

FLORIDA SHERIFFS ALL POINTS BULLETIN



VOLUME 17 • NUMBER 1 • SPRING 2007

Two Honored as “2006 Correctional Officers of the Year”

The Florida Sheriffs Association presents two major awards each year – the Deputy Sheriff of the Year and Correctional Officer of the Year. With more than 30,000 employees working for Sheriffs in this state, we have quite a pool of candidates to draw from.

As we know, the job of protecting the public is a difficult one, and our deputies and correctional officers face a very real threat to their own personal safety when confronting a suspect. And though the circumstances in which injury or death of a suspect are avoided far outweigh those in which a death occurs, the controversy-focused public tends to hear only about the minority...those that end in tragedy.

The story behind our 2006 Correctional Officer of the Year award is a chance to highlight the other side. It's an example of an incident that could have very easily ended in death – of the prisoner and/or the officers confronting her. But through quick actions and wise response, tragedy was avoided.

As the story goes

On Sunday, January 29, 2006, at



Brevard County Corrections Deputy Frederick Mendiola (left) and Corrections Corporal Belden Ferguson (right) are congratulated by FSA Vice President Baker County Sheriff Joey Dobson. Thanks to their quick actions and wise response during an attempted prisoner escape, tragedy was avoided.

Brevard County Corrections Corporal Belden Ferguson and Corrections Deputy Frederick Mendiola foil an attempted escape, avoid injuries

approximately 2:00 in the afternoon, a prisoner transport van pulled up to the back entrance of the Brevard County Jail, where

about 1,500 inmates are housed. The transport deputy was helping prisoners out of the vehicle and into the booking port, when 27-year-old inmate Jamie McEvers jumped into the driver's seat of the van, started the ignition and began racing toward the closed security gate.

The van, out of control and moving at a high speed, crashed into the sally port fence. After ramming it several times, the van finally

penetrated the perimeter and – surprisingly – was still operational.

Inmate McEvers continued driving, sideswiping a parked maintenance van and driving into another outer sally port fence. In her quest to be free, McEvers showed no regard for the life and safety of the officers and civilian staff in proximity to her escape route.

Immediately following the call for assistance, Corrections Corporal Belden Ferguson and Corrections Deputy Frederick Mendiola grabbed two shotguns and raced after the van. Deputy Mendiola fired three rounds into the front driver's tire in an attempt to stop the escape, while Corporal Ferguson maintained cover on the suspect.

With the front tire now flat, the van

Continued on page 14

Mental Illness on the Streets: Protection Through Training

The Florida Sheriffs Association has long supported legislation and other positive developments that have helped families, communities and law enforcement deal with those who are mentally ill. A partnership that Sheriffs supported in its early stages is the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT).

CIT training was first offered in Florida in March of 1999. Since then, thousands of law-enforcement personnel throughout the state have taken the 40-hour course. It has been credited with arming officers with information and techniques that save lives – including their own.

The Pinellas County Mental Health Coalition introduced the program in this state in 1997. Comprised of mental health providers, advocates, law enforcement, persons with mental illness and others, the PCMHC reports that the actions of CIT-trained officers is recognizable on the front line.

Melissa Hutton, a nurse who works in the centralized Baker Act Receiving Facility in Pinellas County, says it is making a difference in communities, families and individuals affected by mental illness. She recently wrote a letter commending the program. Her correspondence stated:

“CIT deputies and officers are a special breed, and we are very lucky to have them in our community. As we all know, the mental health field is not for everyone, so the law-enforcement officers who complete the

training...become even more of an asset to the police force. It really does make a difference. The training provides basic but detailed knowledge regarding the signs and symptoms of psychiatric disorders, names of medications, and other useful information that they can use in their daily interactions with the mentally ill.

Being employed as a nurse in one of the community mental health facilities, I have had a lot of interaction with the deputies and officers. (I personally) was inspired to participate in the training due to the difference I've noticed in the CIT trained officers and deputies bringing consumers into the facility...It was wonderful to see how much they evolved throughout the training. I have heard many stories of how the training has impacted the officers and deputies in the field. When they bring clients who need to be hospitalized, it is great to not only hear about the changes but to see the change in how they interact with the mental health (patients).

It is refreshing and rewarding when the officers and deputies report, 'Hey, I used my CIT training and, wow, what a difference. It really works! Before I would have gone into the same situation and the outcome could have been totally different or somebody could have gotten hurt.'

I would like to encourage each law-enforcement agency to please send your deputies and officers to CIT training, especially if they are interested in attending. The more CIT trained individuals that we have

in our community, the better. I would also like to say thank you to all of those special law-enforcement officers who have been through CIT. All of your hard work and dedication really does make a difference.”

For more information about CIT training, visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness Web site, <http://www.nami.org>; call the information helpline: 1-800-950-6264, or write to Donald Turnbaugh, NAMI of Pinellas County, via e-mail: Turn2cit@aol.com.

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By Julie S. Bettinger



Photo by Larry Cobharp

Connecting

One of the perks of this job is hearing stories about people connecting as a result of stories we've published.

Sometimes it's networking between agencies. Other times, people reach across state lines to learn more about what Florida is doing to combat crime, based on a program we've spotlighted.

Occasionally, we really hit the jackpot: someone credits us with something extraordinary and life-changing. That's apparently what happened as a result of a story we published in our sister publication, *The Sheriff's Star* late last year. The story, titled, "Help Wanted: Wives of Law Enforcement Learning to Cope," exposed a growing problem among law-enforcement families. It explained how a law-enforcement career can cause unique stressors in marriage and family life and increase the risk of infidelity, divorce and/or addictions.

Loneliness, fear, alienation

Being married to a cop comes with a unique job description. Spouses say they have to live every day in fear of that visit from fellow officers or the Sheriff, telling them their loved one has been shot, stabbed or killed by a drunken driver. And they struggle to understand the difficulties of the job and how the stress affects their law-officer spouse. Unfortunately, they often will suffer alone, as there are few organized support efforts for families of law-enforcement officers.

Trilby Brannon, who lives in Brevard County, started an organization called "Bridges of Hope for Families, Inc.," (www.bridgesofhopeonline.com) to bring law-enforcement families together to share their stories, learn coping skills and pick up tips for their law-enforcement spouses, too.

Brannon's own story is one of desperation and courage. Married to a narc agent, she says her husband, Tony, was

required to live two separate lives – one with the personality of a drug dealer and the other as a family man.

Combine this "split personality" requirement with the strong bond they have to their fellow officers, almost as family, and you have a recipe for disaster. Spouses often feel alienated and forgotten.

Brannon says through Bridges of Hope, they are able to raise awareness, educate and network with the families to make them stronger.

In the *Star* article, we also told the story of Kristi Nygren, who lives in Pinellas County.

Nygren had been married to her high-school sweetheart, Jerry, for six years before he joined the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. She said she suddenly saw this person who was her best friend become detached and absent from her emotionally. Nygren says that even the birth of their two children didn't change him, and she became depressed.

After her husband was involved in a fatal shooting of a suspect, her life began to spiral downward. It triggered emotions she couldn't handle.

She started drinking and became addicted to prescription medication and eventually was arrested. Amazingly, the event that could have devastated their marriage managed to save it. Her husband stuck by her side, and she says their marriage and family are stronger as a result.

By the number of calls she receives after telling her story publicly, Nygren says she's learned that addiction and chemical coping are not unusual among law-enforcement families. "And the divorce rate is a huge problem," she says.

Following *The Sheriff's Star* article, she estimates she received three dozen calls from women who recognized themselves in her story. She became a sounding board, of sorts, and tried to encourage healthier coping skills.

Many times, she admits, they're not ready to stop their addiction. "But, at least they will know they're not alone,"

she says.

If she can help save just one life, one marriage, it's worth the pain and embarrassment she suffered through her ordeal. It's one of the reasons she thinks God saved her, despite the quantity of drugs she was taking.

Addiction ends in one of three ways, Nygren says: sobriety, death or incarceration. So she says she'll keep telling her story and hearing others tell theirs, in the hopes of changing the outcome.

Take an honest look in the mirror – do you see yourself in their stories? Do you now someone else who fits this description? Find friends in the struggle by contacting Kristi Nygren via e-mail: kristi2@tampabay.rr.com, or visiting the Bridges of Hope for Families Web site: www.bridgesofhopeonline.com/. We'd like to count you among the success stories.

Julie

Florida Sheriffs Association Calendar of Events 2007



Please check FSA's Web site for updated locations and registration: www.fsheriffs.org

- Florida Jail Inspector Re-certification Course, Lee County, June 5
- Administrative Management Training Seminar, Daytona Beach Hilton, June 10-13
- National Sheriffs Association 2007 Annual Conference & Exhibition, Salt Lake City, UT, June 23-27
- Florida Jail Inspector Re-certification Course, Leon County, July 17
- FSA Annual Summer Conference, Sawgrass Marriott, Ponte Vedra, July 29-August 1
- FSA's Annual Car Evaluation and Fleet Management Training Conference, Plaza Resort & Spa, Daytona Beach, September 24-27
- FSA Jail Administrators' Workshop, Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, December 3-5

E-mail Abuse and Prevention

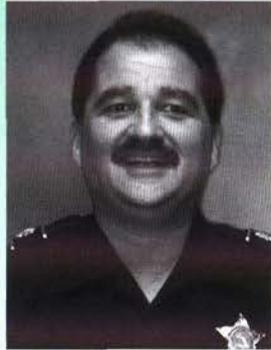
By Maj. Stephen J. Reuther
St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office

When we arrive at work, we sit at our computer and check our e-mail. Throughout the day while in the field, we check it on our laptop. When we arrive at home at the end of our shift, we check it again. E-mail truly has become the norm in society. It also can be widely abused, as legal cases in the state of Florida have shown. There are some steps that law enforcement should take to prevent similar risks in their agencies.

The days of handwriting a letter or a police report are over. We are a generation surrounded by technology, where computers have replaced the pen and paper. Computers are everywhere in the work place. We see them in our office, patrol vehicles and homes. Electronic report writing, warrant and driver's license checks are at our fingertips. Also at the tips of our fingers, is the availability to send and receive e-mail. E-mail started in the 1960s with the utilization of stand-alone computers that were placed in corporate offices. These computers could send only one message at a time and were limited by certain users. In 1993, American Online and Delphi perfected the e-mail system as we know it today.

With the utilization of e-mail also comes abuse of the technology. For example, in November of 2006, a pornographic e-mail scandal

erupted at the Orlando Police Department. The allegations were that two police lieutenants allegedly sent pornographic e-mails to five persons within the agency via a



Maj. Stephen J. Reuther

department-owned computer. The five officers who were involved in the case are seeking civil action against the department. Though investigated two years ago by the internal affairs unit, the case was not reported publicly until the recent testimony of the lieutenants.

According to Officer.com (2006), "Orlando Police Chief Mike McCoy denied there was a cover-up. He stated he's letting the investigation take its course and he'll take appropriate action at the appropriate time."

CareerBuilder bust

In December 2006, another e-mail scandal erupted at the Port St. Lucie Police Department. The "Monk-E-mail" system from CareerBuilder.com was allegedly abused. The Web site features a virtual monkey that can talk. It's programmed by typing a message in your computer; the monkey translates your message into audible words. The message can be saved and sent to others via e-mail. CareerBuilder.com developed this service for entertainment purposes; however in the Port St. Lucie case, the monkey went wild. Allegations are that five detectives from the department's special investigation unit utilized the department's computer system to abuse an appli-

cation from the Web site. An internal affairs investigation revealed that the detectives programmed the monkey to say racial slurs including "tar baby, spear chucker and yard ape."

Though the officers programmed the monkey to say these things, they never e-mailed it to anyone. The inappropriate remarks went on for 11 hours over a period of two days. As a result, two detectives received a five-day suspension and three detectives were forced to resign from their positions. Port St. Lucie Police Chief John Skinner was quoted on Officer.com as saying, "One can only assume that these officers participated in such idiotic behavior with the assumption that they were under the cloak of anonymity despite their assignments in the area of trust."

What's your policy?

Most law-enforcement agencies have policies and procedures governing the use of e-mail. These generally include a statement that the employer has the sole right to inspect all equipment, including the contents of communications. If e-mail messages in question are deleted from the system, they can be retrieved by the utilization of forensic software.

Florida Public Records Law 119 also states that the general public can obtain business e-mail messages. Florida State Constitution Article 1, section 24 states, "All persons have the right to inspect or copy any public record made and received in the connection with the official business." The only exception to this rule is a

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document that involves an active criminal investigation.

It's clear that e-mail abuse is prevalent and problematic in private businesses and even in the military. Consider the following:

1. Dow Chemical terminated 40 employees after they were caught shopping online
2. Compaq fired 20 employees for logging onto adult Internet sites
3. The U.S. Navy disciplined more than 500 employees at a Pennsylvania supply depot for sending sexually explicit e-mails

Suggested prevention

With liability and litigation issues in everyday life, law enforcement administrators must take an aggressive approach when it comes to e-mail abuse. If they

haven't already, agency administrators should adopt a policy on the use of e-mail. At minimum, it should include the following:

1. E-mail system is used for official business purposes only.
2. E-mail can be reviewed at any time; there is no expectation of privacy.
3. E-mail system is subjected to monitoring to ensure compliance with policy and procedures.
4. The use of business e-mail is public record under Florida State Statue 119.
5. Persons abusing the system are subjected to discipline under the agency's discipline guidelines.
6. The use of vulgarity, profanity and racial remarks is prohibited.
7. All employees must read the policy and sign a statement that they

understand it and know what the consequences are if they violate the policy.

8. The agency will provide annual training and review of its e-mail policy.

Silent monitor: software

An additional weapon in combating e-mail abuse is monitoring software, which provides a proactive approach in prevention. This software can be installed on all computers or a particular computer of the employer's choice. Once installed, the software keeps track of all keystrokes, Web sites accessed, instant messages, e-mails and attachments. When the software detects abusive writing, it sends a message to the system administrator. The system adminis-

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Budgetary Problems?

"Old Cops" May Be Your Solution

By Retired Major Frank D. Harris
Background Investigator
Lee County Sheriff's Office

Florida law enforcement agencies, and their counterparts in other states, are finding it exceedingly difficult to meet their budgetary requirements. When Sheriffs and Police Chiefs try to find "extra" operating dollars for staffing, other competing forces make it nearly impossible.

Often essential jobs are filled with full-time deputies or civilians requiring the entire array of benefits afforded full-time employees. Staffing to cover a 24-hour-a-day operation, including Corrections, is not just a logistical nightmare, but can be budget draining.

Taking a fresh look at available labor in your community might be the solution: Every day, highly skilled, more affordable part-time employees are moving into our communities in the way of retired law enforcement. And they're bringing a wealth of experience, ready to be tapped.

Select jobs for part-time potential

Consider positions within your agency that might be appropriate for part-time personnel: background investigators, community service aids, marine patrols, speaker bureaus, advisory committee members, public relations bureaus, public information units and other positions that are currently held by trained civilians and in some cases, certified personnel.

One of the ways you'll save is in training, which even civilians need within a law enforcement agency. The old saying, "experience is everything" is certainly true. Experience coupled with maturity is invaluable to any

"Just two part-time personnel working three days a week equals one full-time employee, but without the expensive benefit package."

organization, which you can get with retirees. Add a little public speaking, supervisory or administrative experience to the mix and you have great employee potential.

You also may be pleasantly surprised to find certified officers among the ranks of retirees. Many cops with 20 or 30 years of experience move to Florida and quickly find they want something more than golf, tennis or just soaking up the sunshine. What they miss is what every cop has experienced, "the law enforcement family environment." Many former cops still want to contribute to their communities. After all, they've spent most of their adult lives doing it.

Savings supplements your budget

Police administrators should take a closer look at the wealth of experience that continues to move into their communities. What about the cop who spent years as a public information officer, speaker, investigator, administrator, trainer or firearms instructor? These people make up a vast reservoir of generally untapped experience.

Most of these retirees already have pensions and health benefits. Hiring them as part-time personnel in areas of their expertise would require only a

decent hourly wage commensurate with their experience, thus saving thousands of dollars needed in other areas within the department. Just two part-time personnel working three days a week equals one full-time employee, but without the expensive benefit package.

Administrators, consider a new way to fill those positions. And get the job done with little budgetary heartburn by hiring "old cops." They may be worth their weight in gold.

Retired Major Frank D. Harris is a background investigator for the Lee County Sheriff's Office. Contact him via e-mail: FHarris@sheriffleefl.org.



E-mail Abuse and Prevention

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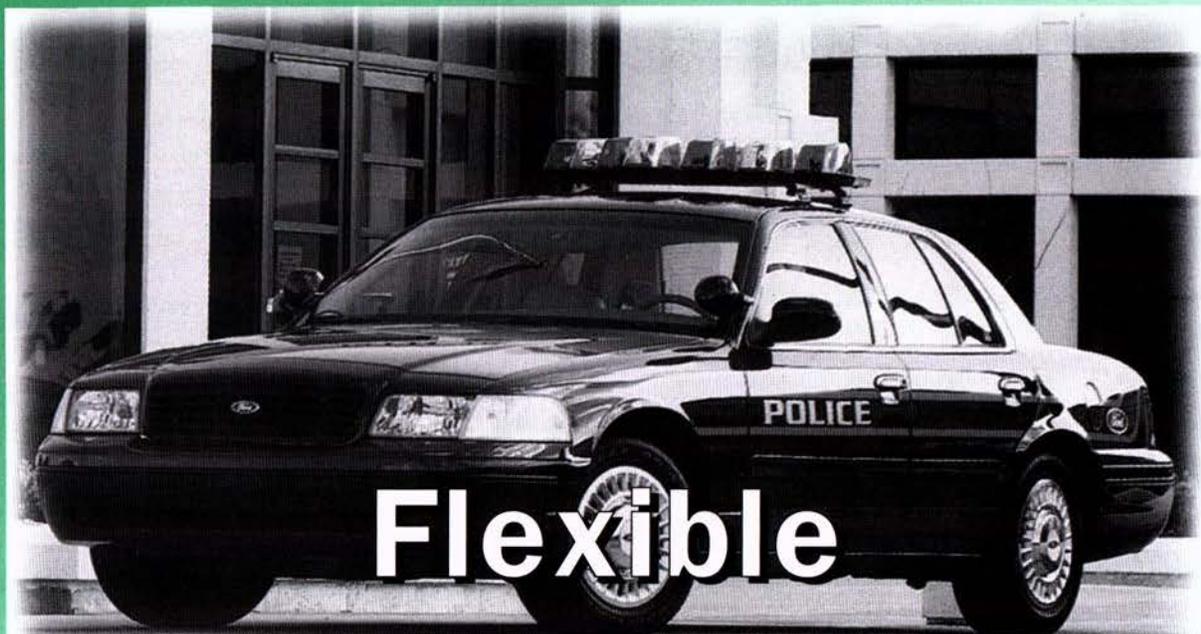
trator can then take appropriate action to remedy the problem. This software is a valuable tool to prevent and detect e-mail abuse.

Just as the weapons our deputies carry, e-mail is essential, but it must be used properly with strict guidelines to ensure control and ethical integrity. Inappropriate e-mails can be a serious liability for our agencies.

Administrators should continue to review cases of abuse and learn from them. What are your policies and procedures related to e-mail use? Consider looking at monitoring software to reduce your agency's risk.

St. Lucie County Sheriff's Major Stephen J. Reuther is a Master's candidate at Saint Leo University. He can be reached through his personal e-mail account:

Reutherb@bellsouth.net. ☆

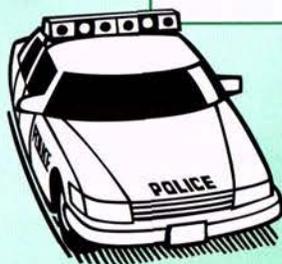


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From Anger to Athletics:

Boxing Helps Redirect Young Lives

By Carrie Hoepfner
Public Information Officer
Seminole County Sheriff's Office

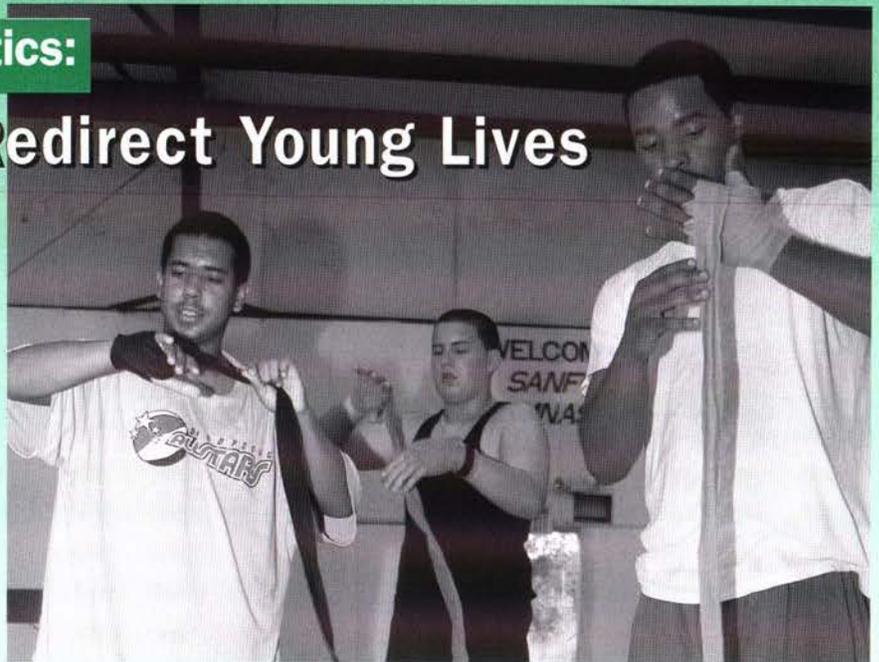
"I used to get into a lot of fights, about stupid things," says Corey, age 14. But now the Central Florida youth says that his participation in the Sanford Boxing Club has taken his mind "off the streets and getting in trouble."

Ask Corey what he thinks about law enforcement and he references his mentor and coach, who just happens to be a police officer. "He's cool," he says. Remarkable, especially since Corey's introduction to law enforcement originated with a fight on a school bus.

The Sanford Boxing Club, a non-profit organization, is changing the direction of youth in Seminole County.

Led by Rick Russi, a former amateur boxer, the club was launched in 2004. It currently coaches/mentors about 25 boys and girls from the Sanford community and gets support from Seminole County.

Many of the youths in this program live in single-parent homes and often are raised by their mothers and grandmothers. The program gives deputies from the Seminole County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) and officers from the Sanford Police Department the opportunity to make a positive impression on young lives. SCSO Sgt. Mickel Green says, "These kids learn about discipline and



From left, Ben Love, Danny Gaines and Jamel Burnside prepare for their time in the ring. The Sanford Boxing Club is credited with deterring youth from dangerous behaviors at school and on the street.

structure. They understand consequences and are offered incentives to stay out of trouble."

The athletic program encourages coaches to keep in close communication with the youth and their parents or caregivers, as well as teachers. In order to train, these athletes must maintain a minimum "C" average and stay out of trouble. "At one point, six of our athletes came to us on probation," says Sanford Police Officer De'Anthony Shamar. "When they got into boxing, only one re-offended." The success has now prompted some judges to sanction youth into the program.

Defending the fight

While some critics may question teaching the sport of boxing to youth who have a bent towards trouble, this program is not just about athletics, but rather discipline and incentive. One youth explained: Now, I walk away; it's just not worth it."

Because the club fund-raises and accepts donations from the community, the athletes are able to participate in the program, including traveling at no cost to their caregivers. Some athletes, including many who had previously never left Seminole County, now travel as a team throughout the state competing at events. Last year, then 13-year old Corey, took home the gold medal in the Florida Sunshine Olympics. He no longer fights on school buses. Corey says that he hasn't gotten into any fights outside of the ring since he began the program. His coach says that the change is remarkable.

And who is credited with such change? Corey. The youth says he wants to stay in the program. He's building confidence and experiencing success, learning about physical fitness, discipline and he understands hard work.

He has accomplished something. When asked about the difference that the program has made in her son's life, Corey's mom, Janice, says, "Ever since my kids got involved in this program, they haven't been involved in any problems with the police. They (law enforcement) always come around and help. It has made such a huge difference."

Coach Russi, the club's organizer, not only provides coaching support but also monetary contributions along with Seminole County government, the Sanford Police Department and the Seminole County Sheriff's Office. Private donations are also welcome. To make a contribution to support the Sanford Boxing Club, write to Sgt. Mickel Green at MGreen@seminolesheriff.org.

Contact PIO Carrie Hoepfner via e-mail: choepfner@seminolesheriff.org.

FSA's Former Deputy General Counsel Named Executive Director of DHSMV



On February 27, the governor and Cabinet confirmed Electra Theodorides Bustle as the new Executive Director of the Department

of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. Bustle, who served as the Florida Sheriffs Association Deputy General Counsel early in her career, most recently served as Assistant Commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

As Executive Director, she is responsible for administering and

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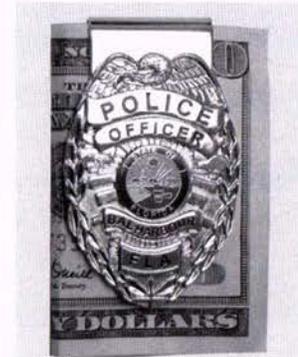
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In Memory of...

FSA Mourns Loss of Sheriff's Wife and Deputy

Law enforcement circles mourned collectively earlier this year, following the tragic deaths that occurred in Jackson County. On January 30th, Jackson County Sheriff John P. "Johnny Mac" McDaniel's wife, Mellie, and Deputy Michael Altman were murdered in Sheriff McDaniel's driveway.

The apparent motive was revenge on the Sheriff by the suspect in a six-year-old murder case and his accomplice. FSA would like to recognize the fast work of responding deputies, who were able to prevent further tragedy in the shootout that ended in the deaths of the two suspects.

A special thanks to all our law enforcement members and friends who have reached out to the McDaniel family during this difficult time. Please continue to keep them in your prayers. ☪

Former "Dean of Sheriffs" Has Died

Retired, long-time Union County Sheriff John H. Whitehead, the father of current Sheriff Jerry Whitehead, died February 9 in Gainesville. He was 82.



Serving as "constable," before being elected as Sheriff in 1952, Whitehead was part of an era when serving as the chief law-enforcement officer required living

the job 24 hours a day, including living at the jail. It also was a time when, as Sheriff, if you put the breadwinner in jail, you took care of the family.

A native of Lake Butler, Sheriff Whitehead served in the Navy before he was elected to the office of Sheriff at the age of 27. "They called me 'the Boy Sheriff,'" he once said.

He recalled that on Sundays, the family took turns staying "home" (the jail), while the others went across the street to church. "The jail never shut down," and that's just the way their family learned to adapt.

During his distinguished law-enforcement career, Sheriff John Whitehead earned the title of "Dean of Florida Sheriffs" in recognition of his long tenure. He also served as a founding member of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches. Sheriff Whitehead's ties clearly went beyond his rural community as he was elected president of Florida Sheriffs Association in 1975 and was recognized by the Florida Legislature as "Law Enforcement Officer of the Year" in 1984.

A founding member of the Lake Butler Rotary Club, Sheriff Whitehead also served as a deacon of First Christian Church of Lake Butler.

Sheriff John Whitehead served his constituents faithfully until 1985, and when it came time to retire, the community chose his son, Jerry, to succeed him.

Sheriff John Whitehead is survived by his wife of 61 years, Vivian Crews Whitehead; three children, John H. Whitehead, Jr. (and wife, Brenda), Cynthia Whitehead and Union County Sheriff Jerry Whitehead (and wife Tammy) all of

Lake Butler; three brothers, Jack Whitehead, William Whitehead and James Whitehead of Lake Butler; and one sister, Merle Brown of Lake Butler. The family requested that memorial contributions be made to the Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranches; P. O. Box 2000, Live Oak, Florida 32064. ☪

Lee County S.O. Names Street for Deputy

The Lee County Sheriff's Office found a way to remember one of their deputies, 13-year law-enforcement veteran Felix Romano, after he died in a vehicle crash last year. Romano was returning from a fundraiser on March 19 and crashed into the back of a dump truck that was driving slowly in the fast lane of I-75. Romano was killed instantly.

He had just coached in a football

Felix S. Romano

July 18, 1960 - March 19, 2006



In NW Florida? Check Out Walton's Firing Range

The Walton County Sheriff's Office has opened a new firing range just outside the city limits of DeFuniak Springs. With 25 short-range firing points for pistol shooting and two long range firing points for rifle shooting, it's a welcome resource for the testing and training of law enforcement in northwest Florida. The range features a classroom for instruction and a "shoot house" that can be used for scenario-based, live-fire training.

Walton County Sheriff Ralph Johnson provided an open invitation to retired law-enforcement officers living in the area to use the new firing range to meet the

firing requirement of House Resolution 218. H.R. 218 allows retired law-enforcement officers to carry a weapon without a concealed weapons permit by meeting certain standards. In order to comply with the Florida standards, the retirees must follow certain provisions released by the Criminal Justice Standard and Training Commission. The CJSTC requires that retirees must have a picture ID from the agency they retired from and it must specifically state their retired status. The law applies only to those who had statutory arrest powers.

A "Firearm Proficiency Verification Card" is being developed by the

Walton County Sheriff's Office. This card, in combination with a retired law enforcement ID card, will allow you to carry a concealed weapon without a permit.

Citizens also are allowed to use the range for concealed weapons permit training and the Sheriff's Office expects to develop a youth hunter safety course in the future.

To make a reservation to use the range for the firing requirement, please contact Lt. Dennis Ward at (850) 892-8186. You also may contact Sgt. Joe Preston or Sgt. Andy Cassavant, both at (850) 267-2000. ★

(ROMANO continued from page 10)

game between firefighters and the Sheriff's Office that raised money to cover medical expenses for another officer's daughter.

Romano's fellow workers wanted to commemorate his life, so they proposed naming the road leading to the new Lee

County Gun Range after him. It's a fitting tribute, in that Romano had been transferred to the training division and was teaching at the police academy at the time of his death.

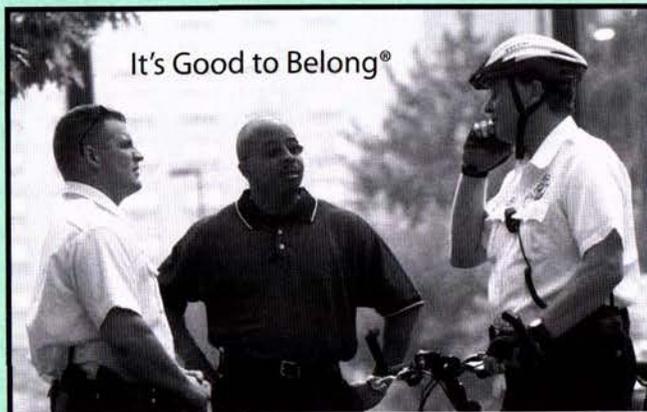
Romano's wife, Barb, daughter Gina and son Sal came to see the sign erected, along with Lee County Sheriff Mike Scott. In this effort, his

name and memory will live on in a very special way. ★

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Drug Unit Corruption: Stopping the Scandal Before It Starts

By Capt. Lee A. Sullivan
Marion County Sheriff's Office

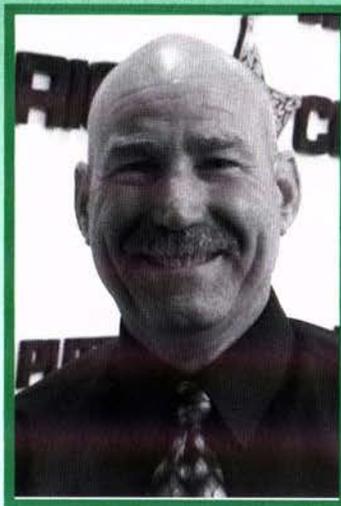
It seems as though you can't open a newspaper or magazine without seeing an article on some type of corruption scandal within some state, federal or local drug unit. Drug unit scandals do not just occur overnight or on a single issue. Because the availability of ever-increasing large seizures of drugs and money, drug unit officers are exposed to unique opportunities for corruption – and the recipient is not likely to complain about the police behavior.

A drug unit officer's job involves drugs, money and informants. Those are three of the highest liability areas for a law-enforcement agency. There usually is a pattern that a supervisor should have noticed or a combination of occurrences that should have raised a red flag. Generally, a drug unit scandal involves a small group of individuals and not a single person. They become involved in committing crimes such as stealing drugs or money, selling drugs, illegal searches and seizures and perjury.

Steps to reduce risk

There are certain things administrators can do to minimize the chances of a scandal occurring in their drug units. These actions are based on several issues that have been identified related to corruption within drug units.

One of the first issues that



Capt. Lee A. Sullivan

administrators should be concerned about is the selection of personnel who are to be placed into the drug unit. A lack of maturity has been shown to be a factor in instances involving corruption. Administrators should consider a potential applicant's age, experience and maturity level during the selection process. Another area of concern is the educational level of the potential applicant. While having more education doesn't necessarily exempt someone from becoming involved in corruption, studies have shown that those with a higher maturity level and additional education are less susceptible to be involved in illicit drug-related activities.

Personality should also be considered in selection for staffing drug units. If a person is a loner who doesn't get along with his co-workers, he may not be the right choice for the position.

There also is a double-edged

sword when choosing candidates for undercover work. If the candidate is quick thinking, assertive, self-confident and fast-talking he is probably going to be the best candidate for the job. Unfortunately, studies show that these personality traits are often the same ones predisposing officers to corruption and psychological distress.

Who chooses?

Administrators who supervise drug units should be allowed to choose the personnel who are selected into their units. After all, they will be the ones held accountable for their actions. The selection process should include an oral interview with all supervisors within the drug unit, along with two or three senior detectives. The questions should be scenario-based involving the gray areas of morality and integrity. There also should be questions pertaining to social habits, marital situation, financial stability and the candidate's motivation for applying to the unit. These issues can have a direct result on an integrity issue within the unit.

A one-on-one interview with the applicant's present supervisor also will tell you a lot about the candidate. There can be a lot more information out there than what is actually on paper about a candidate. The present supervisor may also be able to make you aware of current issues that may affect the candidates thought process.

TRAINING

The same logic applies in choosing the supervisors to lead the drug unit. What makes a successful supervisor in the patrol division doesn't necessarily make someone a successful drug unit supervisor. It may not be essential for the supervisor to have a drug unit background, but it definitely will help. The supervisor who was a former drug officer will be aware of the potential problem areas and shortcuts that drug officers are likely to be exposed to. They will be familiar in the areas of handling informants, money and drugs. It is less likely an officer will be able to convince them that it is OK to do things a certain way, when in fact, it is a bad practice.

Keeping a close watch

Adequate supervision with the drug unit is a must. Investigations into high-profile scandals such as the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Rampart Division have shown that there was not adequate supervision within the specialty unit. The scandal involving drug units in Texas was determined to be from a lack of supervision. If there is a lack of accountability to a supervisor, this can lead to behavior that can, in turn, lead to corruption. Supervisors within the drug unit must maintain control and monitor closely the actions of their subordinates. It is imperative to retain thorough auditing procedures of reports, confidential informants and investigative funds. Supervisors within the drug unit must be alert for potential indications of unprofessional conduct by officers within their unit. They should be on the alert for lifestyle

changes of their subordinates, too. Changes in attitudes of officers can be a key indicator. While an officer having marital or financial problems doesn't mean they are on the road to corruption, it could make them more susceptible to taking what appears to be the easy way out of a difficult situation. It is much better to identify a potential problem than to react to an ethical violation. At that point we may be able to save a career instead of prosecuting an officer.

A culture of fraud?

Organizational culture within the drug unit can become a problem that also can lead to inappropriate conduct. The nature of a small, tight knit unit is to band together and depend on each other to complete the mission. The unit can sometimes be considered more of a family than a paramilitary organization. It is important to preserve the closeness of the unit, while not allowing the "us against them" mentality to take over the unit. This can be characterized by a code of silence, unquestioned loyalty to other officers and cynicism about the criminal justice system. There is absolutely no room in a drug unit for this type of behavior. Other officers within the unit must understand completely that this behavior will not be tolerated. If an officer is aware of another officer's unethical behavior, there must be no doubt that they will be dealt with as harshly as if they had committed the act themselves. If this behavior is left unrestrained, the unit can be more easily drawn into other types of criminal actions. It might begin with unlawful search and seizures

and lead to murder, as it did in New Orleans where 11 officers were convicted in 1994.

Discipline must be maintained within the unit. Early warning signs should be monitored and documented.

Ethics training can help

Ethics training is the key to any effective law-enforcement agency. The same can be said for any successfully run drug unit. If your agency doesn't have ethics training, the drug unit commander should consider implementing a formal ethics training program. This should apply to all newly transferred personnel, along with the experienced detectives within the unit. Supervisors also should be required to attend the ethics training. If your unit is vigilant about ethics, they will be more likely to identify problems and potential risk.

The nature of drug unit investigation is, alone, ethically challenging. There is no other area of law enforcement in which you initiate your own cases. We take the top-of-the-line personnel and train them to become people who deal with strictly the bottom feeders of society. They are expected to work hand-in-hand with drug dealers, informants, prostitutes and others whose nature and acts are unethical. Not only do our officers have to work with them, they are expected to become like them to make cases. And they are expected to work outside of the black and white areas; what works well in uniformed patrol, won't necessarily make you successful in a drug

(continued on page 15)

2006 Correctional Officers of the Year continued . . .

Continued from page 1

got tangled up in the fencing that had been knocked to the ground and it became disabled.

Corporal Ferguson and Deputy Mendiola carefully approached the stopped van, taking cover behind surrounding vehicles. They did not know if a gun or other weapon might have also been left inside the van and was available to the escaping inmate.

They directed McEvers several times to exit the van. When she finally complied, they advised her to show her hands, which she was hiding under her shirt, holding what appeared to be a gun.

While still maintaining cover, Corporal Ferguson and Deputy Mendiola began talking to McEvers in an effort to convince her to lower her weapon and give herself up. As McEvers focused mostly on answering Corporal Ferguson's commands, Deputy Mendiola crept closer, using a nearby van as cover. He managed to get close enough to kick at McEvers, knocking her off balance and into the fallen fence. A quick apprehension followed.

Incredibly, Corporal Ferguson and Deputy Mendiola were able to gain control of this highly volatile situation without injury to staff, inmates or the public.

She's a convicted felon

A short time after the event, Corporal Ferguson and Deputy Mendiola learned that McEvers was a convicted felon who expressed later that she hoped the officers



A proud moment: Above are the winners of the FSA Correctional Officer of the Year award (far left), Brevard County Corrections Deputy Frederick Mendiola, along with his girlfriend Brevard County Corrections Officer Angela Twigg; and (far right) Brevard County Corrections Corporal Belden Ferguson with his wife, Arlene.

would kill her during the botched escape. Other inmates riding in the van with McEvers to the jail said she also had told them she planned to escape. McEvers had slipped a handcuff just before making her attempted getaway. The item she was concealing under her shirt turned out to be a cell phone that belonged to the driver of the van. She seemed to be cradling it as though to provoke the officers.

McEvers originally was being brought to the jail on a violation of community control warrant. Her previous arrests include numerous drug offenses; this was to be her seventh stay at the Brevard County jail.

McEvers has since been charged with aggravated assault on a law-enforcement officer, escape, grand theft auto and criminal mischief and is now serving a two-year sentence in a state prison for her actions.

All together, the escape attempt caused about \$4,000 in damages, which included the transport van,

other vehicles and the security fence.

For their heroic actions, Corporal Ferguson and Deputy Mendiola received a Medal of Valor from Brevard County Sheriff Jack Parker.

The Florida Sheriffs Association echoes that commendation. And as the nomination form states, "For placing their lives in danger to protect the lives of not only the public but other civilian staff and workers at the jail that day," we have named Corporal Belden Ferguson and Corrections Deputy Frederick Mendiola our 2006 Correctional Officers of the Year.

Jacksonville's Hensley Named Runner-Up

Corrections Officer Hubert T. Hensley, a 10-year veteran of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, has demonstrated competence and dedication in his service over the years. Last September, during routine activities at the county jail, he was faced with one of his greatest tests when he found himself in the mid-

(continued from page 14)

dle of an altercation between a fellow officer and an inmate.

The inmate, housed in an area known for violence, refused to end his telephone call when inmates were being moved during the regular course of the day. After attempts to talk him into compliance failed, officers disconnected the phone. The inmate became angry and pulled a mop wringer off a nearby bucket and started threatening one of the officers.

In an attempt to block the inmate's blow to a fellow officer, Corrections Officer Hensley stepped in front of the inmate with his hands raised. The inmate hit Hensley several times, injuring his hand and arm and striking his head, stunning him. After falling dazed to one knee, Hensley saw the inmate go after his fellow officer, choking him. He again joined the battle and did not retreat until he saw that more officers had responded to help.

The violent inmate was eventually handcuffed and Hensley was transported to the hospital, receiving care for his hand and arm and staples to close the gash in his head.

Demonstrating further tenacity, Officer Hensley returned to work the following morning, despite suffering from a sore arm and headache.

It's clear that Officer Hensley's actions prevented the inmate from causing serious bodily harm to other officers. His instant reaction, his continued efforts to get the inmate under control and his instinct to survive demonstrate his true spirit. With these facts, the Florida Sheriffs join the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office in commending Corrections Officer Hubert T. Hensley on his courage, and we name him sole "Runner-Up" for the 2006 Corrections Officer of the Year.

Congratulations, Officer Hensley.



Continued from page 9

coordinating all activities for one of the nation's largest public safety agencies which has an annual operating budget exceeding \$400 million, and 4,900 employees.

Bustle, a certified law-enforcement officer, also served as assistant commissioner of public safety services for FDLE, where her responsibilities included the agency's business support program, information resource management and the Criminal Justice Information Systems. As assistant commissioner, she administered the professionalism program, which certifies and provides minimal officer standards for all law-enforcement and corrections officers in the state. She also supervised the Capitol Police and the Governor's Protection Operations Services.

The one-time general counsel for the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, Bustle's diverse legal career in law enforcement has spanned 15 years.

The Florida Sheriffs Association congratulates Electra Theodorides-Bustle for achieving such a high honor. We look forward to participating in the strong law enforcement partnership we know she will be spearheading in the near future. ✪

Drug Unit Corruption: Stopping the Scandal Before It Starts

Continued from page 13

unit. It's no wonder that an ethically challenged person becomes the next headline.

Drug unit agents have an extremely difficult job. Agents are expected to

make decisions on an everyday basis that deal with all the high-liability areas within an agency. Whether it is a search-and-seizure issue, or an undercover operation, they are expected to complete it with the utmost integrity and then go on to the next thing. Administrators owe it to the agency and the officer to provide them with the best possible training – both in ethics and drug investigations.

The stakes are too high to send them out in the real world without equipping them the best we can to complete the mission. This can be said for both equipment and train-

ing. It is a small price to pay. The safeguards the agency puts in place today, may very well keep it from becoming a headline tomorrow.

Capt. Lee A. Sullivan is the Assistant Bureau Chief for the Marion County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Bureau. A 22-year veteran of law enforcement, he can be reached via e-mail:

lee.sullivan@saintleo.edu. ✪

FEEDBACK

APB invites you to "talk back." If you have a comment about a topic in this publication, or anything else of interest to law enforcement readers, please let us know. Write to: Editor, All Points Bulletin, P.O. Box 12519, Tallahassee, FL 32317-2519, e-mail: jbettinger@flsheriffs.org/.

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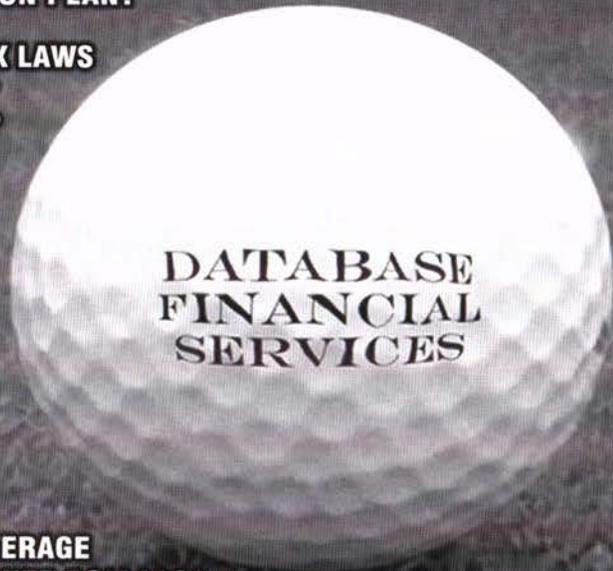
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