

SOUTH FLORIDA



FOR MEMBERS ONLY

OFFICER AWARDS SPECIAL ISSUE

THE BEAT

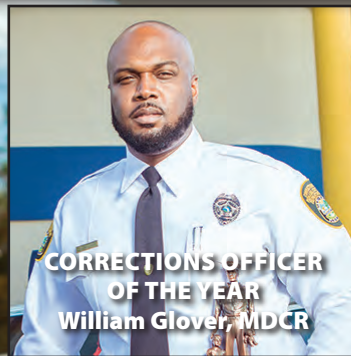
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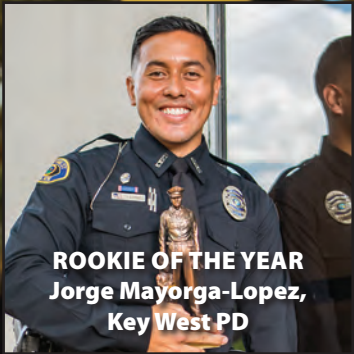
JULY/AUGUST 2021



ARTHUR FELTON AWARD
Farrel Owens Jr., MDPD



CORRECTIONS OFFICER OF THE YEAR
William Glover, MDCR



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR
Jorge Mayorga-Lopez,
Key West PD



OFFICER OF THE YEAR
Christopher Fernandez, MDPD

Simply The Best

South Florida PBA honors members for going above and beyond in 2020



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COVER STORY

OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS



Above and Beyond

Our Annual Officer of the Year Awards issue recognizes the unparalleled work of South Florida PBA members. This special report pays tribute to the way all members go above and beyond every day and spotlights:

- A buy-bust survival story and solving a 40-year-old sex crime.
- Making a splash with a lifesaving effort and preventing havoc in the jail.
- Heroic responses you have to read to believe.
- Special recognition for a member serving up support for kids.

13 pages of special coverage begins on page 18

Cover photos and Officer Awards photography by Sonya Revell

Also honoring...

- South Florida PBA scholarship winners **Page 34**
- Hall of Famers **Page 37**

MESSAGES FROM THE PBA

The Pres Says.....	Page 5	PBA Legal Corner.....	Page 14
Message from the Executive VP	Page 8	RPOC News	Page 16
The Dish from Ish.....	Page 10	POAT News.....	Page 17
Corrections Corner.....	Page 12	Members Only Section.....	Page 40



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Praising a towering response by PBA members



STEADMAN STAHL

Alpha/Bravo does not only define the schedule demand members have fulfilled to respond to the Champlain Towers South collapse.

In the sense of Alpha being the first, you were the first ones to know you needed to get there as fast as possible and how much you could do to lead those victimized through this horrific tragedy. Bravo, of course, could be used to praise your response. And I say “Bravo” as it is used to applaud brave men and women.

Working that Alpha/Bravo schedule of 12-hour tours with no days off since June 23 is not just a compliment to have everybody come together in a situation like this. It’s inspiring how all our member departments have led the way in being on the scene and on the spot moments after the towers crumbled.

I think you have once again proved that the worst of times bring out the best of the best, the best of our officers, our members. There are a lot of things you can train for in the police academy, but a collapsed building is not one of them.

These officers who have been deployed, no one has expressed anything but “Yep, this is my job. I’ve got to do it, and I’ll do it as long as they need me to.” Which is something that I think deserves to be recognized. In these times, everybody doesn’t hesitate to give everything they’ve got. And I just so admire that about you.

I have worked a lot of events. I worked Hurricane Andrew. But I’ve never seen anything like this before. It seems like nobody’s catching breaks there, because we had a pretty impressive Super Bowl that took place in January 2020, the largest contingent of officers that I’ve ever seen at any one event. And then you go right into COVID. And our brave officers and corrections officers kept going, even though we lost four of our ranks.

And then this happens. But there’s no hesitation. No arguing. No fighting. Just, “Let’s go.”

One of the most refreshing responses to come out of this was the outpouring of support from the community to officers. The amount of food, water, toiletries and whatever was needed was beautiful to see the public give our members a helping hand.

The PBA was also proud to lend a helping hand. I want to recognize PBA Executive Vice President David Greenwell, who has been on the site every day since the collapse. We brought our food truck there so we could provide officers, firefighters and emergency workers a place to rest, get some food and get ready to go back into the rubble.

We had bought this for when we were coming out of COVID to do a district-by-district appreciation tour. But it proved to be a godsend at the site for everybody in need.

You could just see the tired looks on everybody’s faces. It was hot, extremely hot. And if it wasn’t hot, you had torrential rainstorms with lightning snapping all around. And when you think things can’t get any worse, you have a hurricane that was heading our way.

Luckily, the hurricane skirted us, but we can’t forget the tremendous toll on the officers that are having to work the scene. We talk about PTSD and stuff like this, and we’re going to be dealing with that for years to come.

We can never forget how great it was to see all the different officers. I don’t care what patch you’re wearing on your shoulder. Everybody was there to help and get these families through a very difficult time. The recovery and the cleanup will be done soon, but the effect that it’s going to have on our officers is going to be forever.

Award-winning policing

We hope to have a feature story in the next issue of *The Heat* spotlighting how our members have answered the call. In this issue, we are spotlighting those who have gone above and beyond to be honored with our Officer of the Year awards.

It’s been a year now since we upgraded *The Heat* to this full-color, glossy magazine. And there is no better way to celebrate these officers and really the way you all go above and beyond every day than with what will be our annual “Officer of the Year” issue.

If you ask all of them, I’m sure the first thing they’d say is “We’re just doing our job.” I think they’re doing more than that. This is one of the most difficult decisions we have to make because there are so many great officers out there that do so many great things. And my hat’s off to our selection committee that has to go through hours of files and stories and pick the best of the best.

The common thread among the award winners is their commitment to help others. When



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Meeting with officers at the Champlain Towers South collapse and paying tribute at the memorial wall set up on site.



STAHL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

you become a police officer, you look out for the little guy. We have recipients of the Artie Felton Award, for example, that was a 40-year-old case. But it shows the way you never stop. You keep digging to find those people that cause great harm to our citizens.

Look at the array of officers we have representing the best of the best: They have gone face to face with somebody pointing a gun at their head to talking somebody out of killing themselves to finding somebody bringing a gun into the jail that could have caused a lot of harm. There are a lot of things that I've done in my life, but being elected president of the PBA to represent these members is an honor for me. And I couldn't be prouder

than representing the fine men and women of these different agencies. It's inspiring, and it's an honor on my part to be able to do it.

And it shows that we must work harder to make sure that these crime fighters have their rights protected. And to make sure that they have all the tools that they need. And to protect them from the stress of the job.

Give those women and men a cigar

We hope to have more occasions to relieve the stress of the job like we had with our Cigar Social on June 23 here at the PBA Hall. Hundreds of people showed up. Members. Retired members. Officers from different districts and agencies who had just come off work.

This was our first event with such a crowd coming out of COVID, and we needed it. We needed that camaraderie, that fellowship, to continue working together and move forward. And it was a great success.

Hats off to Alex Munoz, Secretary Jen Valdes and Chaplain Robin Pinkard. Alex jumped in just like our other new executive board members. And they didn't hesitate on making sure that things went smoothly.

Listen, there's a lot that the PBA does but nothing as important as promoting the brotherhood and sisterhood so we can come together and let off some of that steam that has been building up in the pressure cooker of the past year.

Closing thoughts

As we come out of the pandemic, I want to assure members that we are still getting the work done. We just settled a contracts for the City of Homestead Police Department and the Florida International University Police Department. And we've got two big contracts in the works right now: Monroe County Sheriff's Office and Miami-Dade County.

And the big thing I want to look forward to now is making sure everybody gets a break. That will be a big part of getting back to normal.

And we want to let our members know that no matter what the situation is, in their time of need, the PBA is only going to get stronger. And we're going to be there for them.

Stay safe, my friends.

Steadman Stahl, President
steadman@sflpba.org

South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl
and the Board of Directors cordially invite you to the 18th Annual

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Getting fishy with the South Florida PBA

This year's tournament reeled in more than 120 participants angling for prizes



DAVID GREENWELL
EXECUTIVE
VICE
PRESIDENT

The South Florida PBA Fishing Tournament was held on Saturday, June 5, at Matheson Hammock Park Marina. We had over 29 boats and over 120 anglers, including Stuart Archer and Don Rhindress, who have participated in every single PBA fishing tournament since they began.

As the anglers came in to dock their boats and get their fish weighed, Mark Siegel, who came from out of town to be our weighmaster, did a fantastic job keeping things calm and organized. This was a needed break from the past year during the pandemic, in which most everyone was on lockdown. While we waited to hear the official results, everyone got a chance to hang out and socialize with friends and colleagues, as well as some retired guys, like IPA President Jerry Rudolph, who stopped by to see the outcome.

The PBA would like to congratulate the following winners: First place, MDPD Officer Jorge Ponce, from team Slinginbait, who weighed in with the heaviest dolphin at 12.15 lbs.; second place, Sergeant Arturo Fernandez, team Sea Cup, whose dolphin weighed in at 8.8 lbs.; and third place, Ivan Manotas, whose dolphin weighed in at 8.5 lbs.

In other categories, the Best of Three went to Jeff Archer, from team Fly and Fish, who had a combined total of 17 lbs., and the Female Angler winner was Caridad Diaz of team Reel Equity, with a 7.5-lb. dolphin.

The first place Junior Division (15 and under) winner was Madison Ponce, of team Slinginbait, with a dolphin weight of 5.45 lbs., and the junior second place was Keith Arnesto of team Rising Sun, with a 3.20-lb dolphin. The Fun Fish winner was team Mo'Mahi Mo'Problems, with a 17.5-lb tuna.

There are many people to thank for helping make this event a great success. First, I would like to thank all the sponsors: Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Miami-Dade Commissioners Joe Martinez, Danielle Cohen Higgins and Raquel Regalado; George Joseph, president of the



Dade County Federal Credit Union; Kelly and Eric from Eric's Outboard Marine Service Inc.; Bill Archer from Big Cheese; Al Germi from Acco Foreign Shipping; Mills Consulting; Eduardo Barreto from Sea Tow; Andy Antelo from the Palmetto Bay El Capitan Marine & Fishing Center; Rene Alvarez from iSure Insurance Inc.; Charles Berrane from Warrior Gun Range in Doral; Reel Deal Bait & Tackle; Clifton Event Group; Ray Crego from Excalibur Towing Service; Justin Landau from El Car Wash; Rodbenders Rawbar restaurant, located in Cutler Bay; and Our Pharmacy Network. Please remember to support those who support law enforcement.

I also would like to thank the PBA fishing committee: Steadman Stahl, Joel Valdes, Juan Villalba and Mike Barrios. Thanks also to PBA volunteers Kim Gregson, Sonia Castro, Linda Carta, Margarita Vasquez, Alex Munoz, Robin Pinkard, Jennifer Valdes, Marjorie Eloi, Paul Kuisper and Mark Siegel.

We are already thinking about next year's tournament, and we are planning to have more boats and more prize money. Additionally, we look forward to bringing back the awards banquet dinner. So we hope you'll plan on being a part of this great event, which is a fundraiser for the PBA Love Fund. The Love Fund supports PBA members and their families in their time of need and is a federally recognized charitable organization 501(c)(3), with all

donations being tax deductible.

On another note, I would like to touch upon the horrific collapse of the Champlain Towers in Surfside. Having to deal with this type of situation is tragic for all involved family members, and I just have to say that during this tragedy, the first responders, both local and out of town, have shown tremendous strength, perseverance and solidarity. Especially coming off of a year which included the COVID pandemic, as mentioned above, along with the anti-law enforcement movement to defund the police, it has been inspirational to see our LEO brothers and sisters show up to be a part of the search and recovery mission that was going on while the world was watching.

With weather challenges including our normal summer rain, a threat of a hurricane and incredible heat, as well as some cases of COVID, which is still alive and kicking, our officers showed up on Alpha or Bravo shift and did their job. It was the honor of the PBA to be there daily, as we have been since the beginning, to provide meals and drinks to keep all the first responders nourished. As this tragedy continues, we know that our officers and the PBA will continue to be there to fulfill their duties as long as it is necessary.

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

Catches of the day

The hot shots from the South Florida PBA 2021 Fishing Tournament



Female Angler winner Caridad Diaz of team Reel Equity.



The Best of Three award went to Jeff Archer from team Fly and Fish.



Third place went to Ivan Manotas and his team.



Weighmaster Mark Siegel.



Commissioner Pepe Diaz, supporting the fishing tournament.



Junior Division second place winner Keith Arnesto from team Rising Sun.



The Fun Fish award went to John Saavedra from team Mo'Mahi Mo'Problems.



First place winner MDPD Officer Jorge Ponce and first place Junior Division winner Madison Ponce from team Slinginbait.



Second Place winner Sergeant Arturo Fernandez from team Sea Cup.



South Florida PBA Fishing Tournament volunteers.



PBA scholarship program benefits a diverse group



**CAPTAIN
NIZAM "ISH"
ISHMAEL
VICE
PRESIDENT**

This year the South Florida PBA received 81 scholarship applications. Various agencies were represented by the applicants. Here is a breakdown of the applicants:

- 49 were graduating high school seniors
- 9 were freshmen at college/university
- 10 were sophomores at college/university
- 8 were juniors at college/university
- 5 were seniors at college/university
- Some of the universities and colleges the applicants are attending include:
 - Barry University
 - Broward College
 - Chowan University (NC)
 - Cleveland Institute of Music (OH)
 - Davidson College (NC)
 - Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
 - Florida Atlantic University
 - Florida Gulf Coast University
 - Florida International University
 - Florida State University
 - Jackson State University (MS)
 - Lynn University
 - Miami Dade College
 - Nova Southeastern University
 - Santa Fe College
 - Savannah College of Arts & Design (GA)
 - Spelman College (GA)
 - St. Thomas University
 - Syracuse University (NY)
 - University of Central Florida
 - University of Florida
 - University of North Florida
 - University of South Florida
 - University of Southern California (CA)
 - Valdosta State University (GA)
- Areas of study include:
 - Accounting
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 - Biological Sciences/Pre-Med
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 - Biology
 - Biomedical Engineering
 - Biomedical Sciences
 - Business
 - Business Management
 - Chemistry
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 - Communications
 - Computer Engineering
 - Computer Science
 - Construction Management
 - Criminal Justice
 - Education Administration
 - Engineering
 - English
 - Exercise Physiology
 - Exercise Science
 - Fashion Design
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 - Health Services Administration
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 - International Relations/
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 - Jazz Studies
 - Management
 - Marketing
 - Materials Science & Engineering
 - Music Performance
 - Nursing
 - Pharmacy
 - Psychology
 - Political Science
 - Pre-Law/Political Science
 - Pre-Nursing
 - Pre-Pharmacy
 - Pre-Professional Biology
 - Psychology
 - Public Health and Sociology
 - Science (Veterinary)
 - Social Work
 - Sports Administration
 - Theater
 - Undecided

I had the pleasure of serving as the scholarship chairperson and want to thank the scholarship committee — PBA Treasurer Jermaine Lawson, Chaplain Robin Pinkard, PBA Director Nubia Azrak, PBA Representatives Lisa Nesbitt-Bell and Ronnie Hufnagel and PBA Life Member Olga Lopez — for

their dedication and commitment.

As Danny Kaye said, "The greatest natural resource that any country can have is its children." Some of those who earned scholarships are pictured on page 11.

Keep an eye out for January 1, 2022, as the South Florida PBA Scholarship Com-

mittee accepts applications for scholarship funds between January 1 and April 15 of each year. We all are very proud of our PBA children.

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

PBA'S ASSOCIATE PERSONAL INJURY COUNSEL

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- Former Assistant City Attorney, Hollywood, Florida
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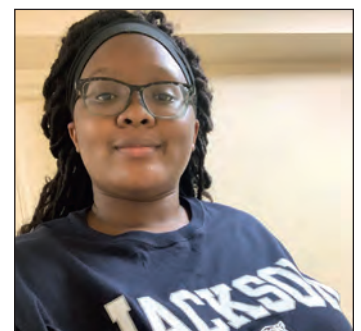
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Congratulations to these South Florida PBA Scholarship recipients



Restoring parity after the COVID pandemic



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The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on our law enforcement community is unprecedented. It has affected us in a variety of ways, exposed the cracks in our budget and disrupted supplies and other valuable resources. It has threatened the most vulnerable staff among us due to our responsibility for maintaining safety in our community and the risk of exposure through interactions with offenders in our custody. Now, since the worst has passed, it is time for us to turn our attention to recovery and healing from the effects of this deadly pandemic. A task of this magnitude requires an all-hands approach. At this vulnerable stage, solidarity and collaboration are essential to address exposed systemic risk. At this juncture, it is difficult to predict which changes will quickly become permanent and which will quickly be forgotten.

It is important to realize that the recovery will not be static, it will not occur on a specific date and time and it is unlikely to end suddenly. The recovery from the COVID-19 crisis coincides with a critical opportunity to evaluate our methods and practices. This represents a departmentwide consensus view that recovery presents an opportunity to not only restore what we lost, but to build greater resilience and even to make progress across the wider law enforcement community as a whole. The COVID-19 pandemic represents the largest economic and sanitation crisis our department has experienced in decades. Those who battle the virus know how dangerous it can be and are urging others to keep their guard up a little longer.

As an organization, we should focus on crisis response, health, safety, essential services and education. We must continue planning

for multiple scenarios as we shift from crisis response to recovery. We should create a contingency plan for multiple waves of the pandemic. We should also focus on making our problem-solving experience reusable. In other words, once an effective solution to an issue is developed, it will allow members to use it in all future situations. It is extremely difficult to predict which changes will become permanent and which will quickly be forgotten. We must also prepare for different outcomes of the pandemic and recognize that the recovery should be adaptable to different situations within our community.

The Monroe County Sheriff's Department has a proven track record for keeping staff, inmates and the community safe during natural disasters and the spread of communicable diseases. They have done an exceptional job to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic, and as an organization, we should develop knowledge-sharing with organizations of this magnitude. This shared information can facilitate decision-making capabilities, build learning environments and stimulate cultural change and innovation.

If there is one lesson from COVID-19, it is that we can no longer manage environmental and economic priorities separately. Past research suggests that the recovery process starts after stressors abate and can take months or years to unfold. While we have demonstrated resiliency in the past, it is important to remember that transformative change can be difficult and unsettling for many of us. As a result, it is critical to recognize what stress looks like, continue taking steps to manage job-related stimuli that can ultimately lead to stress and know where to go if you need help.

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



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Alex Alvarez

Former Metro Dade
Detective, honorably retired.

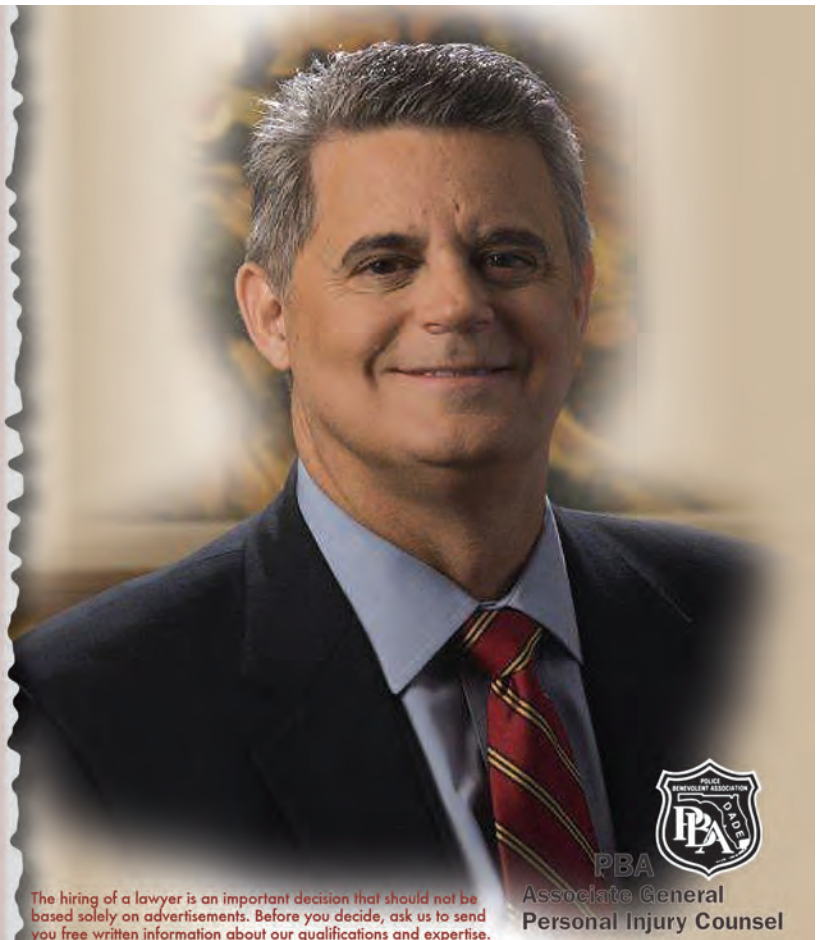
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- A person who is unselfish?
- A person who is honest and trustworthy?
- A person who cares?
- A person who likes to volunteer?
- A person who wants to make a difference?
- A person who is not afraid to stand up for your fellow officer/employee?
- A person who likes being part of an extraordinary team?

IF SO, the I want you, and PBA needs you, to apply for an elected position on the PBA Board of Directors.

Applications will be available for pick up at the PBA beginning September 2nd, 2021 through October 6th, 2021. The applications **MUST** be turned in prior to the October 6th meeting call to order. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7:00 p.m. Contested races will appear on ballots and be sent out by mail.

 **Steadman Stahl, President**

Note: You may only submit for one position. Duplicate applications will void both applications.

You're a subject officer: Now what?



**GRISKA
MENÁ
STAFF
COUNSEL**

Receiving notice that you are a subject officer in an internal investigation by your department may be a one-time occurrence in your career, but do you know what your rights are once you walk into that room? What should you expect during the interview? What steps should you take? Florida Statute § 112.532, the Law Enforcement Officers' and Correctional Officers' Bill of Rights, provides protections for every police officer and corrections officer who is a subject of an investigation that may lead to disciplinary action, suspension or dismissal. Your first step in protecting your rights as a subject officer is to call the PBA and get a lawyer assigned to your investigation.

Most officers may be familiar with Garrity Rights, but your rights begin way before the first question is even asked. You must be notified that you are a subject officer and given advance notice of your interview. Why is this important? You have the right to legal representation, and this notification will give the PBA the ability to schedule your interview at a time when a lawyer can be present to protect your rights. Your first interaction will be with your assigned lawyer to review all evidence that the department may have against you before proceeding with questioning.

You should not be getting blindsided by questioning. The Officers' Bill of Rights ensures that you have a right to review all the evidence the department has collected in preparation for this interview. This includes identifying all possible witnesses and complainants and the ability to review statements made by all identifiable witnesses and complainants, as well as videos, prior to giving your statement. This will also give you an opportunity to speak to your lawyer in a confidential setting. You have attorney-client privilege. This is the time to use it.

In many instances, you will see two investigators enter the room; however, you will not be peppered with questions by both. The interview will be conducted by one investigator. The investigator is a finder of fact; the person you see sitting in front of you is not the person who will decide what your discipline will be. While you are being ordered to give a statement to your internal affairs department, the Officers' Bill of Rights guarantees that you will not be threatened with dismissal, transfer or disciplinary action.

The questions you will be asked will be directly related to the allegations in the complaint affidavit as read to you by the investigator at the beginning of the interview. They will also address your performance and your continued fitness for office. Once the interview starts, you should be giving honest and complete answers. Because you are being ordered to give a statement to your department, nothing you say can be used to initiate or supplement a subsequent criminal prosecution. There is one exception. No criminal prosecution can arise from your internal affairs interview except perjury. Your statement is protected; therefore, your refusal to answer a question could lead to further discipline, up to termination.

Your lawyer cannot unduly interfere with the investigator's questioning during your interview. We cannot stop them from asking certain questions or tell you not to answer them, but we can interrupt where needed to make sure you understand the

2021 PENDING GRIEVANCES

This list represents the pending grievances filed at the various departments represented by the South Florida Police Benevolent Association as of **June 30, 2021**. The PBA legal staff receives numerous other complaints that are resolved by other means.

DEPARTMENT/DISTRICT

HIALEAH	1
HOMESTEAD CORRECTIONS	1
HOMESTEAD PD	1
ASSOCIATION	1
TRANSPORTATION	1
TGK(MHTC)	1
PTDC	1
TOTAL	4
M-D POLICE	2
MIAMI GARDENS	4
MCSO (DEP SHERIFF)	1
NORTH BAY VILLAGE	1
NORTH MIAMI	1
OPA LOCKA	3
SWEETWATER	1
TOTAL GRIEVANCES	20

question or to otherwise aid in the investigation. Remember, while we cannot "unduly" interfere, there can be some interference where we believe it is necessary in representing you. We are there to make sure that the department does not violate any of your rights guaranteed by your collective bargaining agreement and the Officers' Bill of Rights. We are there to advise you, and we will follow your case through the findings made by the department and any subsequent discipline. When you are speaking to your lawyer, less is not more.

Once your statement is complete, you have the right, upon request, to have a copy of your statement at no cost to you. Once the investigation is complete and a decision has been made in your case, you will be notified in writing by the department. This will not happen right after your statement. There are a few rules you need to be mindful of until you receive the notification. You cannot discuss any of the facts surrounding the investigation until it is complete. There are two exceptions, designated department authorities and your lawyer. If you have any questions, it never hurts to reach out to your lawyer.

When you walk out of the room and are done with your interview, the department's work is not done. Once the department is done with the investigation and determines whether a policy or procedure has been violated, they will notify you in writing. If there are violations, you may receive discipline. You should contact the same lawyer who sat by your side at the internal affairs interview to initiate your appeal.

As always, we will continue to represent you through the entire disciplinary appeal process should wrongdoing be found against you and discipline issued.



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- ▶ Refresh interior or exterior paint
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News and notes from your board members



DENNIS BAMBACH
RPOC
PRESIDENT

We hope you and your family had a safe and healthy Fourth of July holiday. Things are slowly returning to normalcy, and I know all of us hope that the trend continues. We are finally able to start planning vacations and trips that we have put off for over a year. Again, a reminder: It is never too early to start planning

for next year's reunion and to save the date on your calendar. The reunion will return to the Marriott Lake Mary, April 21-25, 2022.

Please keep in mind that this is the start of hurricane season and we should all make sure to be prepared well in advance of any storm that comes our way. Stay safe.

Here are reports from some of our board members:

John Fraley, Vice President/Scholarship Chairman: We sent out the scholarship awards to the five recipients last month. Each recipient received a \$1,000 check to help with their education and expenses. The RPOC board, through the Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund, is proud to help the children and grandchildren of our members in continuing their education.

I am extremely proud of the program and our board. I am also proud of our members who have answered the call and supported the Otis Chambers Scholarship Fund. Special thanks to Kay Chambers, who came to our board to initiate the program.

Please continue your help with your donations in January 2022 with your renewals. We will open the fund for the fall semester of 2022. We will start the application process on January 15, 2022, and will close on May 1, 2022.

Ed Spisak, Treasurer: Gratefully, we are steadily moving back to normal after the very stressful year and more we've all been through. It's clear from the many communications we've received that everyone is ready to get



RPOC scholarship recipients, clockwise from top left: Brooke and Taylor Woodburne, Tori Bevans, Russell Young.

together and enjoy our next reunion, which is scheduled for April 2022. We are all looking forward to it! Our membership dues and generous donations have been doing well. We have been receiving new members by your referrals, our transmittal of applications to retired LEOs who have expressed interest in joining and through the RPOC website. The process is made easy at our site, www.rpocpba.org, and we urge you to please continue to spread the news about joining to your retired friends who may not yet be members.

Reba Miller, Chaplain: Passing of our Warriors... With honor, respect and remembrance, "May the Lord bless you and draw you close to Him."

1. Eugene E. "Gene" Moore, May 2021
2. Zackery Gentile, June 2021
3. Roy Sommerhoff, May 2021
4. Rollie T. Biggs, May 2021

We extend our condolences, love and support to retirees Cookie Coleman and Dick Ward at the passing of their beloved spouses, Harry Coleman and Carol Ward. Please know that we are sending encouraging and uplifting support to retiree Harry Wright during his time of rehabbing.

"Look for something positive in each day, even if some days you have to look harder. A positive mind will give you a happier life." — Anonymous

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Support and praise for Surfside first responders



SERGEANT
KENNETH
HORGAN
POAT
ASSISTANCE
COMMITTEE
CHAIRPERSON

On the heels of the Town of Surfside building collapse, we have witnessed this entire community rally together like no other place in the country. The South Florida community responded and supported our first responders like never before. They cooked and delivered countless meals for all of the men and women working there. They have been there every day in the unbearable heat, rain or shine, praying for our well-being. Politicians, the community and first responders worked hand in hand to make this a successful operation of rescue and recovery.

Thank you to all of those in this community that support our first responders. A few of those first responders who worked in that rubble did so knowing that their own loved ones were there.

South Florida should be proud! It has certainly shined, even in the midst of one of the worst tragedies this community has ever seen.

In other Police Officer Assistance Trust news:

The Hispanic Police Officer Association donated \$12,000 to the POAT from proceeds during their Annual Ride for Kidz. Thank you for your hard work and generous donation!

The winners of the 2021 POAT scholarships were selected. We would like to congratulate the recipients:

Mike Byrd Scholarship — Brielle Revuelta, daughter of Officer Valentin Revuelta

Roger Castillo Scholarship — Jonathan Sarasa, son of Lieutenant Susana Sarasa

Amanda Haworth Scholarship — Natalie Gonzalez, daughter of Officer Jorge Gonzalez

Paul Janosky Art Scholarship — Kayla Montizaan, daughter of Officer Edward Montizaan

Paul Janosky Criminal Justice Scholarship — Zachary Allen, son of Captain Lonny Allen

Chris Todd Scholarship — Dylan Brizuela, son of Officer Ruben Brizuela

Chuck Duncan Scholarship — Ashley Moon, daughter of Sergeant Christopher Moon

On Saturday, September 11, 2021, the 20th Anniversary of 9/11 Ceremony will be held at the Law Enforcement Memorial site in Tropical Park at 9:30 a.m. The POAT sponsors this ceremony every year in conjunction with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue. This ceremony is to remember and honor our country's heroes who were killed in the line of duty responding to the attack on our nation. It is important that we never forget all the heroes who perished that tragic day. Please make every effort to attend.

Save the date: POAT's Fallen Heroes Annual Memorial Golf Outing will be held on Monday, October 18, 2021.

Save the date: POAT's Cops Ride for Kids will be held on Saturday, December 4, 2021.

If you or someone you know is in need of assistance, refer to our website at POAT.org or call the office at 305-594-6662.

RPOC CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

Jerry Rudoff, Sergeant at Arms/Information Officer: Due to the overabundance of questions and issues regarding health insurance-related topics that have been raised in the RPOC Facebook group, as well as other, related law enforcement groups — specifically from those who are approaching age 65 and have many Medicare-related questions — we have enlisted the assistance of an expert in this field to answer many of our members' questions. As our RPOC Facebook page is private and is considered a benefit to our members, we have invited participants of other groups to join the RPOC via our website, www.rpocpba.org, so that they, too, can take advantage of this most valuable resource. The following is the announcement that has been placed on our Facebook page:

"As promised we wish to introduce

our new FB group member Stephanie N Ranfys. Stephanie is the wife of retired MDPD Sgt. Butka, who I'm sure many of you know, and her son is currently a police officer with MDPD as well. So, she is family. She is also a Field Benefits Consultant with Av Med and has expertise in dealing with Medicare matters as relates to retirees and those approaching Medicare age. Stephanie has agreed to come here on a voluntary basis and try to answer some of your many related questions and to also address some of your Av Med-related concerns. All we ask is that you be patient and respectful as she makes her way through this maze of related questions and issues. As we progress in this exercise, we'll even have the opportunity to eventually create some private FB rooms via our group so Stephanie can talk about some specific health insurance-related products that might be beneficial for us all. If you'd care to address a question to Stephanie

please make sure you TAG her name, Stephanie N Ranfys as I've done here so she won't have to sift through a bunch of unrelated topics to get to your question. If you have any questions for us, RPOC, feel free to note them here or message us. Thank you all again for your respectful patience in this process and your time. Now please give a family welcome to Stephanie N Ranfys."

We would like to welcome new members Cheryl Mercure, MDPD; Paul Terry, MDPD; Curtis Johnson, Bay Harbor Island PD; Norberto Gonzalez, MDPD; Heather Grimes, MDPD. Reinstated: Ramon Delvalle, Ben Hall, Douglas McCoy, Hernan Organvidez, Timm Ross.

In closing, I would like to say that our thoughts and prayers are with the families and victims of the condo collapse in Surfside, and our support goes out to all the first responders working incessantly on this horrific tragedy.



Trial by Gunfire

Fernandez takes a hit but never quits

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

MDDPD Narcotics Bureau's buy-bust operation advanced in the target's apartment. Two suspects had been apprehended. On the lead into the apartment, K9 Detective Chris Fernandez noticed a shadow on a hallway wall. Had to be a third guy.

Fernandez pursued. As he turned the corner into the hallway, holy spit. He was standing three feet from a gun pointed at his head. The third guy fired.

"I'm hit, I'm hit," he yelled. "I remember telling myself, 'I can't believe I'm hit.'"

Turns out, you need to do more than hold a gun to his head to get this courageous and fearless officer to back down.

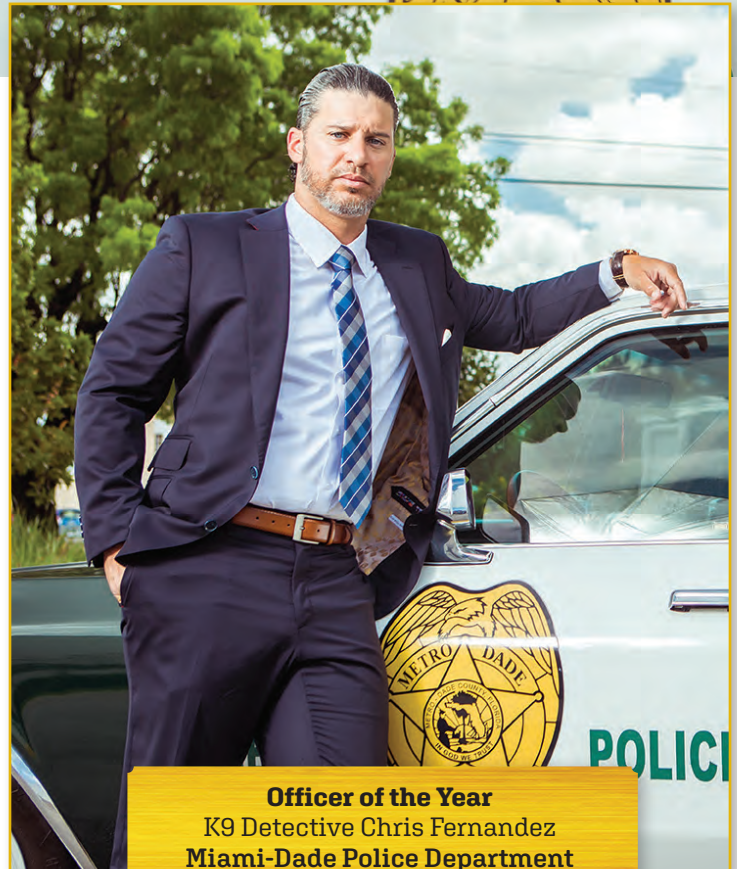
Approximately 12 years ago, Fernandez survived his first near-death experience. He was off duty and got into a bad car accident. Really bad. He broke both his legs and was in Jackson Memorial Hospital Ryder Trauma Center for three months. Not long after, though, Fernandez made it back to work.

All the platitudes certainly apply to Fernandez, trite or otherwise. He is living proof that what does not kill you makes you stronger. He has stared down death – right down the gun barrel – and survived.

"I've learned over the years to use it as fuel to do what I have to do and take care of what I have to take care of," he disclosed.

At 35, Fernandez has been on for 15 years. With that much experience at a young age, he would seem to be one of those guys who was destined to be a law enforcement officer.

Not exactly.



Officer of the Year
K9 Detective Chris Fernandez
Miami-Dade Police Department
Narcotics Bureau

OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

"I mean, we always grew up playing cops and robbers and stuff like that," he quipped. "But I never thought I was going to become a police officer."

He opted for the military over continuing his education and joined the Army National Guard. Eventually, Fernandez became a weapons specialist.

After being discharged, he was working at the Boys & Girls Club and looking for some direction. His uncle, Laz Menoud, had always been the one to provide direction. Laz had lived with Chris' family for a bit and Chris saw him as a brother.

Uncle Laz was on with MDPD. He works as a K9 detective in the Narcotics Bureau as well.

"I was never the one to have a set plan, so he always guided me," Fernandez praised. "He said, 'Hey, listen, bro. You would probably be good at this.' I was always athletic. I had some street savvy. So that's when I put all my pebbles in the basket."

Coming out of the academy in 2007, he was assigned to Cutler Ridge and three years later, Fernandez moved to the Robbery-Homicide Division. He was assigned to narcotics in April 2020, and a year ago he was partnered with Abby, his first K9.

Along the way, he has developed an approach to policing that has manifested in being a great fit for the Narcotics Bureau.

"I've always wanted to interact with people," he explained. "I feel like throughout my career, I've always been able to create a rapport with them and get information or figure out things. Talking and understanding someone goes a long way."

This is the type of approach, experience and demeanor that seem to be of such great value working narcotics. Fernandez is an asset on the streets and the street corners, where the turf wars frame the drug trade and sellers are in as much fear of being shot by a rival gang as getting busted.

And Fernandez is also motivated by having grown up in Miami-Dade and trying to keep drugs from wreaking havoc.

"You see it hand to hand, and you see what it's doing to the neighborhood," Fernandez detailed. "So you take away a couple of the buyers. And then we will typically take the seller after that, which usually involves them having a prior. And a lot of times these sellers are relieved that it's us and not the rival gang or rival seller."

During August 2020, a joint investigation with the MDPD Narcotics Bureau and the DEA led to the identification of several persons selling MDMA and marijuana and trafficking LSD from a high-rise in West Miami. They had already bought from the main target and set Oct. 20, 2020, for the buy-bust to take the target down.

The team took a suspect in the parking garage and prepared to move upstairs and freeze the apartment. According to Fernandez, they didn't need to bum-rush the place. The next sus-

pect came out, and they took him. And they took another once inside the apartment.

"While that's unfolding, I see a shadow running toward the bedroom. All I can think is that he is going to flush the dope," Fernandez recounted. "And I kind of advanced to put myself between the guy and the rest of the team. And once I turned the corner, that split second, I remember the guy holding the gun and firing it."

Everything scrambled for a second. And then Fernandez remembers everything coming back: visual, audio, everything.

Fernandez and his partner, Detective Jesus Martinez, returned fire. He cranked off enough rounds to need to change mags, so he took a position in the living room to reload.

"I just remember myself in my mind telling me, 'Hey it's time to go to work. Let's go fight,'" Fernandez added.

After taking cover behind a recliner, he poked his head out and saw the suspect stumbling toward the bedroom. He wanted to continue, but...

"I knew the guy was close when he got a shot on me," Fernandez revealed. "And I didn't know if the back of my head was there or not. So I remember saying, 'Hey, this is your time to get out and get help.'"

Martinez checked him out and thought it wasn't that bad. But the burning sensation, that one you get when you are hit, started to get worse. Martinez told him they had to get to the hospital.

The shots had taken off the top of his ear and a little chunk of his skull. Fernandez was transported to Jackson Memorial Hospital's trauma center and treated. But three weeks later, he was back to work.

"There's a lot of emotion that goes through it. I was happy that everything worked out, and nobody else got hurt other than the bad guy," Fernandez commented. "This is the type of event you train for. And I truly believe good prospered."

The platitudes continue to apply. Fernandez truly does have so much to live for. He and his partner, Elizabeth, are expecting their first child in September. It's a boy.

Perhaps he will be the next cop in the family, one of the MDPD's most illustrious families. His brother, Oscar, is also a K9 detective in narcotics. His cousin, Fernando Menoud, works with the homicide task force. Laz's daughter Gabby is assigned to Hammocks District Station. His other daughter, Marley, is in the academy.

Chris is proud to be honored as South Florida PBA Officer of the Year. But he'd prefer to stay out of the limelight. He said he is accepting the award for the MDPD Narcotics Bureau and his family. Through all the trials and tribulations, he has realized how to survive.

"I just try to go out there and do what I have to do," he reiterated. "And get back home."



Detective Chris Fernandez receives the Officer of the Year award from South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl.

Cold Catch

After a year of painstaking work, a Miami-Dade Police Department investigations team closed a 40-year-old cold case

BY KAREN JENKINS

They pored over the documents. They deliberated for hours around conference tables about every new lead. One team member even stayed up until 3 a.m. scribbling out his own notes by lamplight to bring back to the team.

During the yearlong investigation into the 40-year-old cold case of the “Pillow Case Rapist,” Lieutenant Farrel Owens Jr. had no doubts that they would be able to put the perpetrator from the 1980s behind bars.

“I had so much confidence in my investigative team, I expected that hit and that phone call,” expressed Owens, who was the lead on the case. “I know the work that we put into this. I literally had guys on this investigative team that — on their own time in the middle of the night — were obsessed with this investigation.”

Throughout the 1980s, a serial rapist terrorized young women in Miami-Dade County and committed more than 30 sexual assaults. Though the cases were linked through DNA testing at the time, a culprit was never identified.

Investigators in the Miami-Dade Police Department and neighboring municipalities worked over the next 20 years to try to apprehend the Pillow Case Rapist, a term coined by newspapers at the time, but were unsuccessful.

Owens joined the Miami-Dade Police Department’s Sex Crimes Investigations unit in October 2017. In April 2019, Major Christopher Carothers and Captain Tyrone White approved Owens to put together an investigative team for the two-decades-dormant case, after the previous lieutenant over it retired.

“When I assumed this investigation, my mindset was, ‘OK, there have been some awesome investigators that have been on this case in the past but could not bring it to a successful conclusion,’” Owens explained. “I loved the school of thought that a mastermind is being able to get some of the greatest people in that particular field on board, all working toward the same end result.”

Knowing he needed the best in each area, Owens identified those who excelled, from investigation to interrogation to surveillance to forensics. The team comprised individuals from the Special Victims Bureau, Sex Crimes Investigation Unit, Cold Case Squad, MDPD Forensic Services Bureau, Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Miami Office of Homeland Security Investigations.

“Everybody had that same level of ambition and just knew that ‘OK, we’re going to get this guy into custody,’” Owens shared. “To have all those people, those guys, sitting at the table just deliberating with all of these amazing ideas, it was just an amazing experience.”

Owens knew that previous investigations were able to gather plenty of DNA, but they weren’t able to link that DNA to a person. He coordinated with the forensics lab, who contracted the



**Arthur Felton Award
Cold Case Pillow Case Rapist**
Farrel Owens Jr.
Cecile Alvarez
Jamie Bethel
Darlene Cordero
Timothy R. Devine
Chauvelin Moise
William Nadramia
Samuel Odi
John Reddick Jr.
Yamile Rodriguez-Cobas
Humberto Tabares
Miami-Dade PD Sex Crimes Unit

services of Parabon NanoLabs to study the genealogy.

The preliminary findings of the Parabon report showed that the identity of the perpetrator’s mother was conclusive, and she was believed to have had four sons before passing away in 2007. They identified one son reported to be living in Miami-Dade County.

After 12 hours of surveillance and testing the DNA of a discarded cigarette butt from the man, they determined he was not the offender but was potentially a sibling.

The team reviewed obituaries, property records and estate records for the mother of the Pillow Case Rapist and determined that he may have been adopted and not raised by his biological mother. This posed a major setback for the investigation.

“We ran into several pitfalls and stonewalls where it appeared that the investigation was just dead,” Owens relayed. “But nobody ever suggested or felt that, ‘OK, it’s dead. It’s time to give up.’”

They collectively deliberated over every piece of information and knew that the case would have to be conducted by examining the backgrounds of individuals on the genetic family tree.

Based on the assessments of database analysis for the family members with the strongest DNA connections to the mother, the investigative team began traveling the country to various Florida counties and other states for surveillance.

“We followed up on all of the leads,” Owens shared. “So any time anybody had an idea, we didn’t discount it. Somebody brought up an idea, somebody threw something out there and we really took it into consideration.”

Then, a hit. After a year of tedious work, a young man was arrested near Brevard County on domestic charges in January 2020. His DNA was collected at the jail and placed into the database.

OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The investigative team determined that he was likely the son of the Pillow Case Rapist.

"[The DNA] was so close, it had to be a parental relationship," Owens said. "So we advanced our investigation from there, looking for the father. We found out where his last address of work was, and that's where we were able to discover where his father was living."

They deployed surveillance for a full week, stealthily collecting DNA samples from discarded items and surfaces in public areas. From that, they positively identified Robert Eugene Koehler as the Pillow Case Rapist.

Koehler was taken into custody by the Brevard County Sheriff's Office on Jan. 18, 2020, rendering the 40-year case of the Pillow Case Rapist closed.

"It was just a matter of when are we going to get him, but we're definitely going to catch him," Owens expressed. "We all knew that at some point we were going to get this guy in custody, that's what made it so profound."

Owens knows that the painstaking work of every team member was the key that brought the case to a successful conclusion and earned them the Artie Felton Investigative Excellence Award for Outstanding Long-Term Investigations.

He is proud of every single member of the Miami-Dade Police Department who touched the case: Sergeant Cecile Alvarez, Sergeant Chauvelin Moise, Detective William Nadramia, Detective Humberto Tabares, Detective Darlene Cordero, Timothy R. Devine, Intelligence Analyst Supervisor Samuel Odi, Intelligence Analyst Yamile Rodriguez-Cobas, Jamie Bethel and John Reddick Jr.

"The best thing I did personally was individually hand-pick



Miami-Dade Sex Crimes Unit Lieutenant Farrel Owens Jr. spearheaded the investigation that solved a 40-year-old cold case.

"the people that were on this investigation team," Owens shared. "These guys had motivation like no other. They were motivated, and failure was not an option."

Owens rests easier now knowing that after four decades, they were able to bring justice in the biggest case of his career. After putting away the Pillow Case Rapist, the team definitely needed a nap — or maybe even hibernation.

"I was just really blessed to have access to experts in each field," he expressed. "I'm extremely proud of these guys and I expected nothing less from them. They expected nothing less from themselves. To be surrounded by those types of people, it's definitely a recipe for success."



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Made for This

Key West PD officer strives for greatness in his first year on the job



Rookie of the Year
Jorge Mayorga-Lopez
Key West Police Department

■ BY ROSEMARY AN

Nobody was more primed to save a young boy from drowning in a hotel pool on Dec. 29, 2020, than Key West Officer Jorge Mayorga-Lopez.

When he arrived on scene, the boy was already out of the pool, lying on his back. None of the bystanders knew CPR. Lopez started chest compressions, and the boy came to life. In the critical moment of the boy's survival, Lopez rolled him over into the recovery position and kept him breathing until the paramedics arrived.

"That was my first time doing CPR after training in the academy," Lopez shared after the incident. "And the first time I responded to a call like this, especially a kid."

Lopez, who completed the academy in October 2019, didn't need an abundance of experience in saving drowning children. The most valuable part of his lifesaving effort was his ability to remain calm amid the shrieking cries of the boy's parents and others gathered, all while keeping the boy, who was unconscious, alive.

Lopez's unwavering and steadfast actions during the incident were part of a year that culminated in everything that a public



OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

servant should be. It was a testament to who Lopez is— a law enforcement officer who understands how great it is to make it on his own and serve the country he loves.

When he was 15 years old, Lopez and his mother emigrated from Nicaragua to the United States. His mother, who stayed in Key West for a year, had to return to her home country.

One day after school, he went home expecting to find his mother there. Then he learned that, following issues with her immigration status, she was unable to come back and wouldn't return in the foreseeable future.

"I was here by myself," Lopez revealed. "She tried so hard to take me here because of the government issues that we have back home. So it was either me going back, or staying, doing the best I can to have a better future here."

Lopez, who was only in high school at the time, decided he wasn't going back to Nicaragua, if for nothing else, then for his mother. He found a part-time job at a restaurant, where he worked every day after school. He was determined to balance his studies with his job and somehow make it work.

"I was dedicated to finishing my education," Lopez mentioned. "Even though it was hard and there was a lot going on, I was able to finish. I can do whatever I put my mind to."

After graduation, he started working at City Hall's code enforcement department. For the next four years, he regulated and enforced municipal law. That's when he first got a taste of working with law enforcement and realized it could open up a new career possibility for him.

"[Officers] would respond to a call where there was a code enforcement case," Lopez recalled. "After talking to them and seeing them, the interaction and how they talked to people, I became interested. So interested that I started thinking maybe this is something I can be good at."

Some of the law enforcement officers Lopez worked with encouraged him to apply for a sponsorship from the Key West PD. The program sponsors future officers to go to the academy with all expenses paid. After contemplating the decision for a year, he applied for the sponsorship.

Lopez was one of 12 people hired out of 40 to 45 applicants. He believes his background of having to support himself, his experience in City Hall and his strong-minded attitude are what led him to be chosen.

"They want to know what type of jobs you had and how you can communicate with people," Lopez explained. "Every day, I was talking to people, and it was very easy. I just have a way with talking that, even when they are being complicated, they would listen. Because I listen to them, too."

Lopez entered the academy at 25 years old. Afterward, he spent three months doing a field training program, where he was placed with a new officer every month and learned how to apply his academy knowledge to being on the job.

Starting in January 2020, his skills were put to the test. In a tumultuous year of policy changes, anti-police rhetoric and a pandemic, Lopez says that his first year was interesting, to say the least.

Lopez frequently encountered people visiting from other states who had a different opinion about law enforcement than what he experienced. He realized that some citizens did not have positive confrontations with officers, and he strived to create change.

"They would ask me questions," Lopez remembered. "Like, 'Where can I find this? Can you help me with this?' And of



South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl presents the Rookie of the Year award to Jorge Mayorga-Lopez.

course, me being myself and doing my job, I would help them, write it down for them, and I was able to have a conversation."

After exchanging pleasantries, the visitors would admit that they had not expected to speak to such a helpful and compassionate public servant.

"Where I come from, the cops are different," Lopez recalled someone saying in an encounter. "And the way you talk to me, the way that you treated me, this is new to me.' They told me that a lot. So that was good to know, and I'm glad that at some point I was able to change the point of view of some people by just being myself. And now they're going back home with a different attitude."

It may have been his first year on the job, but Lopez was able to not only save lives, but change perspectives. Not only by following rules and regulations, but also because this is what he's worked for his entire life — helping people.

"This is what I signed up for," Lopez relayed. "Doing the best we can to find a solution for people in the community."

As someone who is happy to simply wear a uniform and be on the job, Lopez was elated to find out he was nominated as the South Florida PBA Rookie of the Year. And when he learned he was chosen for the award, he felt there couldn't be a better way to wrap up his first year as a law enforcement officer.

"I didn't expect it," Lopez shared. "I was very surprised. I was like, Is this real? I am very happy and glad that other people notice the kind of police officer I am."

Lopez plans to keep doing what he loves and serve his country the best way he knows how. But he does not forget his roots. He credits his resilience and strength to his mother, who taught him early what it means to be dependable and mature and to have integrity.

In May 2021, Lopez made a surprise visit to his mother in Nicaragua for Mother's Day. He thanked her for helping him be the best public servant he can be.

"She is one of the reasons I was able to be where I am standing now," Lopez admitted. "Because of the way she raised me and prepared me."

Undivided Attention

Officer's keen sense of awareness prevents a potentially devastating situation

■ BY KAREN JENKINS

Officer William Glover has always had a keen attention to detail.

Glover, who works in the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department, grew up in Miami-Dade County as the oldest of five children with a single mother. The authority he carried while watching his siblings alone in the house honed his awareness and observational skills from a young age.

"All the responsibility fell on me while she was at work," Glover explained about his childhood. "I had to pay attention while growing up. I had to pay attention to detail and make sure everything's right, because I was the first to blame when she came home."

And on Feb. 3, 2020, Glover's sharpened attention to detail and quick thinking at the Turner Knight Correctional Center prevented a potentially tragic situation, earning him the distinction of PBA Correctional Officer of the Year.

Glover remembers that evening as being an average weekend night. He was working in intake and took a particularly vocal man into the port.

The man kept sharing details about his life with Glover — he was a teacher, he had kids at home — while Glover remained calm and used the wand to check for weapons.

Every time Glover used the wand on a particular area on the front of the inmate's leg, the alert sounded and the inmate became increasingly fidgety. Glover thought the sound was odd, knowing that the man wasn't wearing a belt and that his hand restraints were in the back.

"Every time I went to check, he kept turning to the side, like, 'Man, I don't have anything, I'm a teacher,'" Glover recalled. "So I was like, 'I'm going to dig a little deeper.' I saw the strap on the side of his waist, but it was like a pouch, which was a concealed gun holster."

Glover went to the officer who had brought the man in and asked if he had been searched prior to being put in the car. The other officer said no, they had only transported him to the facility. Glover immediately knew something was wrong.

"That raised my awareness even more," he expressed. "I dug inside his pants, and he had a small handgun. Loaded."

Glover took the gun, unloaded the magazine and asked the other officer to take the inmate back outside while he made sure everything was secure. While securing the scene, Glover thought about the tremendous harm the man could have caused to both officers in the facility and other inmates had he made it through with the weapon.

"[I was thinking], 'Get him out of here and get this gun out of here.' That's automatic, that's nature. You're going to automatically think what could have happened," Glover relayed. "The lobby was packed with people. The main thing is — which is



Corrections Officer of the Year
William Glover
Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation

normal — he was afraid to go to jail. They imagine if an argument happened, and some people lose their mind when they come to jail because of the TV."

Glover, who has four years on the job, grew up watching family members serve in federal and state law enforcement. Though he was always excited to hear stories about the job as a child, he didn't think that he would ever follow in his relatives' footsteps.

"I always thought, 'Nah, I'm not going to jail every day,'" he joked. "That was my train of thought, because I'd heard people say that yeah, they make good money or they have a good career, but you have to go to jail every day."

He eventually decided that law enforcement would be a good use of the skills he had been sharpening over the years, and that's when he joined the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department in 2017. Glover certainly didn't anticipate receiving an award for his diligence on the job.

"Every person that [law enforcement officers] deal with [on the streets], that they arrest, we have to see them every single day," Glover shared about the challenges of working in corrections. "So you have harsh criminals on the one level, a melting pot. And all they have is time to plot how can they get one over on you."

But despite Glover's potentially lifesaving action, he still doesn't feel like a hero. Even when Lieutenant Darius Passmore came to the facility to personally shake Glover's hand, it didn't set in that he had done something extraordinary.

Glover maintains that he was just doing his job. He promises that he'll keep flexing his keen attention to detail and critical thinking skills to keep the Turner Knight Correctional Center as safe as possible.

"Later on, it was like, 'Man, do you know how big that could've been?'" Glover reflected. "But it's a relief that it didn't happen and we were able to protect that many people. It's an honor to be recognized."

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Dream Team

When Aventura Officers Chase Bonville, Kevin Bascle and Joseph Craig responded to an active shooter in May 2020, they knew they had only seconds to save the victims' lives

BY KAREN JENKINS

Chase Bonville didn't mean to ruin a \$500 cashmere sweater by soaking it with blood. But he'd do it all over again if it meant saving another person's life.

Bonville, an officer with 14 years in Aventura, clearly remembers the summer 2020 active-shooter call that placed him and Officers Kevin Bascle and Joseph Craig at the height of crisis.

"This was the only time really in my entire career where I knew that I did [save a man's life]," Bonville shared. "We were all in the right place at the right time. I think my response time to the shooting call was within 30 seconds or less."

Bonville responded to the Nordstrom store at Aventura Mall on May 29, 2020, going through the west entrance doors with the goal of neutralizing the active shooter.

As soon as he stepped into the mall, he saw two gunshot victims. One had a wound to his chest, and the other was projectile bleeding from his femoral artery with a pool of blood surrounding him. Bonville went to work, knowing that every second counted.

"I forgot my medical kit, so I actually grabbed a cashmere sweater off the counter of Nordstrom's and took my knife and cut all around his pant leg," Bonville explained. "While I was tending to him, it went over the radio that the bad guys ran from where I found the shooting victims to be, and one of our officers just happened to be cruising through the parking lot and saw the two males running."

That officer was able to order the crimi-

Officer of the Year Finalists
Chase Bonville
Kevin Bascle
Joseph Craig
Aventura Police Department



Three Aventura officers, Chase Bonville, Kevin Bascle and Joseph Craig, are honored as Officer of the Year finalists for their May 29, 2020, response in a high-stakes, life-or-death situation.

nals to the ground, retrieve the firearm and immediately take them into custody without realizing that a shooting had just occurred inside. But Bonville, providing critical first aid to the victims, was experiencing a much more chaotic scene.

"[Officer Bascle] was able to get me his kit, which I was able to apply combat gauze to his wound and apply a tourniquet, which stopped the bleeding," Bonville relayed. "And then Officer Joey Craig came in and was able to provide cover for me, because at

the time it was still an active shooter scene."

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue arrived and loaded the victims into an ambulance while the three officers, drenched in the victims' blood, cleared the rest of the store. Once they discovered that the threat had been neutralized, they were released from the scene.

"The ER doctor said, 'If you hadn't put that tourniquet on within 10 seconds of what you did, he would've been dead,'" Bonville recalled. "I had blood on my face, I had blood all over my shirt, my boots were soaked in blood. They ended up letting me go home a little early that night."

For their lifesaving teamwork and critical thinking skills, Bonville, Bascle and Craig are Aventura's Officer of the Year finalists. Although they have all had to handle shooting victims in the past, Bonville said that this situation was one of the most high-stakes responses he has ever encountered.

Reflecting more than a year after the incident on the work the team put in, Bonville can look back and say that it was incredibly rewarding to bring the life-or-death situation to a successful outcome.

"Without Bascle and Joey Craig, I wouldn't have been able to do it, because you're not really that calm in that type of situation," Bonville praised. "If you don't have people there to help you relax and calm down and provide cover for you, your brain's going a million miles. You know that you can collect your thoughts, relax, breathe, go, 'OK. This is what I do. I remember this. This is where I go from here.'"

No Time to Spare

Officer saves 10-year-old from jumping from fourth floor of building

BY ROSEMARY AN

Bay Harbor Islands Sergeant Michael LaMantia was on patrol when he received a call at 8:15 a.m. on Feb. 10, 2020, about a distraught 10-year-old female who said she wanted to commit suicide.

The child had called 911 in tears and was coaxed into admitting she was near a community center.

"I zoom to the community center, thinking I don't know if the child's inside with a razor to her wrist," LaMantia explained. "And nobody is in there. Now [the

Officer of the Year Finalist
Michael LaMantia
Bay Harbor Islands Police Department

dispatcher asked], 'Do you have a parking garage?'"

The five-story parking garage next to the community center had the typical openings where windows would be if it weren't a garage. LaMantia flew up the stories and arrived at the fourth floor just as the dispatcher confirmed the child's location.

"[She was] on the opening of one of the

windows," LaMantia described. "The thing that bothered me was, it was a very breezy morning. And you have to make a decision with a jumper on whether to approach, start a dialogue or grab them."

LaMantia, who joined BHIPD after serving the NYPD Emergency Service Unit for 16 years, had responded to calls about emotionally disturbed people multiple times. His experiences allowed him to understand how to defuse a situation like this one.

"You have to play every one of these out," LaMantia explained. "You have to be

The MVP in El Portal

All-around effort makes Battaglia one of department's most valuable police officers

■ BY DAN CAMPANA

Paul Battaglia waited too long to not give everything he had to his first law enforcement job.

Becoming a police officer “was pretty much a calling,” 31-year-old Battaglia explains, but he spent most of his early 20s applying for jobs and getting rejected by departments. Persistent and patient, Battaglia did everything he could — earned his degree, got certified — until a connection with the El Portal Police Department helped get him in the door.

“I was so grateful after trying so hard for so long,” he shared, adding that the struggle to catch on somewhere was “discouraging, but I didn’t want to do anything else.”

What Battaglia accomplished in El Portal over the next several years is voluminous and captured perfectly by Chief David Magnusson.

“There may not be one specific ‘stop the presses’ event or incident that may jump out. But, I submit to you, just by taking a good look at everything this law enforcement professional does consistently (minus fanfare), it is easy to understand why I proudly nominate Officer Paul Battaglia,” Magnusson wrote in a letter of consideration for Battaglia as PBA Police Officer of the Year. “He is more than deserving of such an honor.”

Magnusson highlighted Battaglia’s community contributions, such as starting the award-winning Crime Watch program; his internal work to improve the department’s report system; his efforts as a PBA representative; his connection to the local seniors

ready about what you’re going to do.”

Standing 6 feet away, LaMantia tried to engage the child in a conversation. She was not interested. She insisted on standing at the end of the window, nearly on her toes.

“She just started screaming, ‘Stay away from me,’” LaMantia said. “So I stopped. Either you back away or attempt to grab the person.”

LaMantia needed to close the distance between him and the child. Before he could contemplate how, he noticed that the wind was so powerful that the child was starting to lose her balance. He darted toward the 78-pound girl just as she was about to plunge downward.

“I grabbed her by her waist and flipped her off my shoulder,” LaMantia clarified. “This kid hitting that concrete, four stories up, that [would be] really bad.”



Officer of the Year Finalist
Paul Battaglia
El Portal Police Department

during the pandemic; and charitable work that supported breast cancer awareness and other programs. And he’s a pretty good cop, too, leading the department in reports taken, tickets written and arrests.

“There is no doubt he is a most valuable player for this police department,” Magnusson wrote.

Ask Battaglia about all this and he turns the credit back to Magnusson and the other officers he worked with in the small agency over 4 1/2 years. But it’s clear Battaglia led the way on many fronts. Crime Watch, which involved giving away doorbell cameras that led to arrests, earned El Portal the 2019 Police Department of the Year award for small agencies from the Ring company.

When the pandemic isolated local seniors, Battaglia, who earned El Portal’s Officer of the Year award in 2020, found creative ways to check on them — even when a hurricane threatened the region. He lived

The child was taken to Jackson Behavioral Health Hospital for psychological evaluation. In the coming months, LaMantia would see her twice more on emotionally disturbed calls.

As a father of three, LaMantia feels especially motivated to successfully respond to calls like this one. He thinks it is a natural reaction as both a law enforcement officer and a parent. So when he learned that he was named a South Florida PBA Officer of the Year finalist, he felt undeserving of the award. He humbly accepted and noted that he was just doing what he loves to do — serve.

“I am sure that there were cops that showed more bravery in 2020 than I did with this,” LaMantia relayed. “No matter what police department you belong to, you are proud to do the same thing.”

up the department’s social media, served as PIO and even negotiated a pay raise in his role as PBA rep.

“I never expected anything out of it, just to make El Portal better,” Battaglia, a PBA Officer of the Year finalist, said. “I was really shocked when I read the [Magnusson] letter.”

Battaglia appreciates Magnusson’s support as a “yes man” to his ideas — except when he asked to dye his hair pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Battaglia also credits his support system, his husband and brother, for sticking with him as he chased his law enforcement goal.

Although he recently moved a mile east to a “hidden gem of a police agency” in North Bay Village, Battaglia hasn’t slowed down even as he serves in a reserve role. He is honored to be the department’s LGBTQ liaison officer, which was developed as part of a larger county initiative. It’s a role he believes is important for building a relationship between police and the LGBTQ community, as well as awareness around drug and domestic violence issues.

“It’s extremely important, because so much of it is underreported in the LGBTQ community,” Battaglia explained.

The role is also a step toward showing acceptance and support for LGBTQ individuals among law enforcement, which Battaglia does every time he’s behind the wheel of the department’s “badass rainbow” squad car.

Through everything he’s experienced in the last five years, Battaglia is undeniably appreciative and modest.

“I just never expected this. I’m truly humbled,” he said.



Dark Water

Teamwork and a mission to help others guide Intracoastal officers to daring, middle-of-the-night rescue

BY DAN CAMPANA

Dark, unfamiliar surroundings. The screaming of a mother and her child. Precarious positioning at the edge of a canal.

Any of those factors alone makes for a challenging moment for a police officer. Put them all together and you begin to understand the scene Intracoastal Officers Anthony Martin, Edwin Ramos, Joseph Metka and Sergio Cordova faced in July 2020 when the quartet responded to a call of a woman in distress in the water in the Enchanted Lake neighborhood.

“There’s no specific training. I’m sure the dive team and firefighters had better training in that kind of situation than us,” said Metka, who has been with Intracoastal for two years. “It was just kind of instinctive — hey, let’s save this woman as fast as we can; pull her up.”

The four officers were the first to arrive at the home just after 3:30 a.m. Unfamiliar with the area, they had to orient themselves to find the canal, which sat on the other side of a fence. With their flashlights the only light to cut the pitch black, they followed the sounds of the woman and her 5-year-old son, who jumped into the water thinking he could rescue his mother.

“We don’t see them immediately, then we looked down and could see her kind of

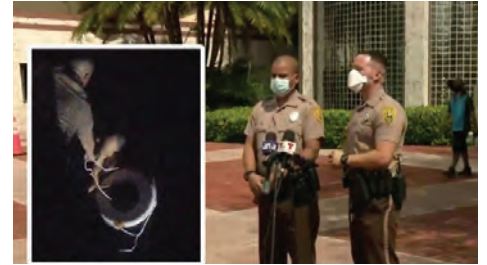


hanging on,” Metka described.

Cordova, along with the others, carefully approached the edge of the retaining wall. Although a bit leery that he could slip on it and end up in the water himself, he got on the ground and extended his arm toward the pair as the boy clung to his mother.

“My priority was [the boy]. I was trying to reach out for him first, that way nothing will happen to him ... and I could save her after that,” Cordova, who is nearing three years with Intracoastal, recalled.

As Ramos held him by his belt and legs, Cordova reached out to try to grab the boy even as the mother — apparently intoxicated — refused to cooperate with the officers’ directions and even tried to avoid their rescue attempts. Both mother and son briefly disappeared under the water before Cordova’s outstretched hand was able to snag the boy and pull him to safety with the help of the other officers. Ramos then tossed a life-guard buoy to the woman, who was then lifted from the water.



Miami-Dade Officers Edwin Ramos (left) and Sergio Cordova were part of the team that saved a woman and her son who had fallen into a canal.

“I thought I was going to go in. I was able to grab her and pull her out while my partners were grabbing my belt,” Cordova said.

The team effort resulted in the four officers being named PBA Officer of the Year finalists. Cordova and Metka took the modest approach to describing their feelings about their first time experiencing this type of rescue.

“It’s rewarding that we were able to get there and help them out, help the family out, and nobody got seriously hurt. It’s kind of like why we do the job,” Metka offered.

Cordova, a first-generation officer whose family is from Cuba, added, “Life, there’s nothing more valuable than life. When we sign up for the job, it’s part of the job. We’re law enforcement, we save lives. It felt great to have saved two lives.”

A Call to Help

North Miami sergeant connects with woman to save her life

BY KYLE FURMAN

Law enforcement officers know that any given moment can turn deadly, and they will need to rely on their instincts and experience to save lives. When the Veteran Affairs Hotline sent out a call to help somebody threatening to harm herself on the morning of July 23, 2020, North Miami Sergeant Stacina Jones acted quickly to keep the incident from turning deadly.

“I was on the east side doing a business check, and I heard the call go out,” Jones recalled. “They dispatched two rookies to the address, and I said, ‘No, let me go.’”

Once Jones arrived at the scene, she worked to obtain as much information as possible on Jessica, the veteran in distress.

After Jones approached the house and was met with no response, she contacted Jessica’s mother to attempt to speak with Jessica by phone.

After numerous attempts, Jessica picked up the phone, indicated to Jones that she had no intention of speaking to her and ended the call. Jones recalled that no more than four seconds after Jessica hung up, a loud gunshot was heard.

“So that changed everything,” Jones explained. “I advised over the radio there were shots fired. At that time, I requested units to respond, and I set up a perimeter, and I had rescue. I had a gut feeling that when she was not responding to us and she would not come to the door, I said to

myself that I do not want her mother to come home and find her deceased in her room. I must get in contact with her. I kept calling, kept calling. She probably hung up on me 15, 20 times. I would not stop until she answered that phone.”

When Jessica finally answered, Jones knew she had to work quickly and use her exceptional crisis negotiating skills. Her focus centered around trying to build a rapport with Jessica to gain her trust and ultimately have her leave the household with no injuries sustained.

In remarkable detail, Jones is still able to recount exactly what happened in the moments after Jessica informed Jones that she had shot herself.

Serving the Community and Other Cops

MDPD Special Response Team officer leads by example

BY ROSEMARY AN

Miami-Dade PD Officer Armando Calzadilla had always wanted to be a law enforcement officer. The idea of being able to help someone in need pushed him to consider the line of work from early childhood.

“[I wanted] the opportunity to be out there and help people and maybe make a difference in certain people’s lives,” Calzadilla mentioned. “It’s something I always had on my mind as a child. I either wanted to be a fireman or a police officer, and it worked out this way first.”

Calzadilla was hired by the department 20 years ago and has been on the Special Response Team for 17 years. The SRT conducts all high research warrants, hostage rescues and barricaded subjects. The officers receive elite training to respond to calls that non-SRT officers are not equipped to handle. He believes being on the SRT was his life’s calling.

“I knew right away,” Calzadilla revealed. “I wanted to do the line of work that I do now. I’ve always known that this was my route.”

Officer of the Year Finalist
Armando Calzadilla
Miami-Dade Police Department

Being an SRT officer is not an easy task. Calzadilla explained that it takes constant, extensive training so that the officers can learn new skills and practice old ones. Then the challenge becomes taking what they’ve learned and applying it to the real world.

“I’ve always tried to keep my training and skill level to the highest bar possible,” Calzadilla described. “More so than anything, learn from the [officers] you work with, take information from the different entities we train with and actually be able to assess and apply what you’ve learned.”

With his highly skilled training, Calzadilla can not only protect and serve the community, but also help other officers respond to calls. That’s his favorite part about being on the job — making a difference in any way he can.

“You get to go out and actually assist

other officers in their work,” Calzadilla clarified. “When they’ve done all they can and their resources have been exhausted, we come out. We have special training and tools, and we’re able to provide that for them, kind of take over and give them a hand.”

So when his team responded to an execution of an arrest warrant and made contact with the suspect in July 2020, Calzadilla swiftly took control of the situation even after shots were fired to his ballistic vest. He and the SRT were chosen as Officer of the Year finalists for their actions while engaging in the violent situation.

Calzadilla strives to continue being the best law enforcement officer he can be, every day. He believes it takes passion, devotion and most of all, humility, to remain vigilant and steadfast in his duties.

“A big thing with all this is being able to stay humble,” Calzadilla offered. “And remember where you came from and that you’re equal as everyone else. Live life righteous, help people out when you can, and that’s it. The rest is history.”

“And then all of a sudden, I heard a scream,” Jones continues. “That’s when I asked her what she did to herself. And she said she shot herself. I asked her where she shot herself. At that time, I was more forceful because I didn’t hear anything.”

There was a second gunshot, which Jones said she didn’t hear because Jessica had put the gun to her stomach and fired. So she tried to talk her out of the house.

“I said, ‘Jessica, I need you to open the door. We’re here. We’re here to help you, but I need you to open the door. I need you to open the door, and I need you to walk out of the room but leave the gun in the room. Do not come out of the room with the gun.’ So she was able to open her bedroom door. And when she opened her bedroom door, she told me the door was open.”

Officers entered the house, where they found Jessica with a self-inflicted stomach gunshot wound. Because of Jones’ decision



Officer of the Year Finalist
Sergeant Stacina Jones
North Miami Police Department

to have rescue on standby ready to assist, Jessica was able to receive rapid emergency treatment and was transported to the nearest hospital, where she underwent success-

ful lifesaving surgery.

When asked why she wanted to take the call, Sergeant Jones explained that her experience made her compelled to answer the call of duty.

“As a sergeant — and I’m a hostage negotiator, too — certain calls, we should respond to,” she stated. “And any calls dealing with mental illness, dealing with veterans and everything, someone with experience should go.”

Two months later, Jessica reached out to Jones to express her gratitude for saving her life.

“When she heard my voice, my calming voice, she says that’s what prevented her from actually hurting herself,” Jones shared. “I was thinking about her and wondering if she was doing OK. And every now and then, I pick up the phone and I’ll call her just to check up on her to make sure she’s OK.”

Cooking Up Love

MDPD officer dedicates his time to serving children and their families in a special way

Miami-Dade Police Officer Elliott Scholes remembered seeing a meme on social media 12 years ago. Little did he know that it would be the beginning of the next decade — and more — of going above and beyond for the many children in need who would become part of his friends network.

“No matter how strong, how big and how tough you are, if you have a child that hands you a phone, you answer it,” the meme read.

So when he received a call about a boy at the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) who wanted to celebrate his birthday with law enforcement officers, Scholes answered.

RMHC is a nonprofit with programs to improve the health and well-being of children. The charity has three floors and 32 rooms to house families and their ill children who are seeking treatment in the area.

At the birthday party, Scholes spoke to the charity’s volunteer coordinator to learn more about their program. He fell in love with their dedication to providing essentials for children and their families and decided that one visit would not be enough.

Shortly before Thanksgiving Day, he contacted the coordinator to see what they had planned for the holiday.

“She goes, ‘Nothing,’” Scholes recalled. “I’m like, ‘What? What do you mean, nothing? You got to give thanks that you’re at least alive.’”

Scholes asked around to find donations or volunteers to set up a Thanksgiving dinner for the children and families at RMHC. Along with his mother, his wife, Barbara, and several friends, he went to serve up a warm meal for everyone.

“It was like, ‘Wow, this is the first time,’” Scholes shared. “Three turkeys, a ham, a bunch of food, 32 2-liter bottles of soda from my squad. It was nice.”

The dinner was so successful, never mind rewarding, that Scholes decided to make it a monthly event. As more people started participating and volunteering, the idea started picking up steam. And one day, a friend of Scholes’ came to him with the idea to create a Facebook group.

“I go, ‘What do you mean?’” Scholes noted. “[They said] ‘You and your friends.’ So I go, ‘Elliott & Friends. Yeah, OK.’ And that became the name of it.”

Once a month for the next 12 years, Scholes posted on the Elliott & Friends Facebook group to announce the next event and list any required items for people to donate. Sometimes, he’d receive so many responses that he’d have to ask the members to wait until the next month.

“I couldn’t have done this if it weren’t for my friends and the amazing group of volunteers,” Scholes revealed. “Right away, I’d have people say, ‘Count me in. I want [to donate] this. I want that.’ It was amazing.”

With the help of Elliott & Friends, local restaurants and officers from all over Miami-Dade County, Scholes was able to host barbecues, pizza nights, ice cream socials, breakfasts and dinners. Some events had themes, like Cuban or Mexican. People came dressed up for the events, wearing Cubaveras or guayaberas on Cuba Night.

“It was very important to us to make sure that everyone had a

Special Recognition Award
Elliott Scholes
Miami-Dade Police Department



Miami-Dade Police Officer Elliott Scholes with his wife, Barbara.

good, full meal,” Scholes mentioned. “So we made it a point that whenever we did something, we did it in the biggest fashion we could for the families. For them to enjoy it.”

Each event would feed 30 to 50 people. Scholes says that no matter how much the group cooked and prepared, there would be days when they still ran out of food.

“Sadly, we had an abundance of people there,” Scholes explained. “You’ve got anywhere from mom and the ill child to mom, dad, two kids and an extra person [to feed].”

The events might have taken a lot of organization, but Scholes believes that was nothing compared to what the children and families were going through. And that’s what kept him going.

There was no shortage of moments that left Scholes in tears. He remembers seeing the light in children’s eyes when they received their favorite dessert. He remembers how happy the parents were when volunteers would offer to play with their children so the moms and dads could get a break.

But his greatest motivation was seeing children be children. One of his favorite events, the ice cream social, provided children with half-gallons of chocolate, vanilla and strawberry ice cream, along with all the fixings, from crushed Oreos to gummy bears to flavored syrups. The children went nuts.

OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

"This little girl came, and one of the volunteers said, 'Let me guess. You want this, this, this,'" Scholes recalled. "Then I [asked], 'How do you know?' And he goes, 'She's had three of them. She loves it.' And that's what it's all about. That's what they do. They're kids. They should do that."

Apart from all the warm meals and desserts, Elliott & Friends worked to provide families with essentials, as well. Scholes' niece came up with the idea to create baskets for each family that included toothpaste, soaps, deodorants, loofahs and detergent. Twice a year, they'd make 330 baskets to hand out to families or leave on top of their beds.

"It was incredible," Scholes noted. "We did an Easter basket and a Christmas basket. And the families were so appreciative."

In his more than a decade of working with the charity, Scholes says one question everyone asks is why he does it. His answer has always stayed the same.

"It's real simple," Scholes revealed. "Why not do it? And no one could ever contest that."

Scholes was never going to let go of dedicating his time to brightening the lives of the children and families. But when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the subsequent lockdowns shut his group down completely.

The regulations, especially for children who have medical conditions, meant just two volunteers would be allowed inside at a time. Elliott & Friends required upward of 20 people at a time to cook, prepare, clean and set up. Scholes says it would

have been virtually impossible to make do with just two volunteers.

"It was sad and painful," Scholes admitted. "March [2020] was the first month in almost 12 years that we were not able to do it. It devastated me."

Scholes took the remaining contributions and opened an account to donate to RMHC. It was the end of an era, but the memories he made would last forever.

He is grateful for everyone who helped to give 12 years of happiness to children and families of RMHC. Most of all, Scholes thanks his wife for volunteering with him, side by side, every step of the way.

"I could not have done this without her," Scholes shared. "She's amazing."

So when Scholes learned that he'd been given a Special Recognition award by the South Florida PBA for his work at RMHC, he credited the award to his wife and Elliot & Friends.

"It was never me," Scholes noted. "It was us. I owe it all to everybody. And to be recognized for this work is humbling in ways you can't imagine. It's rewarding."

Scholes plans to retire in three years and move to the West Coast. Even across the country, he wants to continue to help RMHC alongside his wife.

"As a retiree, you want to make your time count," Scholes clarified. "And I told my wife, 'We need to find a Ronald McDonald House over there.'"

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A Good Cigar Night

Cigar Social shows that where there's smoke, there's the unity that makes the PBA great

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Members who gathered for the South Florida PBA Cigar Social on June 23 enjoyed an aroma they had not sensed in a long time and certainly needed. Lounging at tables inside and outside the union headquarters, each taste of the cigar allowed them to inhale brotherhood and exhale stress.

The cloud of smoke was not as thick as the cloud of camaraderie, for the Cigar Social brought back one of the PBA's most important assets. No public scrutiny or anti-police sentiments here. No worries about contracts or grievances. Just a smokin' hot night of what makes being a member great.

"It's the ambiance of being around other officers where you could let your guard down, talk freely and enjoy a cigar," confirmed Alex Munoz, the PBA's newly ordained sergeant-at-arms, who coordinated the event. "Maybe 90 percent of the people there were either police or fire. So, you could sit down at a table, light a good cigar and the conversation starts. And you end up making friends."

The proceeds of the event bolstered the PBA's Love Fund. There was a bit of a somber side, considering hours before the event, the Champlain Towers South had just collapsed, and Miami-Dade PD officers were immediately shifted to the Alpha-Bravo schedule of working 12-hour shifts with no days off.

But even after the tragedy transpired, members still reached out to Munoz to assure him they were coming. They needed this night to feel this love. That love makes this union so strong, and it was out in full force at the Cigar Social.

"If you don't have that, then you don't have a union," Munoz declared. "If you have unity within the members, you have that human aspect where you can say, 'Hey, listen, I'm just like you.' Just sitting down and being able to talk to them and telling them, 'We're here for you. We really are.' The reasons why we're here are to help you out and to look out for the members."

The main attraction, of course, was the cigars. South Florida PBA President Steadman Stahl certainly knows a good cigar, and he found a vendor to acquire a special blend he had wrapped with PBA-logoed rings.

Rich Tschernia, the vice president of Cross Country Mortgage, added to the ambiance by bringing a cigar-rolling aficionado to the event. PBA members across the state and country have enjoyed these cigars courtesy of Tschernia, who is one of the union's – and law enforcement's – most dedicated benefactors.

Nothing goes better with a good cigar than the opportunity to drink a few toasts. Big Cypress Distillery in Miami provided the beverages, with one of its owners on hand to mix up his best flavors for members to sample.

"He's like, 'Hey man, I just want to serve you guys and take care of you guys,'" Munoz noted. "And I was like, 'Wow.'"

It was that kind of night. Nobody had to be subjected to any criticism, and the camaraderie was augmented by a side order of respect. Accordingly, the post-event reviews asked one question.

"Everybody wanted to know when we are doing this again," Munoz shared. "Everybody was just so happy."



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Family Matters

South Florida PBA scholarship winners make their law enforcement parents proud

■ BY KAREN JENKINS

Mia Bermudez's father, John Bermudez with the Miami-Dade Police Department, has been a law enforcement officer since before she was born. So have her uncle, her aunt and her other uncle.

And it doesn't stop there. Her brother is currently in the academy, along with her cousin.

When it comes to law enforcement, it's safe to say Bermudez is well-versed on the sacrifices that a family of officers must make in pursuit of the public good.

So when her father sent her the application for the 2021 South Florida PBA scholarships and told her "just to give it a shot," Bermudez knew the exact topic that she wanted to share about for the essay prompt.

The prompt asked applicants to write, in 750 words or less, about growing up in a law enforcement family and what it means in this day and age of negative perceptions of police in the media, along with how that will shape their college experience.

"My experience is kind of crazy, actually," she expressed. "I wrote an essay about my life and being in a law enforcement family and I sent it in, hoping for the best."

Just a few weeks later, the South Florida PBA sent Bermudez an email inviting her to the office for a board meeting. At that meeting, which she attended with her father, Bermudez found out that she was being awarded the top honor of a gold scholarship.

"It was weird, it was crazy," she proclaimed about that evening. "It surprised me, because I didn't think I would win first place. Like maybe, 'Oh, you applied,' and that's it, but I didn't think I'd be able to get first."

Bermudez, who will be attending Florida State University as a freshman in August, has opted to study exercise physiology on the pre-med track. Despite her lifelong dream of working in the medical field, Bermudez has always had a deep appreciation for law enforcement officers.

"Everyone, when they're in pre-K or something, they'd be all singing, like, little nursery rhymes, and I'm there singing the bad boys theme song from 'Cops,'"



Mia Bermudez earned first place in the 2021 South Florida PBA scholarship awards.

she laughed. "I've always grown up in that environment. I've always seen my dad in uniform in the house, and I'm like, 'Oh bye, Papi, be safe.' I was always on top of that."

The PBA offers annual scholarships for active members' children who plan to be a part-time or full-time student at an accredited two-year or four-year college. The South Florida PBA Scholarship Committee reviews all applications and selects a first, second and third

place winner, along with other honorary awards.

This is a continuing effort for children of members to pursue higher education, which resulted in more than \$43,000 of scholarship awards to 81 applicants in 2021.

"It means a great deal to me, because college can get expensive," Bermudez explained. "The fact that I ended up blessed enough to have received a scholarship, it just makes me at a loss for words. College



The second-place scholarship award was given to Kerry Guyton.

is a great expense on my family, and it's a great feeling to have at least a little bit of a break."

Joining Bermudez with top honors are second-place winner Kerry Guyton, whose mother is Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation Officer Renitha Guyton, and third-place winner Andrew Garcia, whose father is Elio Garcia with the Miami-Dade Police Department.

Guyton will be attending Edward Waters University as a freshman in August, while Garcia currently attends St. Thomas University as a junior.

One of Garcia's most prevalent memories of childhood is going to bed each night praying his father would come home safely by the time he woke up the next morning.

"I was scared growing up in a law enforcement family — my dad used to work night shifts," he shared. "Every day, I'd say, 'Dad, be safe at work.' Kiss him goodbye, say, 'Love you.' Every day was stressful on me, but I knew in my heart he would come home safe."

If Garcia had decided to pursue a career in law enforcement, he would

choose to work with a SWAT team. He's currently majoring in sports administration and dreams of working on the business side of the Miami Dolphins.

He's thankful to the PBA for the contribution it's made to allow him to stay at school and play on the university baseball team.

"This money will go to my tuition and my room and board," he described. "I greatly appreciate the PBA and everything they do for us and for giving out as many scholarships as they did to all these students."

Second-place winner Guyton wrote an essay about growing up with both his father — who is a retired law enforcement veteran of 35 years — and his mother on the job.

"I don't even know what goes on in the jail cells," Guyton shared about his mother, who currently works at Turner Knight Correctional Center. "When I first heard about it, like when I was little, I was scared every night thinking about, 'What's going to happen to my mom?' But she's a strong woman. She always gets the job done."

Guyton plans to put his scholarship



money toward studying psychology, because he's interested in learning how individuals' minds work. His hardworking parents encouraged him to pursue higher education, and the addition of the PBA scholarship will help ease some financial strain throughout his studies.

"I'm very grateful that the PBA awarded me this scholarship," Guyton expressed. "There are a lot of students that really need scholarship money, including me. So I'm glad that this will benefit me for the future. School comes first and grades come first, and I'm very grateful that I'm being awarded this scholarship."

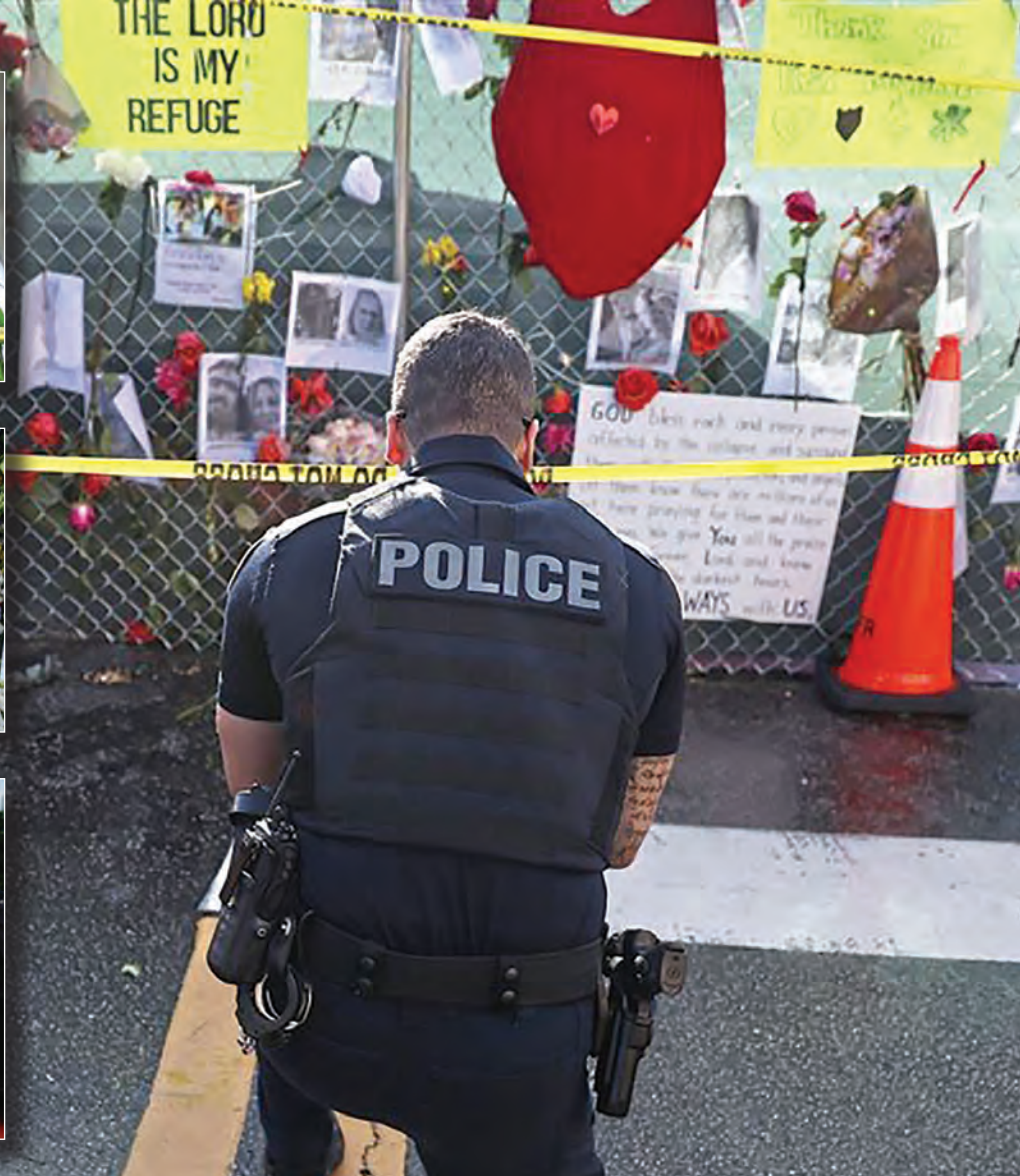
Bermudez agreed, and promises that she will put the PBA's generous investment to good use. She's proud of her law enforcement roots and will continue telling stories about her family of officers when she begins attending college in the fall.

"I'm extremely thankful to the PBA, because there's people every day who are struggling to pay for college," she shared. "It's a great expense, and it's just nice to know that there's a community out there that's willing to take that off with some relief."



Andrew Garcia was honored with the third-place scholarship award.





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A 'Heller' of a career

Longtime Miami-Dade officer honored with Hall of Fame induction

BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

Irving "Red" Heller stood by his plaque that had just been hung in the Florida Law Enforcement Officers' Hall of Fame as part of the class of 2021. The 43-year veteran of the Miami-Dade Police Department posed for this photo pointing at the words beneath his endearing image that captured a snapshot of his career.

To fully detail Heller's all-encompassing and far-reaching career would require the description to be continued on another plaque or two. Or 10. It's impossible to explain the accomplishments, contributions and dedication that went into 46 years of being the consummate public servant (with 42 years of military and military reserve service on the side).

And paying tribute to Red could fill all the pages of this magazine. Of course, that would be the last thing Heller would want, to sound braggadocio, for it was never about that. It was about the service to the community, sisters and brothers in law enforcement and a grand litany of organizations he served.

Picking an accomplishment to be the defining moment of a man who started in patrol in 1958 with what was known as the Sheriff's Road Patrol is not possible. He ascended through the ranks to sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major, district commander, colonel, chief and his last nine years with MDPD as assistant director.

When reflecting on such an illustrious career, Heller shared that he took just nine sick days in 43 years.

"I could not wait to go to work every day because every day was a productive day," Heller confirmed. "It was something I could do for the betterment of myself and the betterment of the community. It was an honor to serve the community, and I loved it."

This is what a hall-of-fame career looks like. Though he worked traffic detail and investigations in homicide and supervised sexual battery and robbery units, his contributions to raising morale, community relations, fundraising and just giving of himself at every turn were priceless and legendary.

Heller created a legacy that underscores how policing is so much more than arresting bad guys. Even at 88, he continues to serve as president of the Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County, sergeant-at-arms and chaplain for the Miami-Dade Chiefs Association and trustee for the Town of Davie Fire Pension Board.

"You have to be a special type of person to sacrifice the time and put yourself in harm's way," Heller asserted. "It's more than a desire to do your job. It's a desire to help. It's more than just working. It's being an integral part of the community."

Anybody who has worked for MDPD during the past 50 years knows Heller. Or a member of his family. His son Randy was on for 36 years and retired as assistant director. His daughter Wendy served for 30 years. Randy's wife, Janna, served 30 years and retired as a captain. And now his grandson is five years into his career with the department.

Heller will also always be known as a pioneer. He co-founded the South Florida Shomrim Society in 1984 to serve the needs of Jewish officers. That led to creating the chaplaincy program in



Irving "Red" Heller stands with his plaque as he is inducted into the Florida Law Enforcement Officers' Hall of Fame in May.

Below, Irving "Red" Heller (center) with, from left, sons Randy and Craig, daughter Wendy and girlfriend Rhoda Stern.



the department in 1997 to offer confidential support to officers.

Of his many community-oriented policing contributions, Heller's most impactful might have been introducing the department's Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program when he was in charge of the Intracoastal District. His daughter also served as a DARE officer.

And for 11 years, Heller was the driving force behind the Miami-Dade Magnum Force, a football team of officers that used to play the famous "Pig Bowl" before 40,000 fans in the Orange Bowl. He loved this not just because he was a tough lineman at Miami Beach Senior High who was inducted into the school's hall of fame but because of what it did for department morale and that it raised more than \$1 million for various charities.

But the greatest testament to Heller might have been best explained by what he said during his Florida Law Enforcement Officers' Hall of Fame induction speech on May 15. In the 63 years since he first became a police officer, his commitment and dedication to what makes the job great have not waned even one iota.

"We had a purpose, and our purpose was to be honorable and protect and serve our citizens," Red said. "I'm here to represent the thousands of women and men wearing the badge of honor, going out to serve their communities every day."

The Famed Sheriff

As one of Monroe County's greatest public servants, John Spottswood's career was larger than life

■ BY MITCHELL KRUGEL

When President Harry Truman and First Lady Bess vacationed in Key West at the Little White House in the early 1950s, they forged a friendship with Monroe County Sheriff John Spottswood. Future President Richard Nixon and wife Pat dined with the Spottswoods a few times in 1962. In fact, Nixon wrote in the Spottswood's guest book, "Best steaks ever."

The guest list for backyard barbecues at their home included John Glenn, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Godfrey, John Foster Dulles, Admiral William F. Halsey, several Florida governors, senators and congressmen. His grandparents entertained Ernest Hemingway, Lou Gehrig and General Omar Bradley in that same backyard. President Kennedy recognized him with the "For Service of Special Merit" honor in 1962.

But much of that pales in comparison to what Sheriff Spottswood did for his department, his community and law enforcement. His work in the profession when he served as sheriff from 1952 to 1963 made such an impact that he was included posthumously in the Florida Law Enforcement Officers' Hall of Fame class of 2021.

"He showed us how to be loyal, how to love, how to achieve and how not to be afraid when the truth was our standard," Spottswood's son, Robert, expressed during the speech he made at the induction ceremonies on May 15. "He showed us that truth in strength and loyalty is the noble path."

Rarely has a day gone by since Spottswood passed away in 1975 when somebody hasn't told a story about what he accomplished as sheriff. One of the favorite tales tells about how he had one gun and one rusty pair of handcuffs when he took over the sheriff's department.

Truth be told, there wasn't a whole lot more. The only sheriff's office to cover the entire 120-plus miles of the Keys back then was in Key West. Spottswood opened substations in Marathon and Plantation Key and began to tame the territory.

It was a rough-and-tumble place where the Bolita runners had a mob-like presence with the way they orchestrated this Cuban numbers racket. Spottswood started enforcing the law and putting a stop to the unsavory activities that came with the Bolita.

"I remember him sleeping with a gun beside his bed because of the threats that were going on with that," Spottswood's eldest son Jack commented.

Spottswood had a big presence with the Florida Sheriff's Association, serving as its president in 1957. Through his work with the association, he helped establish the Florida Sheriff's Boys Ranch in Suwanee to provide opportunities for children in trouble with the law. It eventually became the Youth Ranch and served both girls and boys.

He was also renowned for proposing the first statewide law enforcement standards, which included standardizing the design of sheriff's office uniforms and colors. Such forward thinking is credited with turning sheriff's departments into professional organizations.

He was a renowned civil rights activist who hired Nathan Tynes as the first African-American detective in Key West. He started the civil defense in Monroe County to lead the rebuilding of the Keys after Hurricane Donna struck in 1960.

Jack Spottswood noted how his father worked to keep politics out of the sheriff's office, which he accomplished by being so devoted to the community. He brought the first radio station to the



Former Monroe County Sheriff John Spottswood's children were in Tallahassee on May 15 to celebrate their father's induction into the Florida Law Enforcement Officers' Hall of Fame.



Spottswood, center in dark suit, became friends with President Harry Truman when he vacationed in Key West.

Keys, which is how he forged his friendship with Truman. And he brought cable television to the area in the 1970s.

His daughter, Fawnie, always repeated one of her father's favorite sayings. "He used to say, 'I don't have a hobby. I have a town. And my town is my hobby.'"

Spottswood was a bit larger than life. Not only did he receive an award of special merit from President Kennedy, he had a cameo role in the 1963 movie "PT 109" about Kennedy's heroism when his Navy vessel was sliced in half by a Japanese destroyer during World War II.

After leaving the sheriff's office, Spottswood went on to serve four terms in the Florida Senate. His support for law enforcement continued in the legislature, where he also became a powerful presence. During one session, 13 of the 14 bills he wrote passed.

Jack, Robert, Fawnie and his other son, Bill, were all present in Tallahassee on May 15 to represent their father. Their tribute was simple, direct and impactful, just the way dad would have liked it. Just the way he did his job as a sheriff.

"He was a compassionate disciplinarian and he wanted people to follow orders. He wanted to enforce the law," Jack praised. "He was just trying in all ways to do something to improve the community. He liked to get things done. He was more concerned with the result than taking the credit."



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Members Only Section

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

Members honor fallen officers during National Police Week

The 40th Annual Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Ceremony is a time-honored tradition that allows law enforcement officers to not only honor their fellow colleagues, but also honor fallen public servants across the country. Each year, agencies from all over South Florida hold ceremonies to pay proper tribute to these officers.

The 2021 National Police Week was especially powerful because of many agencies losing their own to the COVID-19 pandemic. Aventura PD, North Miami PD, South Miami PD and Miami-Dade PD paid special tribute to officers killed or disabled in the line of duty through heartfelt ceremonies and honorary videos. Here is a look at the 2021 National Police Week:

Aventura PD



The 2021 Peace Officers Memorial Day was particularly emotional, as dozens of Aventura PD officers and local citizens gathered in silence to overlook the ceremonies and devote flowers during National Police Week.

North Miami PD



North Miami PD paid special tribute to three fallen officers, Sergeant Carl W. Mertes, Detective Sergeant Steven E. Bauer and Sergeant Lynette Hodge, on May 4.



MDCR Memorial Week

The Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Command Staff and Honor Guard took part in the ceremony to pay tribute to the 151 fallen officers in Miami-Dade County. Jairo Bravo was added to the memorial service after the former MDCR officer died of COVID-19 complications.



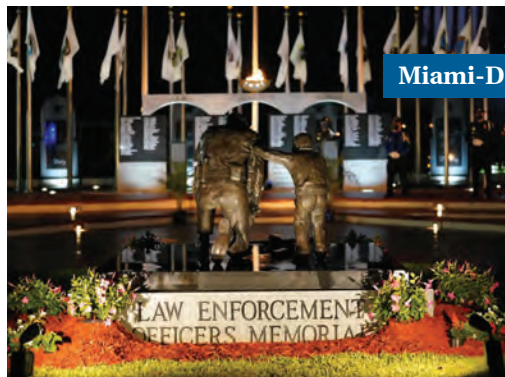
MDCR Project Hero

The Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Honor Guard participated in its annual Project Hero ceremony by placing flags and flowers at each fallen officer's resting location. The MDCR visited the resting locations of Officers Juan Llanes, Jairo Bravo, Leonard Trudeau, Theodore Lozada, Rosa Echevarria and Dillon Duncan Brooke.



South Miami PD

Five South Miami PD officers headed to Tropical Park on May 6, providing a strong force during the annual Peace Officers Memorial Day.



Miami-Dade PD

Miami-Dade PD participated in ceremonies and honored fellow officers well into the night at Tropical Park on May 6.

MCSO members jump at chance to do good for the community

Monroe County Sheriff's Office deputies never turn down an opportunity to help, whether it's a child, an animal or the world. From saving a kitten to buying a child a new bike to collecting more than 1,000 pounds of trash, MCSO works to create a safer, better and more fun community for all.

MCSO Middle Keys Deputy Jonathan Rodriguez received a call about a kitten running close to traffic on the Seven Mile Bridge at 9:30 a.m. on May 11. He found a dead adult cat, which he suspected was the kitten's mother, in the roadway at the base of the bridge. Rodriguez saw the kitten run toward his patrol car and thought it had exited the bridge, back to safety.

Rodriguez left the scene to respond to other calls. But at 6 p.m., Sergeant Joel Slough heard a cat meowing from under Rodriguez's car. Deputy Frank Westerbund saw the kitten sitting on the rear axle. Day- and night-shift deputies went to work trying to rescue the kitten, using cat food, until both rear tires had to be removed from the car. Finally, Animal Control Officer Aryel Del Cueto safely removed the kitten. Nicknamed "Pawcifer

Lucky," the kitten is now resting at the Florida Keys SPCA.

Continuing the series of good deeds, the law enforcement community responded after a 15-year-old boy, Victor Espinosa-Rosello, had his bike stolen. His mother wrote a post on Facebook expressing her dismay, and U.S. Merchant Marine Captain Jeff Frankel saw the post. He called MCSO Sheriff Rick Ramsay, who said he was on board to help. Retired Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Officer Erik Steinmetz commented on the post to contribute as well. The trio surprised Espinosa-Rosello with a new bike at the Sheriff's Office headquarters on June 8.

MCSO Lower Keys Detective Antonio Guieb also wanted to do his part to help children in the county. He created and hosted a free football camp on May 29 and spent the day showing children how to have fun while exercising. The camp drew 100 kids who were happy to learn and play with a law enforcement officer.

To top it off, MCSO Upper Keys Sergeant James Hager and deputies went to Card Sound Road to collect trash off the



streets. They were able to remove more than 1,140 pounds of trash in one sitting, then smiled for photos, feeling accomplished about helping to beautify the community.

Miami-Dade, Miami Gardens and North Miami officers rally to stop gun violence

Law enforcement officers, community members and local organizations joined victims and mothers to gather in a show of support for the Stop the Silence Against Gun Violence Peace March on June 16.

Miami-Dade PD, Miami Gardens PD and North Miami PD partnered with Crystal Foster We Stand 4 Justice Inc. to host the peace march. The meeting point was at Ark of the City Inc., where members of the community-based organization rallied the crowd to put an end to the recent wave of violent shootings in the community.

Miami Heat player Udonis Haslem went on stage to tell the public that if they see something, they should say something. Officers also took the stage to urge the public to do their part in reporting incidents and building a safer community.

"I'm not up here as an [officer]," Miami-Dade PD Director Alfredo "Freddy"



Ramirez III said to the crowd. "I'm up here as a dad. I got four kids. Hard work and focus, that's what we're all going to do here together, as a community, as one, to stop this gun violence."

Once the speeches were finished, the crowd marched through the county for the innocent lives lost to gun violence. The march for peace was dedicated to children who were shot and killed — at least six children since 2016, with two killed this year. On the march route, the crowd made a stop at 55th Street near Interstate 95, where 6-year-old Chassidy Saunders was killed by gun violence in



January.

Law enforcement officials and the community walked hand in hand, demonstrating that they are fed up with the ongoing violence. Even members of the Miami Hurricanes football team participated in the march. They walked until they reached Range Park and completed the march for peace.

"We were proud to join our neighbors, law enforcement partners and community leaders to walk in unity against gun violence," said North Miami PD Chief Larry Juriga. "Together, as one team, we can stop the violence, bring about peace and save lives."

Two PBA members move quickly to save a life

While off duty at a local gym, Miami-Dade Police Officer Giovanni Joseph and Miramar Police Officer Dwayne Campbell rushed to help save Trevor Grant, a man who collapsed and went into cardiac arrest while playing a pickup game of basketball. Once the officers determined that Grant had no pulse, they reverted to their medical emergency training. Campbell ran to retrieve the gym's automated external defibrillator. While Joseph prepped the defibrillator, Campbell gave Grant CPR.

Grant's mother, Tamika, credited the officers for helping Grant avoid brain damage through their swift actions.

"Because of the acts of Officers Joseph and Campbell, Trevor is here today with zero brain damage," she said. "His mind is completely functioning. As far as that, if it wasn't for them and also the gym, which had the defibrillator available for them to use on Trevor, if it weren't for that, Trevor would not be here today."

Grant was able to express his gratitude to the officers later, once he was released from the hospital.

"I was extremely thankful and grateful, because I've played basketball with



these two guys for years and I never knew they were police officers," he said.

"They were there for me at the right time. They did what needed to be done."

Bal Harbour members commemorate elderly on Mother's Day



On May 7, several gracious mothers and longtime residents were delightfully surprised with floral arrangements courtesy of the Bal Harbour PD, in celebration of Mother's Day.



Mayor and city council praise Doral officers

On May 12, in honor of National Police Week, Mayor Bermudez and the Doral City Council recognized local law enforcement officers for their extensive efforts to keep the public safe during the pandemic.



Miami-Dade members paint mural for students

In honor of Autism Acceptance Month, the Miami-Dade PD partnered with Somerset Academy Inc. and Home Depot to paint a mural for students and staff.

Key West officers congratulate three Police Explorers



The Key West PD's Police Athletic League congratulated three Police Explorers who are graduating from Key West High School. The three students will be pursuing careers in law enforcement once college begins.

MDCR officers prevent inmate from committing suicide

Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department Officer S. Andre observed a 27-year-old inmate walking upstairs, where the inmate shouldn't be, and ordered him to return downstairs in October 2020.

Andre thought the inmate had followed his directions. But seconds later, without warning, the inmate tied a sheet around his neck and to the second-floor railing, then climbed over the rail.

After calling for emergency assistance, Andre rushed to the second floor to try to rescue the inmate. Officers E. Sanvil and C. Jacob Jr. responded to the call, and with the help of other inmates, they tried to lift the victim and prevent him from a successful suicide.

The group effort was successful. The responding officers and staff administered first aid to the inmate until paramedics arrived. The inmate was transported to a local hospital and has since recovered and been returned to MDCR custody.

For their quick action and lifesaving response, the Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police presented Officer of the Month awards to the three officers on June 1, 2021. MDCR Director



Daniel Junior praised the officers for rendering aid and keeping the inmate from committing suicide.

"Being a correctional officer is an incredibly challenging job," Junior explained in a Facebook post. "But our staff

are committed to keeping the inmates in our custody safe. Our correctional officers are trained to never hesitate in providing first aid and to respond to life-threatening situations. Their quick thinking made all the difference."

MCDR members celebrate graduation of fallen brother's daughter

The daughter of fallen officer Alexey Aguilar, Angelica, graduated from high school on June 2. Officer Aguilar passed away two months ago due to severe COVID-19 complications. Aguilar's colleagues Jessica Herrera, Shyller Hyppolite and Brandon Bailey looked on in support as Angelica walked across the stage at Miami-Dade Fair and Exposition to accept her diploma from American High School.

The three officers congratulated Angelica, proclaiming that her "father would be so proud of her" and that he is "smiling down on her." Angelica plans on continuing her education next fall at Broward College.



Sunny Isles Beach officers celebrate D.A.R.E graduation

Sunny Isles Beach PD celebrated its program's fifth-grade graduation on April 30. The program, which focuses on providing students with the skills to recognize and resist social pressures to experiment with alcohol, tobacco and other harmful substances, was led by Officer Ruiz.



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