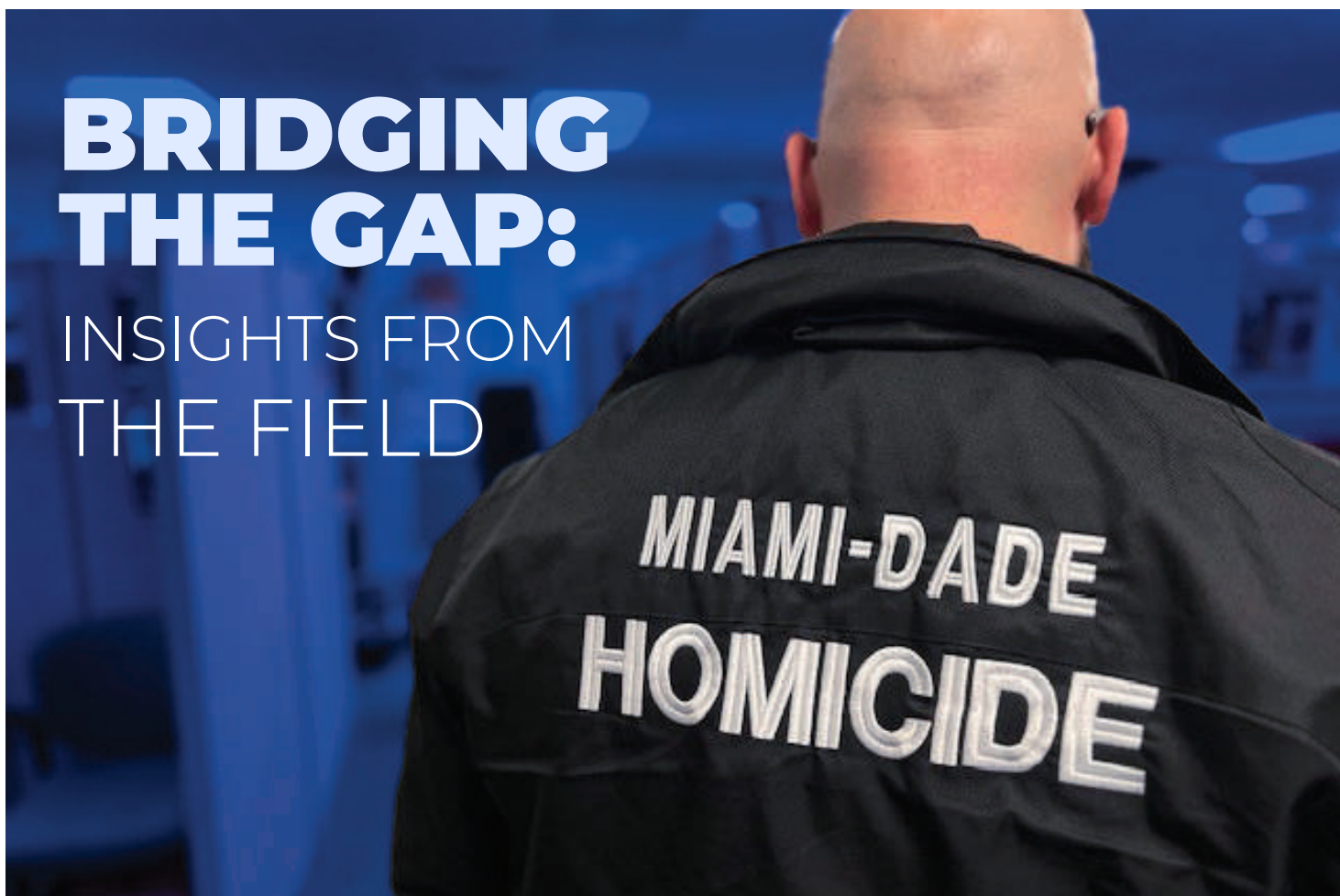
HR Department (850) 414-3900 or  
Investigations Coordinator  
Richard Worms (813) 287-7960



JOB OPENINGS

# BRIDGING THE GAP:

## INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD



As the current Treasurer of the PBA, I have the privilege of working closely with various units within our department, gaining firsthand insight into their operations. Recently, I had the opportunity to spend a day with the Homicide Bureau to better

understand the unique challenges they face and the dedication they bring to their work.

### The Emotional Toll of the Homicide Bureau

My role in the union is to represent our members and advocate for tangible improvements in their working conditions. Being side by side with the Homicide Bureau was an eye-opening experience. It's mind-blowing to witness how these officers deal with horrible crimes. It's crucial for them to maintain control over their emotions because even a moment of lost composure can jeopardize a case. This emotional toll is a major reason why many officers suffer from PTSD.

Investigating homicides comes with immense emotional

strain. Detectives often deal with depression, sleep deprivation, and the relentless weight of witnessing humanity's darkest moments. During my visit, I had the privilege of spending time with Detective R. Riveron, an 11-year veteran, and Detective L. Serrato-Sanchez, a six-year veteran. Their commitment to uncovering the truth in every case is remarkable.

### A Calling Beyond Recognition

Choosing to become a homicide detective is not a decision made lightly. Supervisors seek individuals with the right temperament, work ethic, and resilience to withstand the nonstop demands of the job. This social experiment helped me realize that their motivation comes not from seeking recognition but from a deep dedication to justice. They are true professionals whose devotion is inspiring and deserving of our utmost respect.

I have always recognized the hard work of all officers in our department. However, witnessing the intensity of their duty was life-changing. When you see it, smell it, and even feel it, you understand just how deeply it

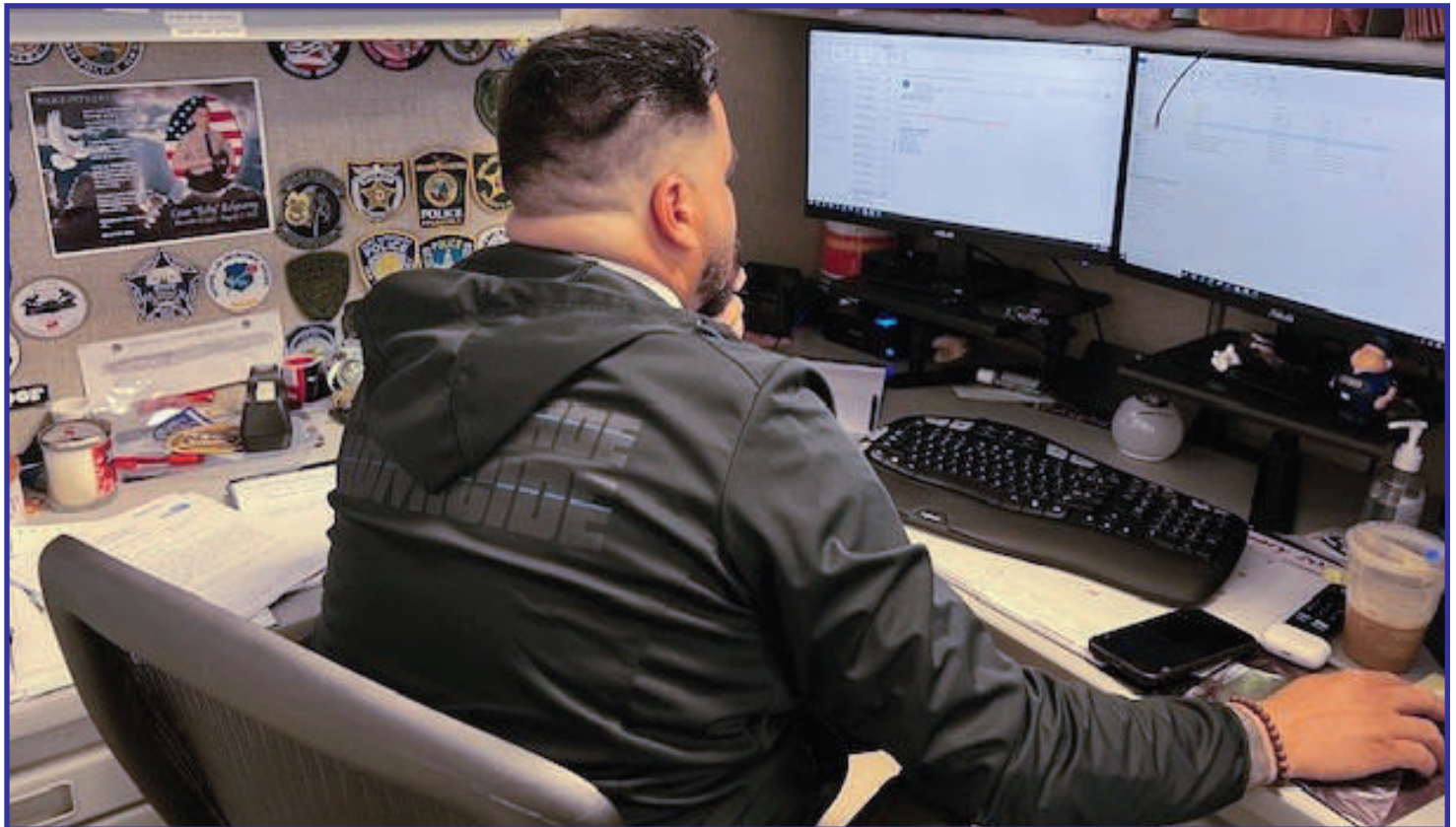
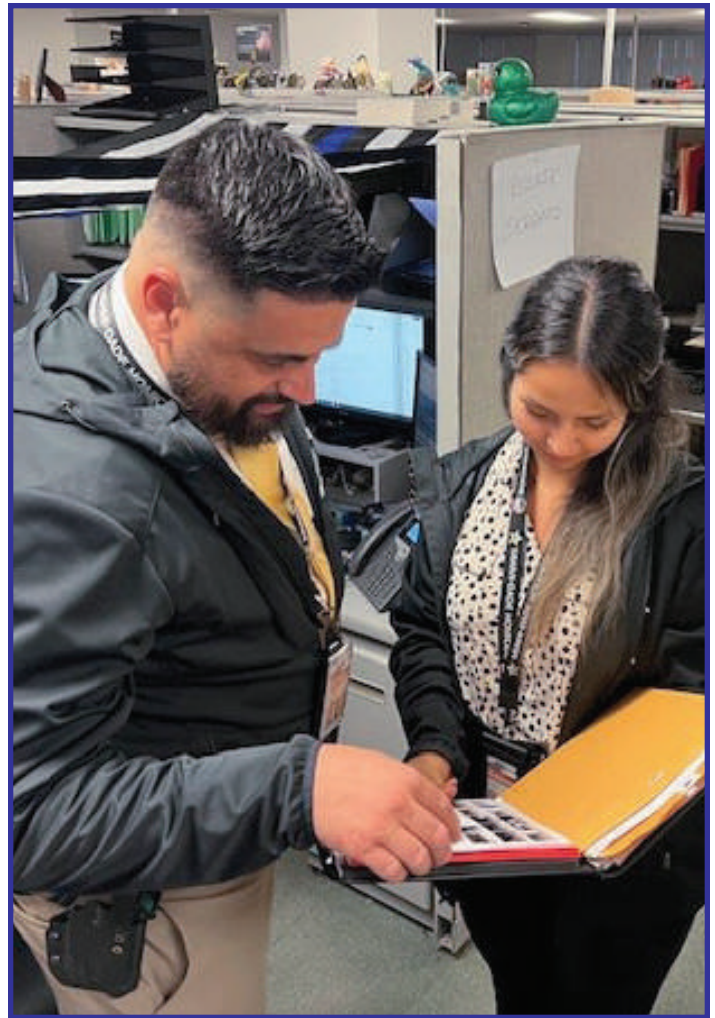
impacts them. I could see the emotion in their eyes as they spoke, and I realized that for these detectives, being in homicide is not just a job; it's a calling.

What struck me most was the immense passion they have for their work. If you've been in the Homicide Unit for a long time, you must truly love what you do, because it's not a job you can easily "get used to."

Reflecting on my experience, I was deeply moved by their commitment. These detectives face unimaginable challenges daily and continue to serve with remarkable resilience. I now pray for them every day, knowing that God places people where they are needed most.

Advocating for the Homicide Bureau has become a priority for me. Whether it's fighting for a salary increase or pushing for better mental health support, these officers deserve more. I have the unique privilege of seeing the struggles they face behind the scenes, and one thing is clear: they need our support. It's time we give them the recognition and resources they deserve, because what they're doing—day in and day out—is nothing short of extraordinary.

Let's continue to stand together and recognize the sacrifices made in law enforcement. As a union, it's our responsibility to ensure that they have the resources and recognition they need. I am committed to doing everything in my power to make that a reality.



INSUBORDINATION...



Insubordination is defined as disrespectful, and/or the continuing or constant intentional refusal to obey an order, whether direct or indirect. Insubordination can take many forms, it can be verbal, undermining authority, disobeying direct orders, and/or among

other things, the refusal to perform assigned tasks. There is also gross insubordination, which is the more severe and blatant acts of disobedience that demonstrate a complete disregard for authority. These instances, depending on severity, and/or if a continued pattern is established, can lead to discipline, up to and including termination.

No one wants to be insubordinate, and as a supervisor, to be on the receiving end of that. However, the reality is that at times, “issues” do arise between supervisors and subordinates that if not addressed, can snowball into uncomfortable workplace situations derailing the dynamic of a healthy and professional subordinate/supervisor relationship.

I will be suggesting some avenues you can take should you be experiencing “issues” at work, however because every case and everyone is different, I recommend that before you do or say anything, contact your PBA attorney to discuss the best course of action. That said, generally, if you have an “issue” with a supervisor, the first thing to do, is talk to your supervisor. Your objective should be to resolve the issues. This conversation does not have to be formal, but do it privately, calmly, professionally and, wisely. Communication is key. Voice your concerns, keeping in mind that your objective is to have the issue(s) clarified and hopefully cleared up. Also, understand that it needs to go both ways. Meaning, you will voice your concerns, but then you need to listen and really listen. Listening is an art that often falls to the wayside when emotions start to run high. That is why, prior to the conversation, prepare your thoughts, convey and listen. Hopefully that resolves any issue(s). However, it’s important to understand that if the issue isn’t resolved, you should avoid engaging in a back-and-forth. Instead, request a meeting with someone higher up in your chain of command. Do not skip the chain of command. These

meetings are managerial, and their intent is to have the issues vented and resolved at the lowest possible level. These meetings are not to point fingers at each other, and/or pan out the dirty laundry, they are to professionally sit and discuss the reasons why perhaps, you may be doing something that is being misinterpreted or wrongly perceived by the supervisor, and/or vice versa. You do not have to be best friends with anyone at work, but you must work together and perform your official duties regardless of personal feelings. If that does not work, there are other avenues your PBA attorney can discuss with you.

If you are a sworn employee, whatever your classification(s), you are working in a paramilitary organization, which requires you to show respect and if/when ordered to do something, follow that order. Not following a lawful order can be deemed insubordination. The question I sometimes get is, but what if the order my supervisor gives me is unfair? There is a huge difference between what you may deem “unfair” and the order being “unlawful.” When given a lawful order, though you believe it to be unfair, you must still follow the order and argue about it later. After compliance with such an order, call the PBA and we will guide you. If an order is unlawful—meaning it would require you to break the law or violate departmental policy—you should respectfully inform the supervisor that the order appears to be contrary to law or policy. Then, request clarification from a higher-ranking supervisor before proceeding with compliance. If that does not work, immediately contact the PBA for on-the-spot assistance. Remember that you have PBA attorneys available 24/7, even after hours. Just call our general number and the PBA representative will connect you to an attorney. Stay safe and thank you for all you do!

2024 PENDING GRIEVANCES

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of February 28, 2025. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT:	
BAL HARBOUR VILLAGE PD .....	1
KEY BISCAYNE PD.....	2
CITY OF MIAMI PD.....	4
MIAMI-DADE CORRECTIONS Association.....	1
Total.....	1
MIAMI GARDENS PD .....	3
TOTAL GRIEVANCES.....	11

# 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.



**Angel Alvarez**  
Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office



**Angel Dovale**  
Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office



**Ava Heiden**  
Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office



**Beatriz Dominguez**  
Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office



**Damian Colon**  
Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office



**Kevin Childs**  
Aventura Police Department

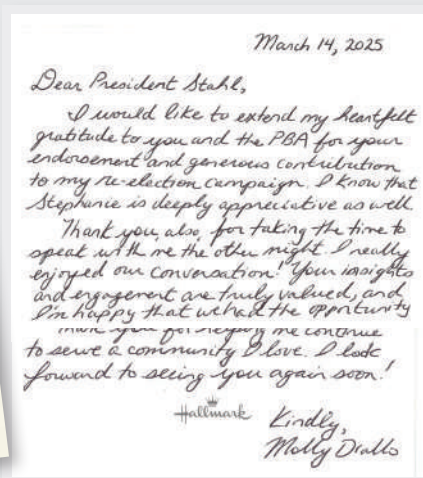
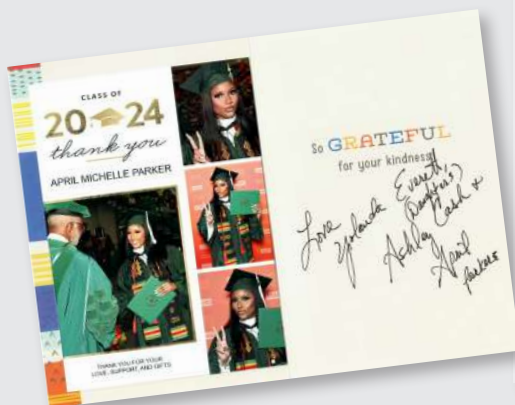


**Mark Huffman**  
Aventura Police Department



**Raymac Tapanes**  
Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office

## THANK YOU NOTES TO THE PBA



# FROM MOM TO MENTOR:



## INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICERS

### *Diana Fuentes*

#### **A Badge and a Heart: The Life of a Police Sergeant**

Miami-Dade Police Sergeant, Diana Fuentes, graciously took the time to speak with us about her journey, career, motherhood and passion for service.

#### ***A Legacy in Law Enforcement***

*What inspired you to become a police officer, and did you ever imagine your whole family would follow suit? Since I was a*

little girl, I always wanted to be a police officer. It wasn't about anything else, I just enjoyed it and wanted to help people. But I never expected my entire family to follow in my footsteps.

*With law enforcement being such a risky career, were you ever concerned about your kids joining? A little bit of both—I'm incredibly proud of them, but of course, as a mother, I worry. I try not to dwell on it too much. I went through it, so I stay positive that they'll be okay.*

*What's it like knowing your twin sons are now Sergeants and your daughter is a Deputy?* It makes me so proud. They love the job and knowing they're out there helping people means a lot.

### ***Balancing Motherhood and the Badge***

*How did you juggle motherhood and such a demanding career?* It was tough, but my husband, who's also a Sergeant, and I made it work. He worked days, I worked midnights, and our families—especially our moms—helped a lot.

Even during the academy, I'd drop the kids off at 5 a.m. before heading to training. It was a lot, but we managed.

*Did your job influence how you raised your kids?* Absolutely. I was very protective—I didn't allow sleepovers, and I always explained why. Now that they're older, they understand. I also put my daughter in the Explorer program early on, and she loved it. She always knew she wanted to be a police officer. Even as a little girl, she'd carry her purse, necklaces, and toy gun—it was meant to be!

### ***Pride & Challenges***

*What's been your proudest moment as a mother and as a Sergeant?* As a mother, just raising three amazing kids. They've always been good, kind-hearted, and willing to help others. As a Sergeant, I've had a great career. I love this department and the people I work with.

*What advice did you give your kids when they joined the force?* Be honest, do your job with integrity, and treat everyone with respect. Imagine every person you help is your own family member.

*What's a common misconception about law enforcement that you wish people understood?* That we're human. Yes, some people make mistakes, but that doesn't define the rest of us. Most of us genuinely love helping people and serving our communities.

*How do you unwind from such a stressful job?* We made it a rule not to talk about work at home. We spent time camping, doing family activities, keeping the stress away from the kids.

### ***Mother's Day & Reflection***

*What does Mother's Day mean to you, knowing your whole family serves in law enforcement?* It fills me with pride and happiness. I always wanted to be a police officer, and seeing all of them in uniform means the world to me.

*What message do you have for other law enforcement moms?* You can do it. If I did, you can too. Support your kids if they want to follow this path, even if it scares you. My mom has always been terrified, but I tell her—I can't think negatively. I have to stay positive.

*If you could say one thing to your children about their law enforcement journey, what would it be?* Enjoy it, be the best you can be, and always help others. I love you, I support you, and I'm so proud of you.



# Debra Guzman



## Balancing the Badge and Motherhood: An Interview with Officer Debbie

Officer Debra Guzman, a Miami native, has been married to Robert Guzman for 35 years and comes from a proud law enforcement family. Her late father, Capt. Robert Yee, retired from the City of Miami, and his tragic case was featured on an episode of the nationally televised series “The First 48” after his passing in 2009. Continuing the family legacy, her three sons also serve as police officers—Robert and Richard in Doral and Ryan with Miami-Dade. Since joining the force in 2008, she has dedicated herself to mentoring and guiding the next generation as a School Resource Officer and D.A.R.E. Instructor and Coordinator.

**What inspired you to pursue a career in law enforcement?**  
It runs in the family. I grew up watching my dad go to

work as an officer, and that really motivated me to follow in his footsteps.

**What kind of impact did you hope to make?** I’ve always had a desire to help people. Even before wearing the badge, I naturally stepped in whenever I could. People often told me, “You should be an officer,” but I never gave it much thought—until I realized that this career aligned perfectly with who I am.

Being an officer takes more than just enforcing the law. It requires patience, resilience, and the ability to wear many hats. We serve as mentors, counselors, protectors, and sometimes even parental figures. There’s so much more to this job than what people see on the surface.

**What were the biggest challenges of balancing motherhood and policing?** It wasn’t easy, especially with the demanding hours and shift work. I became an officer at 37, already a mother of three. Balancing the police academy with family responsibilities was challenging, but I pushed through. My husband helped with the kids, but after long days at the academy, I still came home to cook dinner, take them to baseball practice, and be present for them. Motherhood doesn’t pause for career goals—you just find a way to make it work.

**What did you do before becoming a police officer?** I was a dental assistant for 12 years. I had always wanted to be an officer, but out of respect for my father’s wishes and my husband’s concerns, I put it off. Eventually, I sat them both down and said, “This is something I truly want to do. If I fail, at least I tried.”

They were shocked but ultimately supported me. And here I am today.

**How has being a mother shaped your perspective as an officer?**  
Growing up in a law enforcement family, I was always vigilant—especially with my kids. I knew their friends, their surroundings, and I stayed on top of things. That carried over into my career. Even though my kids are now officers themselves, I still give them advice—both as their mother and as someone who understands this profession.

**How do you handle the emotional weight of your job while being emotionally available for your children?** Some officers

bring their work home, but for me, it's about balance. If I share something with my kids, it's usually to educate them—to make them aware of certain situations. But as a mother, you always worry, no matter what.

*Do you feel your maternal instincts influence your interactions with the public, especially in sensitive situations?* Absolutely. I'm a School Resource Officer and a D.A.R.E. Instructor and Coordinator, my experience as a mother helps me connect with the kids. I can recognize when something is wrong and know how to approach them with care and understanding. Being a mother has given me a nurturing side that I bring into my work every day.

*Are there any changes you'd like to see within law enforcement to better support working mothers?* Honestly, I think we're treated equally. When we sign up for this job,

we know what we're getting into.

The key is finding a support system and managing the responsibilities that come with both roles.

*What does this career mean to you?* It means everything. I took a leap of faith, and it paid off. I get to do what I love while being a role model for my children. And in the end, that's what truly matters

*What advice would you give to mothers considering a career in law enforcement?* Follow your dreams, follow your heart. As mothers, we already juggle so many roles—counselors, mentors, protectors. Being an officer is an extension of that. There are risks in every job, but in law enforcement, you're not just protecting the public; you are helping them and truly making a difference.

## Chartardai Garib



### Beyond the Bars: A Corrections Officer's Journey

*What inspired you to become a corrections officer, and how has the job shaped you as a mother?* I initially pursued a career in corrections because I was looking for better opportunities than my previous job at Dillard's. I applied and was fortunate to be accepted, and now I've been a Corrections Officer for nearly 23 years. This job has shaped me as a mother by opening my eyes to many

realities that were always present but that I hadn't fully recognized before.

*What are some of the biggest challenges of balancing the demands of corrections work with raising a family?* Balancing corrections work with raising a family was challenging, especially since my children were pre-teens when I started. To make it work, I took the evening shift so I could be with my kids in the morning, while my husband took care of them at night. This helped us maintain stability and ensure our children were always supported.

*How do you separate the intensity of your job from your role as a mom when you come home?* They are inmates...yes... but they are also people; if you treat them the way you want to be treated you have no stress. Of course, there are tough days, but I never bring that home. On my drive back, I play music and relax, allowing myself to fully transition into my role as a mom and wife.

*Have you worked with male or female inmates and which environment did you find more adversity?* I've mostly worked with male inmates, but I actually found working with females to be more difficult. While men can be emotional, women are often much more intense in their

emotions. Their conflicts tend to be more personal and can escalate quickly, requiring a different approach to interaction and conflict resolution.

*Have your experiences in law enforcement influenced the values you instill in your children?* Yes. It has. Working in corrections has given me a greater awareness of the realities around me, which has influenced the values I instill in my children.

*What has been your proudest moments as both a corrections officer and a mother?* My proudest moments come from the opportunity to meet new people and learn something new every day.

### **Mother's Day & Reflection**

*What does Mother's Day mean to you, given the sacrifices and dedication your job requires?* Mother's Day is especially meaningful to me because, despite the sacrifices and demands of my job, I raised my children to stay on the right path, they never got into trouble and they are doing exceptionally well.

*If you could share one message with fellow moms working in law enforcement, what would it be?* Communication. Communication is the best way to resolve any issue; whether it's with your kids, your work or personal .. communication is everything.

## **Jeanetta Joseph**



### **Law, Order, and Love: A Deputy's Perspective on Motherhood**

#### **Career & Motherhood**

*How / Why did you get involved with law enforcement?* I got into law enforcement to build a stable career and provide a better future for my son. At the time, I was working in fast food and hadn't gone to college. Then I saw an ad for corrections officers in Florida City, applied, and within

four months, I was accepted into the academy. Nearly 29 years later, I'm still here.

*What's a common misconception of Corrections Deputies?* A common misconception about corrections officers is the stereotype that we're corrupt or involved with inmates, but that's far from the truth. Our role is to provide care, custody, and control, ensuring a safe environment for everyone.

We do more than enforce rules; sometimes, we act as counselors, checking in on inmates, talking to them, and helping them stay mentally healthy. While they've made mistakes, our job is to ensure they serve their time and encourage them to move forward.

*Have you ever faced resistance in a predominantly male environment?* From inmates? Absolutely. That happens a lot. Many of them aren't used to taking orders from a female officer. I make it clear from the start that I'm in charge. They're in custody for a reason, and disrespect won't be tolerated.

While some situations escalate, and I've had to use force when necessary, I usually rely on de-escalation techniques—what I call 'verbal judo.' Most of the time, I use my interpersonal skills to diffuse tension, and eventually, many inmates will own up to their mistakes and say, 'My bad, Ms. Joseph.' Communication is key in keeping things under control.

***Please share moments when your two worlds intersected in a meaningful way?*** Absolutely, there are second chances, and I truly believe in them. Over the years, I've encountered former inmates who have turned their lives around. They'll recognize me and say, 'Hey, Ms. Joseph!' and share how they're doing, like working at Nissan or on a garbage truck. So many take the time to say, 'Thank you for talking to me, for seeing me as more than just an inmate. I made mistakes, but I've changed.'

Hearing this is especially rewarding from juveniles. When a young person tells me they graduated high school or earned a degree and thanks me for always guiding them, it reminds me why I do this job. Knowing that a small conversation made a difference in someone's life makes it all worth it.

***What's the biggest adjustment you've had to make as both a mom and a Deputy?*** The biggest adjustment has been balancing shift work and long hours in law enforcement with being a mom. With 12-hour shifts, it can be exhausting, but family always comes first. You can't redo those moments, like missing a game because you needed rest. Sometimes, we sacrifice our own needs to ensure we're there for our kids, raising and guiding them in the right direction.

***Has your work influenced how you guide and protect your children in everyday life?*** Definitely. My son has been a corrections officer for about 10 years at the Key West facility, and it's been rewarding to watch him grow in the field. When he started, he was a bit uneasy, but over time, I've seen him become more confident and responsible.

As a mom, especially with two sons, my work has influenced how I guide and protect them. I'm aware of the challenges young men face, so I've always emphasized making good choices. I steer them away from bad influences and remind them to uphold their moral character. I tell them, 'Do the right thing, even when it's tough.' While they'll make their own choices, I've always tried to guide them in the best direction.

***Do you feel your profession has helped you in raising your kids, or has it added to your worries?*** It definitely adds some worries. After nearly 29 years in this field, I've learned that no matter how much you try to guide your kids, they'll become who they want to be. As a parent, all I can do is instill a positive outlook and encourage them to do



the right thing. But at the end of the day, they'll grow into the people they're meant to be, and that does make me worry about them every day.

***How do you transition from the structured, high-stress environment of your job to the role of being a mom at home?*** I make a conscious effort not to bring stress or frustration home from work. I don't want my kids or grandkids to see me upset. It's not always easy—after all these years, I've learned that no place is perfect, and there's always some drama, whether it's with coworkers or inmates. But I do my best to leave those issues at work and focus on my family when I get home


### ***Mother's Day & Reflection***

***What does Mother's Day mean to you, knowing the sacrifices your job requires?*** Mother's Day means a lot to me. It's a reminder of how far my kids have come and watching them grow into the people they're meant to be. My career allowed me to provide them with a stable environment and seeing them thrive now brings me joy.

Both of my sons live with me—one worked as a dispatcher but decided to go back to school, and the other is a correctional officer in Key West.

***What's one piece of advice you'd give to other moms working in law enforcement?*** My advice would be to always put your family first. Stay focused and grounded at work, even on the tough days. There will be times when you feel overwhelmed, especially with home problems, but don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

Also, don't let the job change who you are. We sometimes have to wear a 'work face,' and people might be surprised by what we do, but it's important to separate yourself from work. Stay true to who you are, love yourself, and always try to do the right thing.



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## STAYING INVESTED (AND INVESTING MORE) DURING MARKET UNCERTAINTY



Investing in the stock market can be a rollercoaster ride. When markets are booming, it's easy to feel confident. But when uncertainty strikes, like during the COVID-19 crash in 2020 or the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008, fear takes over, and many investors panic, selling

their investments at the worst possible time.

If history has taught us anything, it's that markets are resilient. Despite downturns, they have always rebounded, often reaching new highs. The key to long-term investing success is staying the course, even when things feel uncertain.

### Market Corrections Are Normal (and Healthy)

A market correction—typically defined as a drop of 10% or more in stock prices—is a natural part of investing. While they can be unsettling, they serve an essential function: they help reset valuations, shake out speculative excess, and create buying opportunities for investors.

To put things into perspective, the S&P 500 has historically experienced a correction roughly once every 1–2 years. Despite these temporary declines, the market has consistently trended upward over the long run.

### Lessons from Recent Market Turmoil

**The COVID-19 Crash (2020):** When the pandemic hit, markets plummeted by more than 30% in a matter of weeks. Many investors sold in fear. Yet, those who stayed invested saw the market recover within months, reaching new record highs. Those who panicked and sold often missed out on the rapid recovery.

**The Global Financial Crisis (2008–2009):** During the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, markets dropped by over 50%. It was a painful period, but those who continued investing or simply held onto their portfolios saw a massive recovery in the years that followed.

**Recent Volatility (2022–2023):** Rising inflation, interest rate hikes, and geopolitical uncertainty have caused market swings, but despite these challenges, long-term investors have continued to see growth.

### The Power of Staying Invested

If you try to time the market by selling when things look

bad and buying back when things “feel safe,” you risk missing out on the best days of the market. Studies have shown that missing just a handful of the best-performing days can significantly reduce long-term returns.

For example, if you had invested \$10,000 in the S&P 500 in 2003 and stayed fully invested for 20 years, your money would have grown substantially. However, if you had missed just the 10 best days during that period, your returns would have been cut nearly in half.

### Why You Should Keep Investing During Uncertainty

Investing during downturns may seem counterintuitive, but history shows that these periods often present the best opportunities. Stocks are essentially “on sale” during bear markets, allowing long-term investors to buy at lower prices and reap the rewards when the market rebounds.

If you're investing for the long haul—whether for retirement or building wealth—short-term market swings shouldn't dictate your strategy. By consistently investing over time (through strategies like dollar-cost averaging), you reduce the risk of making emotional decisions and take advantage of market fluctuations.

### Final Thoughts

Market volatility is an unavoidable part of investing. However, history has shown that those who stay invested, remain patient, and continue investing through uncertain times are the ones who see the greatest long-term rewards. Rather than fearing market corrections, embrace them as opportunities to build wealth over time.

The most successful investors aren't the ones who avoid downturns—they're the ones who endure them. Stay the course, keep investing, and trust in the power of long-term growth.

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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 Mai Street Financial Solutions LLC.*



## **REFLECTIONS**

### *A Life in Corrections: A Story from the Inside*

**Kimberly Richardson,  
retired Corrections Officer**

#### **The Vitals**

- Graduated from Miami Senior High
- Earned bachelor's degree from Barry University in Human Behavioral Science
- Began in Corrections in 1986 and has worked in all facilities within the area
- After retirement, Officer Kimberly now is in Real Estate

#### **How I started**

##### ***Why did you choose to be a corrections officer vs being a law enforcement officer?***

I always knew I wanted a career in criminal justice but wasn't sure where to start. I considered becoming a crime scene technician, but once I saw how much math and science were involved, I knew it wasn't for me. At 18 or 19, I applied to be a Miami-Dade County police officer and got partway through the process. They told me I was too passive at the time—probably true for a 19-year-old. Eventually, I applied for a corrections position, and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I ever made.

#### **THE CONVERSATION**

***Looking back, what experiences do you feel prepared you for this career?*** Starting at the Community Action Agency taught me professionalism, communication, and how to serve diverse communities. I was mentored by strong women who shaped my work ethic. Miami High also prepared me—its tough, multicultural environment taught resilience and adaptability. Those experiences laid the foundation for my career in corrections.

***What was the most challenging part of your daily***

***responsibilities?*** One of the biggest challenges early on was ensuring my unit stayed spotless. We had competitions at the stockade, and the cleanest unit won a VCR for the weekend (remember those?) – a big deal back then! Inmates would clean, and as a reward, they'd get to watch movies. To stay ahead, I even brought my own cleaning supplies and floor wax. It was a fun and memorable part of my career!

***What sense of purpose did you find in your work?*** I found purpose in seeing the human side of those behind

bars—people often defined by their worst moments. Free from the influence of drugs or desperation, many were incredibly smart but had simply made bad choices, taken the wrong path. That always intrigued me.

One experience that stayed with me was a homeless inmate who arrived completely withdrawn and in a catatonic state. Her hair was matted, and she seemed lost. After building trust, she allowed another inmate to cut and style her hair. For a moment, she felt cared for. Seeing her transformation—both physically and emotionally—was incredibly rewarding.

Corrections taught me that everyone has a story – one that most never get to hear; hearing them firsthand made this job an eye-opening and meaningful journey.

**Did your role as a corrections officer impact your family life?** Yes, it definitely did, but mostly in positive ways. I made it a point not to work overtime—actually, I didn’t work any—because being present for my family was a priority. It motivated me to stay focused on keeping my kids on the right track.

**A funny story:** One time, a famous rapper came through intake. He was really popular, but I had no idea who he was. As the supervisor in the intake area, I noticed my team acting strange but couldn’t figure out why. At one point, he said his jewelry didn’t come off, and I replied, “What? Cut it off. That’s what we do.” My team just stood there, and someone finally said, “That’s DMX.”

Still confused, I took his mugshot home to show my kids, and they completely freaked out! They absolutely lost their minds!

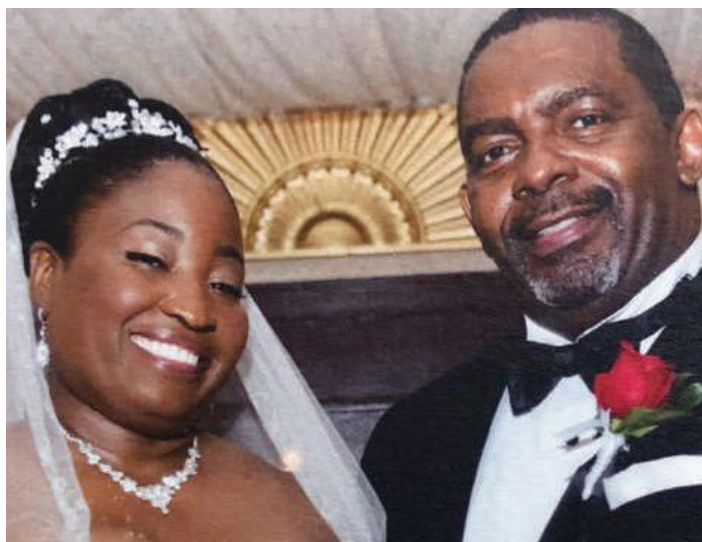
**How has the U.S. prison system evolved from when you first became an officer to the time you retired?**

The prison system has changed, especially with younger officers. While they bring valuable skills, many struggle with face-to-face communication due to their reliance on social media. This can impact their ability to establish control and command respect. However, they connect with inmates through shared slang and offer insights older officers may lack.

**How would you de-stress?** The mall. The mall is a cure-all for just about everything. I walk into Macy’s and I’m good!

**Are there specific changes you’d like to see within correction facilities to better support working mothers?**

I had always hoped that they would provide daycare,



Kimberly and husband, Terry Roberts, a retired Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, Firefighter and Paramedic



Kimberly’s 4 granddaughters  
Left to right: Bailey, Savannah, Sydney and Summer (in the back)

especially since there were so many women. It would have been so convenient.

**What is the most important quality a corrections officer should have today?** Communication skills.

**What changes could the prison system make to better support inmates in successfully reintegrating into society and reduce repeat offenses?** To reduce recidivism, we need to provide inmates with opportunities to learn marketable skills. While there have been

programs in place, over the years many have been cut due to budget constraints. Taxpayers may not want to fund these programs, but without them, inmates are left with little to do but perfect their criminal skills. Programs like boot camps have been successful because they offer structure and teach valuable skills that can help inmates reintegrate into society and avoid reoffending.

***Do you know Sergeant at Arms, Karlos Ramos? Throughout the years, he considered and still considers you his mentor/work mom .. tell us about this ..*** Yes,

I know Sergeant at Arms Karlos Ramos- he's like family to me. That's my "baby," my Karlito. He's always been a dedicated mentor to trainees, bringing professionalism and heart to the job. I truly believe God brought Karlito into my life. He's not just funny, kind and caring-he's also incredibly committed.



*Kimberly's grandson "my pride and joy," her only grandson Najee*

While paperwork isn't his strength (laughing), he always got it done when reminded. His military background shaped our trainees into outstanding professionals, making our drills, marching and physical training second to none.

Carlito's sweet, kind demeanor at work was a contrast to the strict, disciplined side of him when it came to training. We consistently outshone other departments during review ceremonies.

I'm grateful to have witnessed his growth and proud to call him my work "son."

***On this Mother's Day, what would***

***you say is your greatest source of pride as a mom?***

My two daughters are both professionals and educators. They're also wonderful moms and wives, and they constantly give me reasons to 'pop my collars'.

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## MEMBERS ONLY

### SECTION

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



After an incredible career spanning five decades, Sergeant Ruben Mena is retiring, leaving behind a legacy of dedication and service. He began his law enforcement journey in 1974 and served briefly with Miami-Dade County before joining the City of Miami, where he spent the majority of his career. Throughout the years, he was part of elite units, including Mounted Patrol, Aviation, and SWAT, serving as an instructor and representing Miami in training missions in Brazil. His experience includes participating in over 400 SWAT operations, seven major riots/shootouts, and providing protection details for President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II. He concluded his full-time service as a sergeant and field training supervisor in Miami's South End before continuing as a reserve officer with Sweetwater for the past 15 years. We thank Sergeant Mena for his unwavering commitment and wish him all the best in his well-earned retirement!

**In honor of Women's History Month and International Women's Day, members of the South Florida PBA honored the invaluable contributions of women in law enforcement. From officers to civilian staff, these women play a crucial role in ensuring safety, justice, and community trust. Their dedication, resilience, and leadership continue to inspire and break barriers in a traditionally male-dominated field, highlighting the essential impact they have on law enforcement and society as a whole.**



### Bal Harbour Police Department Honors Women in Law Enforcement

The Bal Harbour Police Department celebrates the courageous women who serve our community. With women making up 23% of our Operations Division and 19% of our agency—above the 21% national average—BHPD takes pride in its diversity and dedication.



## FIU PD Honors Women in Law Enforcement

The FIU Police Department highlights the dedication and impact of the women who serve as officers, dispatchers, administrators, and community partners. Their leadership and commitment help strengthen the Panther community every day.



## Doral PD Honors Women in Law Enforcement

The Doral Police Department recognizes the outstanding women who serve in both sworn and civilian roles. Their leadership, bravery, and commitment help build a safer, stronger community.



## Sunny Isles PD Honors Women in Law Enforcement

In celebration of Women's History Month, Sunny Isles Police Department proudly recognizes Officer Montehermoso of the Community Resource Unit, Communications Officer Mia Betancourt of the Communications Unit, and Officer Roxana Martinez, the department's first female motor officer in the Motor Unit. These women embody dedication, leadership, and resilience in their roles, and their contributions continue to inspire others in law enforcement.



## West Miami PD Honors Women in Law Enforcement

The West Miami Police Department proudly recognizes Master Sergeant Carolina De La Uz, Officer Kimberly Gonzalez, and Administrative Assistant Gloria Lopez for their outstanding contributions and dedication to the department.



## Doral PD Makes History with Promotions and New Officers

On March 13, the Doral Police Department welcomed eight new officers and celebrated multiple promotions, including a historic milestone—Alicia Neal was sworn in as the department's first female Deputy Chief. Congratulations to all as they continue serving with dedication and integrity!



## Congratulations to Sergeant Monique Bony on Her Promotion!

A heartfelt congratulations to Sergeant Monique Bony of the North Miami Police Department on her well-deserved promotion! Her dedication, hard work, and leadership have truly earned this achievement.



## Major James Mesidor Graduates from FBI National Academy

Congratulations to Major James Mesidor on completing FBI National Academy Session 293! His dedication and commitment to excellence are truly commendable. FIU PD and the Panther community celebrate this outstanding achievement and look forward to his continued leadership and impact.



## Key Biscayne PD Host Coffee with a Cop Event

Key Biscayne residents gathered for a productive Coffee with a Cop event, strengthening connections between the community and local law enforcement. Hosted by Winn-Dixie, the event provided a space for meaningful conversations. The Key Biscayne Police Department looks forward to hosting more events like this in the future to continue fostering community engagement!



## Homestead PD Hosts Successful GVI Pop-Up Event

The Homestead Police Department recently hosted a Group Violence Intervention Pop-Up Event at Turner Circle, bringing the community together in the effort to create a safer Homestead. Sponsored by the Ocean Reef Community Foundation, the event fostered valuable connections. More opportunities for community involvement are on the way.



## Medley Police Department Welcomes Officer Fuentes

The Medley Police Department proudly welcomes Officer Fuentes, who has been sworn in and is ready to serve the community. With a strong commitment to safety, Officer Fuentes begins this new chapter with unwavering determination. Congratulations on joining the team!



## Protecting the Track: Law Enforcement's Role at NASCAR Homestead

A big shoutout to the dedicated law enforcement officers who worked tirelessly to ensure the NASCAR race at Homestead-Miami Speedway was safe and enjoyable for everyone. From managing traffic to providing security and assisting fans, your commitment and professionalism made the event a success. Thank you for keeping our community safe and contributing to a fantastic race weekend!



Photos: Nolan Regan



# ***BUILDING TRUST AND SAFETY:***

## Chief Knapp's Strategic Plan for HPD

*By Lyan Babilonia*

*Photos: Nolan Regan*

Mario Knapp was sworn in as the Chief of Police for the Homestead Police Department (HPD) in January, bringing years of law enforcement experience to the role. His vision as Chief is to strengthen connections with the community while enhancing public safety and the well-being of residents.

After 27 years in law enforcement, Knapp is committed to transforming HPD by upholding excellence. He succeeded Chief Alexander E. Rolle, Jr., who served the community for more than 40 years.

"Safety is our top priority, and we're here to work with you, listen to you, and ensure that Homestead remains a place where everyone can feel secure," said Knapp.

The veteran leader, who also served on the PBA Board, recognized how this experience prepared him for his current role.

"Serving on the PBA Board has been incredibly enlightening. It's given me a broader perspective on best practices in law enforcement and reinforced the importance of transparency, accountability, and overall balance between departmental interests and those of our employees. The experience has strengthened my commitment to continual improvement and has shaped my strategy to lead the Homestead Police Department," he remembered.

"My vision is to build a principle-based police department that stands for excellence and professionalism in my focus on protective policing. I want the Homestead Police to be a modern and proactive organization—one that not only protects and serves but also earns the trust of every community member by upholding the highest standards of professionalism," added Knapp.

This will be achieved by working closely with community leaders and listening to the people. In this regard, it's crucial "to build a genuine partnership that makes Homestead safer and more united."



For that reason, he is working to increase the department's presence at local events, hold regular town meetings, and leverage social media platforms to inform and engage with everyone.

Knapp emphasizes that officers need to understand the concerns of the majority. What are the main needs of our neighbors? How can we assure safety?

To accomplish all objectives, he requires more than enthusiasm and open communication. He is prepared for the challenges ahead and has devised a plan to overcome them.

"We face a rapidly changing landscape in terms of recruitment. Specifically, in Homestead, the city is growing, and we have to ensure that the police continue to grow and advance at a rate proportional to the growth. We're addressing these challenges by investing

in advanced training and technology, strengthening our internal accountability systems, and expanding our community outreach initiatives. This balanced approach ensures our officers are prepared for any situation and remain a trusted part of the community," explained Knapp.

Knapp is grateful for his promotion and acknowledges that he can't do it alone. He conveyed a powerful message to his team, stating that he expects them to continue upholding high standards and promises to provide all necessary internal support and tools to do so.

As part of his work style, he is committed to ensuring that every piece of the puzzle falls into place. He aims to strike a healthy balance between the interests of the department and the demands of taxpayers. His strategy is straightforward: evaluate each situation objectively.



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