

# FLORIDA SHERIFFS ALL POINTS BULLETIN

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## St. Lucie County Sheriff's Detective Brian Hester Wins 2006 Deputy Sheriff of the Year

By Julie S. Bettinger

One of the traditional highlights of the Florida Sheriffs Association Summer Conference is meeting the Deputy Sheriff of the Year winner.

Past winners have been recognized for everything from wrestling victims away from dangerous criminals to surviving a shootout and bringing the culprits to justice.

The men and women who have received this prestigious, state-wide award are often recognized for an outstanding act related to one particular incident – frequently on the frontline. In the case of this year's winner, it was very much behind-the-scenes work that made the frontline operations go more smoothly.

What captured our award committee's attention was an investigation that lasted three months and resulted in the dismantling of a powerful and dangerous street gang. This special operation targeted and successfully took down the leaders of a group responsible for several homicides, numerous shootings, robberies and a significant level of narcotic trafficking.

During the investigation, the Sheriff's Office had acquired enough evidence to prove that in just 90 days, this group and



St. Lucie County Sheriff Ken Mascara (left) congratulates his Detective, 2006 Deputy Sheriff of the Year Brian Hester, pictured with his wife Brittany.

its supplier had moved more 550 pounds – that's one-quarter ton – of powder and crack cocaine through a county of about 300,000 people.

### *Hindered by henchmen*

As with many investigations, "Operation Unlucky 13" was borne out of a need for a comprehensive solution to a growing problem. Officers and investigators at every level – federal, state and local – had suffered for years trying to fight illegal drug activity and investigate serious crimes, including homicides, shootings and robberies in northern Ft. Pierce. But all cases were hindered by the presence of a powerful organization called the 13th Street Gang.

The gang members were fighting with others over the usual things – turf, drugs and girlfriends – and creating a culture of fear in

the community. But the tactics they used to intimidate witnesses and victims – including violence, threats and even murder – were hindering all efforts by law enforcement to investigate or prosecute cases in that area.

By all accounts, it was getting worse. The St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office was seeing a tremendous increase in the amount of cocaine pouring into the area and they knew the 13th Street Gang was largely responsible.

Detective Brian Hester and other members of St. Lucie County's Special Investigations Unit started looking for ways to attack the organization and dismantle it. They knew if they could get the top tier – the leadership and second or third levels – they had a better chance of cutting off the flow of drugs.

*continued on page 8*



## Beware of "Off-Bonding" Risks

**S**umter County Sheriff's Office Chief Jack Jordan, who serves as the legal advisor to Sheriff Bill Farmer, warned the Florida Sheriffs recently about a common problem in jails — off bonding. Off bonding occurs when a bondsman decides he or she no longer wants to be on the bond of the defendant. They can bring this person to the jail any time, without explanation, and there may or may not be a warrant for the subject's arrest.

The Jails run into problems when the bondsman makes this request, but does not have the defendant with them. In many cases, the defendant is in another county jail, having been arrested on a new charge.

Chief Jordan said the jail should never release a bond unless there is a "body," meaning a defendant. The bond is linked to the defendant, and if the bond is released, even if the subject is in custody somewhere else, the responsibility now transfers to the Sheriff's Office for follow up. Making it a policy not to release a bond unless there is a body is the safest way to reduce the liability of the Sheriff's Office.

"The thing to remember about bail bonds is that they are a contractual agreement between the defendant and the bail bondsman," Chief Jordan said. "In that contract, there are a number of conditions that the defendant agrees to, and the bondsman has the option of canceling it at any time." Still, just because they cancel it doesn't mean the responsibility

should transfer to the Sheriff's Office. No body, no bond. That's the best policy.

Chief Jordan issued another warning: Florida Statutes allows the bondsman to give a law-enforcement officer his power to arrest the defendant, by signing over their authority on the back of the bond. But if a deputy arrests the individual under these circumstances, they are doing it based on the bondsman's authority and not state law. It places the deputy (and Sheriff's Office) in a weak position. It's better not to allow the bondsman to sign over the bond. Just explain that there is no warrant for that person's arrest and that the bondsman needs to arrest them and bring them to the jail.

*Save time, expense on bond processing*

In these times of tight budgets, Chief Jordan said Sheriffs might want to look at the administrative time and expense related to bond processing. It's not well known, but a Sheriff's Office can transfer the physical processing of those bonds to the Clerk of Court if he or she desires. Florida Statute says that the Sheriff may hold the bond or transfer it to the Clerk who "shall" accept it.

Something else that Chief Jordan offered is a reminder that the warrants section should forge a strong relationship with bail bonding companies. "That bond represents money to them," Chief Jordan said. "If a person fails to appear in court, no one wants him back in custody more than the bondsman — including the Sheriff."

In the bond transaction, the

company collects a lot of data, including information on family members, past residences, phone numbers, etc. and the bonding company is likely to share this information to help a Sheriff's Office track them down. So bonding companies often hold the key to getting a person back into custody.

*For more information on bail bonding issues, contact Jack Jordan, legal advisor for Sumter County Sheriff's Office, via e-mail: [jackj@sum.net](mailto:jackj@sum.net) or phone: 352-568-6615.*

### FLORIDA SHERIFFS ALL POINTS BULLETIN Volume 17, Number 2 Summer 2007

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By Julie S. Bettinger



Photo by Larry Cochran

There's a troubling trend among our ranks. It's the type of thing that can work like a cancer and spread to vital organs – and it threatens the very heart and soul of Sheriffs' Offices.

It seems the very evils that law enforcement fight every day are infiltrating the people whose job it is to protect our communities from those threats. I'm talking about domestic violence, suicide, drug abuse and corruption. Deputies taking their own lives...being arrested for domestic violence, road rage or fraud. Getting caught with pornography on their computers, and it's obviously for personal use and not investigation purposes.

Some offices are getting hit harder than others. The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office had three suicides in four years. Sheriff John Rutherford has stepped up efforts in the areas of education and prevention to combat the trend. And other agencies would be wise to do the same.

## Acknowledging there's a problem

Sure, we're human. There's going to be a certain amount of that in any agency – but there's been an alarming rise in these cases, it seems. And we need to start taking a serious look at the sources and address them.

Besides the toll it takes on the families affected, these behaviors can significantly affect the agency and profession. As one Sheriff's Office spokesperson acknowledged, even though it's not an accurate reflection on law enforcement, each person working at the agency suffers because of the public's perception.

We've reported on efforts toward

prevention in this column previously. Trilby Brannon's "Bridges of Hope for Families, Inc." ([www.bridgesof-hopeonline.com](http://www.bridgesof-hopeonline.com)) was profiled in our last issue. Kristi Nygren, who lives in Pinellas County and is married to a Deputy Sheriff, also has found her calling assisting law enforcement spouses and those struggling with addictions (e-mail: [kristi2@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:kristi2@tampabay.rr.com)).

## Recognizing we're in a battle

When people are exposed to the depravity of the human condition on a daily basis as law enforcement requires, they can't help but be affected. It's kind of tough to have hope when you see such hopelessness in the violence, the abuse, the revolving door of the justice system and other realities in our world.

The question is: Are you preparing for that battle?

I'm not talking about general law-enforcement training – it's more the personal stuff. How are you fortifying yourself against the threat of corruption? Do you even acknowledge that there is such a threat?

I'm currently reading a book by John Eldredge called "Waking the Dead." Eldredge is kind of a man's man. He likes adventure and talks a great deal about warriors and movie heroes and roughing it out in the wilds of Colorado. His books acknowledge the great depravity that most of us have experienced. We desire challenge, but we look for it in all the wrong places – or we're motivated for the wrong reasons. Somehow, it gets twisted and eventually takes a toll on our marriage, our family and our other relationships.

One of the things Eldredge talks about in this book is spiritual warfare. Sometimes we forget the big picture – that we actually are battling against the forces of darkness. And that requires a different kind of weapon.

While most of Eldredge's books have been geared to men, this one holds some very good thoughts to ponder for all of us, especially those battling on the frontline. Specifically

for the ladies, the book he co-authored with his wife – "Captivating" – is also good. I think both offer some solutions that can help us prevent self destruction from becoming a byproduct of our work.

If you have any thoughts on the issue, please send me an e-mail: [jbettinger@flsheriffs.org](mailto:jbettinger@flsheriffs.org).

## News from FSA

I now will step down from my soapbox to deliver some news items. For those of you in Corrections, you'll be happy to know the FSA now has a full-time person on staff to represent your interests.

Ned Hafner joined FSA as the director of corrections and jail services and is responsible for networking with all county jails that are managed by Sheriffs' Offices.



Ned Hafner

Ned has more than 30 years of experience in the Corrections field. Contact Ned via e-mail: [nhafner@flsheriffs.org](mailto:nhafner@flsheriffs.org), or use the information on the facing page to call. I'm sure he would be glad to hear from you.

And finally, this is the "last call" to register for FSA's Car Evaluation and Fleet Management Training Conference the last week in September. See our ad on page 12 for more information, or visit our Web site: [www.flsheriffs.org/conferences](http://www.flsheriffs.org/conferences). Don't miss it!

*Julie*

## Florida Sheriffs Association Annual Calendar of Events 2007

Please check FSA's Web site for updated locations and registration: [www.flsheriffs.org](http://www.flsheriffs.org)

- FSA's Annual Car Evaluation and Fleet Management Training Conference, Plaza Resort & Spa, Daytona Beach, September 26-28

- FSA Jail Administrators' Workshop, Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, December 3-5

- Civil Process Training (throughout the year), check calendar of events at: [www.flsheriffs.org](http://www.flsheriffs.org)



# Brevard County – Tough on Sexual Offenders

By Sheriff Jack  
Parker  
Brevard County  
Sheriff's Office



In December of 2005, the Brevard County Sheriff's Office unveiled an innovative approach to registering, monitoring and tracking sexual offenders and predators with the implementation of the "Sexual Offender Registration and Tracking" (SORT) Unit. This specialized unit is responsible for the registration of all sexual offenders and predators in Brevard County, as well as verifying their addresses and closely monitoring their movements. In addition, SORT has joined forces with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and locally formed a task force to fight child exploitation, which investigates cases related to child pornography and the online exploitation/solicitation of children.

In order to meet the public needs of notification, we partnered with Watch Systems, Inc. and, with their help, have implemented an excellent public notification system. The system allows our analysts to advise Watch Systems' Offender Watch of a new registration or address change which automatically generates a postcard mailing to citizens in the immediate area



**Through the work of the Brevard Sheriff's Office SORT unit, the county has been able to crack down on non-compliant sexual offenders and predators. In the first year alone, Brevard saw a 69-percent reduction in the number of absconders (from 52 to 16). A new public notification system and Internet-based search is also helping families to better protect their children.**

of the offender's residence. With our prior door-to-door notifications, it was not uncommon to miss homes in the affected area. We also did not like the possibility that young children would arrive home after school before their parents and retrieve posted sexual predator notifications that were not age appropriate.

As of August 2007, more than 85,000 individualized postcard mailings detailing information about the offender and his or her photograph have been mailed. The service also provides an option for the citizens to sign up for email alerts that are generated immediately upon verification of the offender's address. Since the inception of



the program, about 2,000 households have taken advantage of



the email service receiving more than 5,000 notifications.

We also have set up a simple search process on our Website at [www.BrevardSheriff.com](http://www.BrevardSheriff.com) that enables citizens to input an address anywhere in the county (home, school, etc.) and see not only how close sexual predators and offenders live, but details of their convictions and photographs. Hardly a day goes by that we don't encounter a citizen who thanks us for the service.

Additionally, we created a zero-tolerance program for sex offenders and predators who violate the law or conditions of their probation. A four-pronged approach was implemented to ensure SORT could rid our streets of offenders who were not in compliance:

- A verification affidavit was developed that was efficient for patrol, but gave SORT the necessary information to ensure offenders were in compliance.

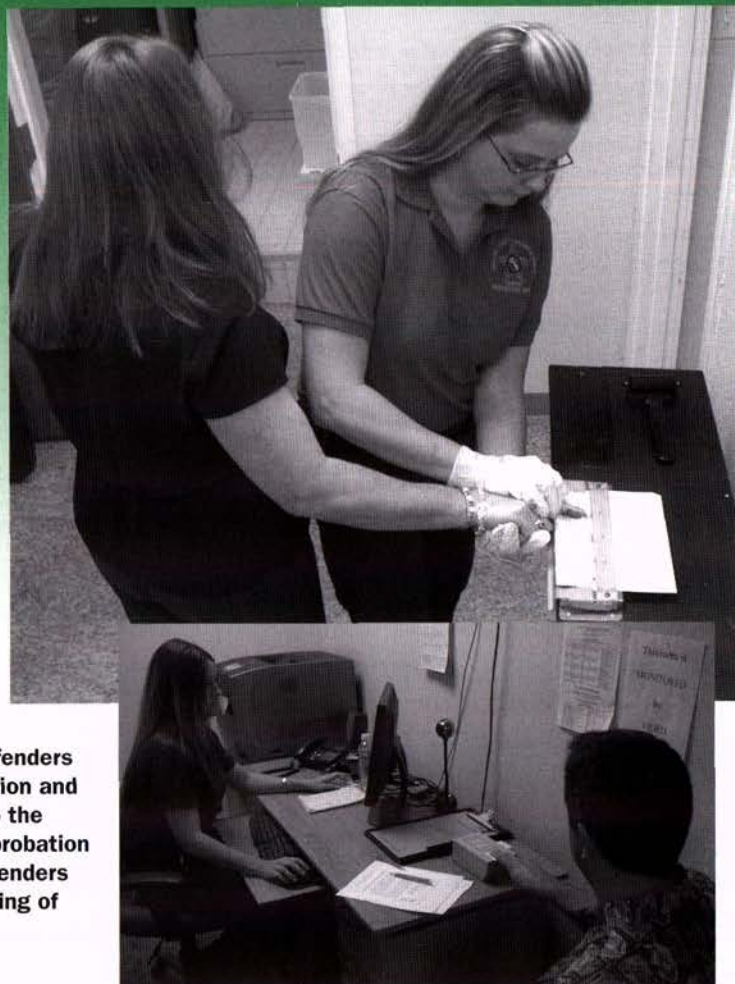
- We developed an in-house database that allowed crime analysts to input all information on the offenders' addresses, employment, important scanned documents and movements that could be easily accessed by agents in the field.

- We worked with municipal, state and federal law-enforcement agencies to ensure we are all working off the same page with regard to verification. The majority of law-enforcement agencies devoted sworn personnel to the monitoring and verification of the offenders in their respective jurisdictions.

**Through the SORT unit the Brevard Sheriff's Office is able to carefully track sexual offenders and predators. One of the methods includes partnering with Probation Officers throughout the county to share information, assist in searches of offenders under supervision and gain access to the conditions of probation for specific offenders and GPS tracking of offenders.**

- We partnered with Florida Probation and Parole in the verification of these offenders. By partnering with Probation Officers throughout the county, the Investigators were able to share information, assist in searches of offenders under supervision, gain access into the Florida Department of Corrections databases for immediate access to the conditions of probation for specific offenders, as well as access to GPS tracking of offenders.

In addition to enforcement, the SORT Unit focuses on prevention and awareness. Unit members provide citizens and fellow law-enforcement officers with crime-prevention training related to child and Internet safety.



In the first year alone, we experienced a 69-percent reduction in the numbers of absconders in our county (from 52 to 16). We have greatly improved our knowledge of where offenders are in our county in addition to putting them back in prison or jail when they do not comply with the law or conditions of probation.

Brevard County is gaining a reputation for being tough on sexual offenders and predators, and we like it.

*If you have interest in the SORT program, or have any questions, contact BCSO Commander Doug Waller via e-mail: [douglas.waller@brevardsheriff.com](mailto:douglas.waller@brevardsheriff.com) or call: 321-454-7061.*



# Education Will Not Make a Good Cop, But It Can Make a Good Cop Better

By Russell L. Cormican

**T**here is a saying about how people will sometimes keep doing the same thing over and over, yet expecting different results. It's no different in law enforcement. At some point, it becomes obvious that we have to change or improve what we are doing in order to achieve those intended "better results."

Law-enforcement agencies work to attract and keep high-quality deputies and officers. With increasingly competitive wages and benefits being offered, it seems as though this would be an easy task. Unfortunately, that is often not the case.

Perhaps we are setting our standards too low and, consequently, not attracting better candidates. There have been a number of studies that point to the fact that our society, in general, is becoming more educated. According to the Census Bureau, 25.4 percent of Floridians have at least a bachelor's degree.

A recent survey of Florida Police Academy students, found that 80 percent had taken "some" college courses prior to attending their academy training. On the other hand, the same survey showed that only 4 percent had a G.E.D.

According to the Institute of Higher Education, 35 percent of adults age 26 – 27 hold associate or bachelor's degrees. This

percentage is close to the Florida Police Academy study, which revealed 31 percent having an associate or bachelor's degree.

It may be impractical or impossible to make an immediate leap to requiring a college degree in all law-enforcement agencies statewide. We are at the point, however, that we should consider requiring some college or military experience.

But how do we make this transition to a higher education requirement without having a negative impact on the agency? Actually, the answer to this question is simple.

The two key components are a Community College Bridge Program, which transfers the vocational credits earned in police academies to college credit, and a method to take advantage of the Bridge Program while new deputies and officers are in their initial field-training phase.

## Bridge Program

Daytona Beach Community College has what it calls an Associate Science degree in Criminal Justice Technology Bridge Program. Other community colleges in Florida have similar programs with various titles. Under these programs, when a student graduates from the Police Academy, they can then apply for the bridge program. It is important to keep in mind that graduation from the Police Academy has no value as far as college credits are concerned. Police Academy

graduates must pass the State Certification Exam, and, in the case of DBCC, be enrolled in or have already completed at least one college course in order to enter the bridge program. At this point, the 28 credit hours from the Police Academy will be awarded to the students.

The bottom line is this, upon acceptance into the bridge program, the Police Academy graduate will have the equivalent of one year of college. When they complete an additional 11 college courses, they will have an associate's degree.

Several community colleges in Florida also are offering a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree. This is a four-year Bachelor's Degree being offered at the community college, with no need to take any transitional courses or transfer to an upper level university. DBCC began the Bachelor of Applied Science Degree in January 2006.

## Volusia County pilot program

In September 2005, Volusia County Sheriff Ben Johnson and the Director of the Daytona Beach Community College Emergency Services Institute, Louie Mercer, began a pilot program to increase the education level of newly hired Volusia County Sheriff's Deputies.

In the pilot program, after completion of the Basic Recruit Training (Police Academy), the new deputies are assigned to the Sheriff's Field Training Evaluation Program (FTEP) for 12 weeks of additional training. During this time, deputies can voluntarily enroll in a newly created college course and receive three credits. This course, "Co-



operative Education Experience In Criminal Justice," is completed in unison with the Sheriff's Field Training Evaluation Program.

While the new deputies are assigned to the Field Training Unit, they are required to complete Daily Training Activity Logs for each day of the 12-week sessions. They also must submit two completed Supervisor Evaluation Forms: one at the mid-point and the final form due the last week of the experience.

Additionally, they must complete a written report detailing a specific procedure from the Sheriff's Office manual of operating procedures. These items are submitted to a professor for review, and those successfully completing the requirements are awarded three college credits.

The students/deputies who are involved in this pilot program also have signed up for the bridge program. Upon completion of the co-op course taken during their field training, and being award 28 college credits for completing the Basic Law Enforcement course, they now have a total of 31 college credits. This equals one year of college, and the deputy is half way to an associate's degree.

The initial phase of pilot program has proven to be successful and is now being offered to all law enforcement agencies in Volusia County.

There are, of course, college tuition reimbursement programs at a vast majority of agencies in Florida. Since they obviously value a college education enough to pay for it, perhaps the time is right to require just a little more education, either prior to hiring, or during the first year of employment.

The law-enforcement commu-

nity, working with their local community college, can achieve a true win-win situation. Law enforcement wins by having more well-rounded, mature and better-educated officers to serve the public. The community college wins by being able to attract additional students into their degree programs.

There are a number of methods for implementing and customizing similar programs to fit your local needs. One key component should include the ability to convert Police Academy credits from one community college to another. Therefore, no matter where or when the deputy or officer attended a Florida Police Academy, they can still take advantage of a bridge-type program.

The idea of increasing education requirements for entrance-level law-enforcement officers has been discussed for a number of years. Perhaps the idea of law-enforcement agencies forming a partnership with their local community college and Police Academies is something worth considering.

Connecting community college bridge-type programs with an agency's Field Training Unit will assure that all new deputies and officers can achieve one year of college credit within their first year of employment.

*Writer Russell L. Cormican has more than 30 years of police experience. He retired from the Hollywood Police Department, serving as Major and Deputy Chief and is a former Commander with the Daytona Beach Police Department. He is currently a Law Enforcement Consultant and Adjunct Instructor at Daytona Beach Community College.*

## Sheriff Honored By Fellow War Veterans

St. Johns County Sheriff David B. Shoar was selected as the state of Florida's "Law Officer of the Year" by the American Legion this summer. Shoar, a member of the American Legion and lifetime member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said he was "thrilled" to be selected by his fellow veterans, but added, "the real law officers of the year are the ones that are out there every day putting their life on the line to protect our citizens."



After a 24-year career in the Florida Army National Guard, Sheriff Shoar served as an enlisted soldier for six years until he attended Officer Candidate School. He retired in 2005 at the rank of Major. During his military career, the Sheriff served in the Persian Gulf during the first Gulf War and served around the state of Florida during several state emergencies, including Hurricanes Andrew and Opal. For his service, Sheriff Shoar has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, the National Defense Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal, the Liberation of Kuwait Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal, among others.

Sheriff Shoar added that he is truly honored for this recognition and wants to dedicate it to the men and women in the Armed Forces who continue to sacrifice so much for us during their efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.



*continued from page 1*

In February of last year, Detective Hester proposed a plan that would combine the resources of the Sheriff's Office with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the State Attorney's Office, the Ft. Pierce Police Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the U.S. Attorney's Office. His idea was to conduct a wire intercept of the cellular telephones of the key members of the group and target their ongoing drug organization. This would allow investigators to track the organization's daily routines, determine their financial abilities and better understand their operation.

Now, the idea of cell phone wiretaps may sound easy, but anyone in law enforcement will tell you it's tricky business.

Having the technology to allow the wiretaps is the first challenge, but Detective Hester knew the technology existed through FDLE. Next, there had to be enough probable cause to justify the wiretaps.

Under Detective Hester's direction, the combined agencies spent countless hours researching and conducting surveillance and interviews to gain enough probable cause to lead to the final draft of the wiretaps. The interviews were especially difficult to come by, since anyone with knowledge of the gang's activities was subject to their threats.

Through diligent efforts, though, they managed to prove their case and by March, investigators were monitoring eight cellular phone lines.

*A code word for...?*

Here's where they met their

next series of challenges. Gathering intelligence through faceless conversations between callers can be very confusing. In order to decipher the gang lingo and various accents, the investigators had to learn a new culture through eavesdropping. Once deciphered, this information had to be organized in a way that would win search warrants and allow law enforcement to make arrests with charges that would stick, based on the evidence they'd gathered. There was no room for error in any of the collection methods used.

Through their investigation, what detectives found was a business model that consisted of a supplier, 34-year-old Derrick Cooper, purchasing crack and powder cocaine for distribution through the 13th Street Gang. Gang leader, 27-year-old Johnny Daniels, recruited members to be street-level dealers by enticing them with the lure of expensive cars, boats and other luxuries, calling it the "sweet success of their entrepreneurship."

As St. Lucie County Sheriff Ken Mascara pointed out later, it was more like "the fruit of the poison vine."

With all the intelligence gathered, Detective Hester and his team determined that over a three-month period, the 13th Street Gang was responsible for distributing 150 kilos, approximately 330 pounds, of powder and crack cocaine in Ft. Pierce, alone – a town of about 40,000 people. Investigators also discovered several other organized groups that were responsible for selling an additional 100 kilos, or 220 pounds, throughout the county during the same time period.

It was estimated that the drug ring supplied \$4.5 million worth of cocaine each month to customers in St. Lucie County.

By early June, thanks to the investigators' efforts, the team had executed 14 search warrants and confiscated nine firearms, nearly \$200,000 in cash, seven vehicles valued at about \$300,000 and large amounts of cocaine. Thirty-seven individuals were arrested, including Johnny Daniels, the head of the 13th Street Gang, and primary trafficker Derrick Cooper, the supplier.

#### *Doing the time*

The operation successfully achieved its goal of taking down the leadership. Federal indictments alone resulted in two men serving life sentences, four serving 27 years each and six serving 10 years or more.

According to the nomination form submitted on his behalf, as the lead, Detective Brian Hester had the most demanding and difficult job any investigator can take on. Besides initiating the plan, he monitored all situations, worked a variety of hours and shifts and produced volumes of paperwork. He organized transcriptions, surveillance logs and – eventually – the indictments. Throughout the three-month operation, Detective Hester's investigative and organizational skills were exceptional.

Because of the sheer volume of crime that this one gang was responsible for, the Ft. Pierce Police Department credited the operation, and other follow-up efforts by the Sheriff's Office, with significantly decreasing crime in their community.



And one year later, this one investigation continues to bear fruit: information gathered from the operation has led to obtaining more evidence that is supplementing ongoing investigations that had become stagnant due to the fear of retaliation from 13th Street Gang members. These crimes include previously unsolved robberies and homicides.

While many agencies and their personnel assisted in the investigation, all those associated with the case agree that Detective Brian Hester was the driving force from the beginning through the end. His work ethic, concern, drive and teamwork are credited with taking down the leadership, second-and third-level people and effectively destroying the violent 13th Street Gang.

For this reason, the Florida Sheriffs have selected Detective Brian Hester as their 2006 Deputy Sheriff of the Year and awarded him a handsome plaque and a check for \$1,000.

Our congratulations to Detective Hester for his fine work and the example he set for future large-scale operations.

## Polk County Deputy Sheriff Douglas Speirs Named Runner-Up

The Florida Sheriffs wanted to also recognize Polk County Sheriff's Deputy Douglas Speirs, who was involved in an incident that was nationally televised and ended in the tragic death of his fellow deputy and canine partner.

While performing what seemed to be a routine traffic stop, Deputy Douglas Speirs was handed a Florida Identification Card by a driver who identified himself as Edwardo Ramclaim. When the driver asked if he was going to be arrested for not having a valid license, Deputy Speirs said he did not know at that point.

The driver ran from the scene into a densely wooded area. Numerous patrol units set up a perimeter to contain the suspect, while Deputy Speirs, Deputy Matt Williams and his canine partner, DiOGi, tracked the man. Within seven minutes, they located the suspect, who began shooting. All three officers were hit – Deputy Williams and his devoted canine partner, DiOGi fatally. Deputy Speirs managed to limp, then crawl



**Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd congratulates Deputy Doug Speirs, FSA's 2006 Deputy Sheriff of the Year finalist. Deputy Speirs was recognized for his actions related to a traffic stop that included a lengthy manhunt and ended in the tragic death of fellow Deputy Matt Williams and his K-9 partner DiOGi.**

through the woods and water to seek help. While being treated for a gunshot wound to his leg, he provided enough details on the suspect for them to positively identify him as Angilo Freeland, not Ramclaim. The suspect was located the following day during a massive search of the wooded area and died in a shootout with officers.

The Florida Sheriffs have named

Polk County Deputy Douglas Speirs Runner-Up for the 2006 Deputy Sheriff of the Year for his brave actions in the face of imminent danger, overcoming physical pain to assist in the successful identification of the suspect, and preventing further loss of life of innocent victims.

Congratulations, Deputy Speirs.



# Pasco SROs Train for Active Shooter on Campus

Story and photos by Kevin Doll  
Public Information Director  
Pasco County Sheriff's Office

**P**asco Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer Cpl. Blake Swezey slowly peers around the corner of the building, Glock 40-caliber handgun in one hand, radio in the other. His backup, Cpl. John Peteck, warily keeps an eye on the set of double doors behind them.

Minutes before, the two deputies had begun their search for an unknown gunman, reportedly roaming the school halls randomly shooting victims.

Glancing down an outside corridor, the two deputies spot movement behind a large planter.

"Possible suspect sighted, wearing a blue shirt," Swezey reports into his radio as both deputies point their weapons at the planter.

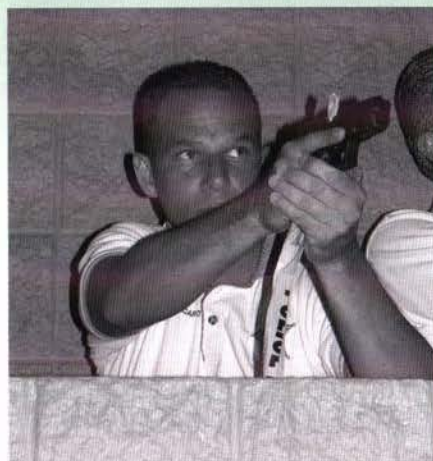
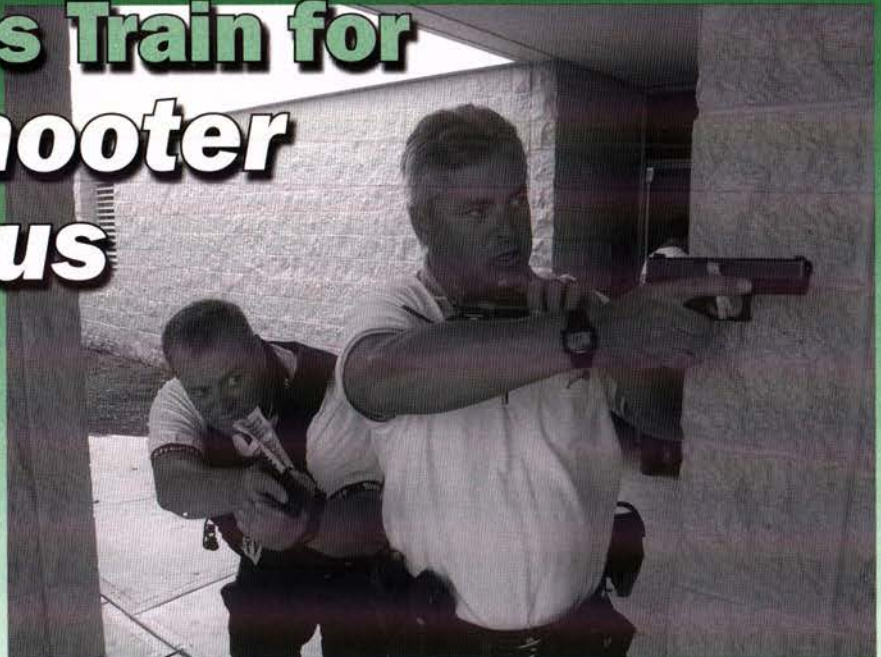
"Show us your hands!" both deputies shout as they crouch behind the corner of the wall. "Stop moving and show us..."

"BANG-BANG!!" echoes a reply from behind the planter as the "gunman" moves out from behind the cover and points his blue handgun at the deputies.

"BANG-BANG!" the deputies shout as they return "fire."

"You're dead," claims the shooter, Pasco Sheriff's Office Explorer Chris Ryan.

"No, you're dead," replies Cpl.



Pasco County Sheriff's Office "active shooter" exercise involved deputies from the PCSO training section, SRO Unit and members of the Pasco School Board. Sheriffs' Explorers volunteered to be the frightened students or gunmen during the scenarios.

shooting. The training is important, as the number of school shootings in the nation has increased, as has the urgency in meeting such threats.

"The traditional response was to set up a perimeter, call for back-up and then send in the SWAT team," said Lt. Brian Prescott, Training Section supervisor. "But due to the extreme loss of life and injury to students and faculty in many well-publicized shootings, now our training emphasizes for any and all law-enforcement officers to quickly enter the building, move to the sound of shooting or violence, and eliminate the threat."

The Training Section, SRO Unit and members of the Pasco School Board all coordinated to make the exercise as realistic as possible. An entire wing of Wesley Chapel High School was used

Peteck. "We all had you before you even made a move."

The deputies continue to good-naturedly argue with the youth as they head back to the classroom where their exercise began.

## Training for trouble

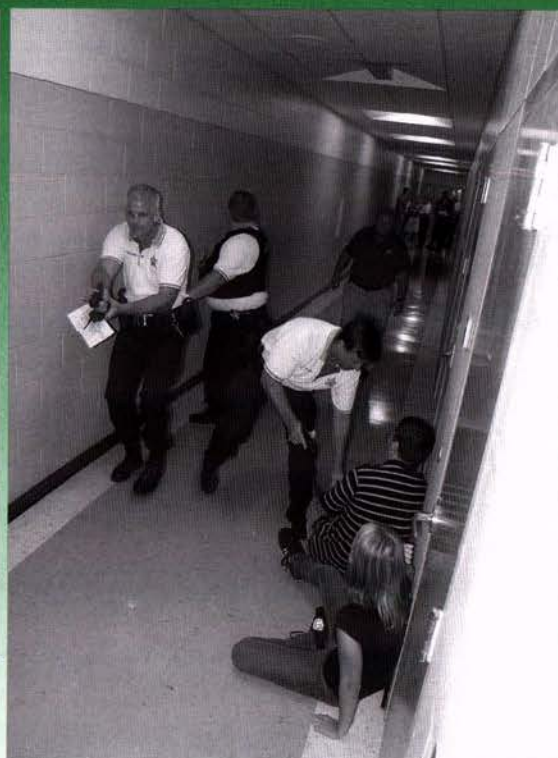
Although there was time for humor in the "active shooter" exercise involving deputies and Sheriffs' Explorers, the group was very serious about the lessons and skills learned during PCSO's annual exercise aimed at training school resource officers who may have to respond to a school



## TRAINING



The students were limited only by their imagination in the "active shooter" exercises. Some hid, some confronted the deputies, and some were decoys who pretended to be frightened students, but were really "armed and dangerous."



for the exercise, and a number of Pasco Sheriff's Office Explorers volunteered to be frightened students or gunmen during the scenarios. Darkened hallways, bathrooms and classrooms gave the "gunmen" multiple places to hide in ambush, and students were limited only in their imagination (and suggestions by deputy trainers) on what to do. Some hid, some sought out confrontations with the deputies, and some were decoys who portrayed themselves as frightened students, but were really "armed and dangerous."

### *What's real, what's not*

"We began the day with classroom instruction on the preparation SROs need to make with their respective schools before a tragedy occurs on their campus," said SRO Sgt. James Law. This includes forming a crisis committee that determines the needs of their school, such as

its particular problems and possible solutions.

Once the issues are identified, this team or committee can then formulate a comprehensive plan to make the school safer. An example is a "crisis box" maintained by the school principal that contains essential items needed by law enforcement in the event of a school shooting. Items in the crisis box should include:

- A current school yearbook for identification of students
- At least one school radio (law-enforcement radios may not work in some schools.)
- Keys for every door in the school
- Map of the school grounds
- Blueprint of the school buildings

Like any law-enforcement training, the active shooter exercise stresses the importance of communication, especially in a rapidly evolving, extremely tense situation. Responding officers, school

administrators and the school faculty within the classroom all have a part to play in providing information that can save lives. An example is a "safe classroom" sign that a teacher can slip under the door into the hall that lets an officer know that their room is OK and the officer can continue their search for the gunman.

"We hope we never have to use this training," said Sgt. Law. "But it is important that our SROs practice the teamwork and communication needed for such an incident. When you are in a high stress situation like this, your actions resort back to your training."

For more information, contact: Kevin Doll, [kdoll@pascosheriff.org](mailto:kdoll@pascosheriff.org), or call: Phone (727) 844-7732.



## Suicide Prevention "Tool Kit" Coming to Local Law-Enforcement Agencies

Donna Schulz, law-enforcement coordinator for the U.S. Attorney's Office Middle District, was a speaker at the Florida Sheriffs



Association summer conference in July. She told Sheriffs to expect to receive a "tool kit" in September from her agency that was developed as part of a Suicide Prevention Outreach for local and state law-enforcement agencies in Florida. It was developed through a concerted effort by the Governor's Office of Drug Control, Florida RCPI, SOLES and the Middle District of Florida's U.S. Attorney's Office. Schulz's husband, who was a career law-enforcement officer in Tal-

lahassee, was a victim of suicide, and she has made it her life's work to educate law enforcement about the warning signs and helping agencies get prevention programs implemented.

Jacksonville Sheriff John Rutherford had invited Donna Schulz to do the presentation. His agency had three suicides in four years and Sheriff Rutherford has stepped up efforts in the areas of education and prevention to combat the trend.

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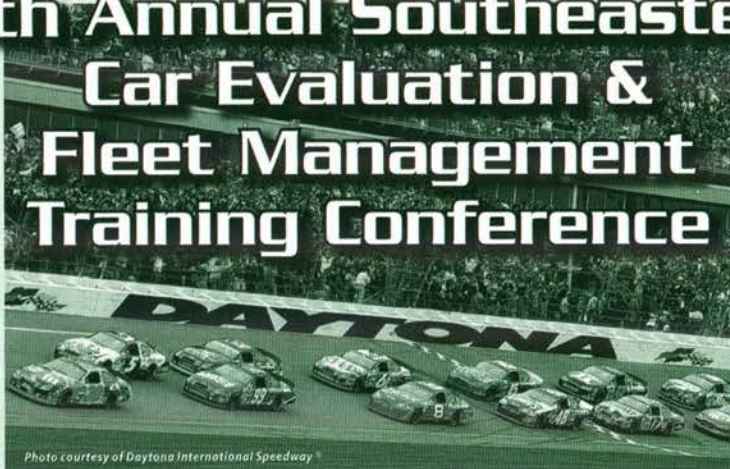


Photo courtesy of Daytona International Speedway



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## "Look Twice, Save a Life" Motorcycle Awareness Mission Gaining Ground

Diane Pearson of Safety Harbor calls herself a "mother on a mission." She

launched the "Look Twice, Save a Life" motorcycle awareness campaign after her 31-year-old son, Gene Adam Pearson, was killed when a car pulled out in front of him



Deputy Gene Adam Pearson

while he was riding his motorcycle. He was a corrections officer for six years with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office before his death May 19, 2005.

The Division of Motor Vehicles and Tax Collector Offices in Hillsborough County have helped in the distribution



The Richard A. Purdy Youth Ranches Motorcycle Ride covered 225 miles, departing the Marriott Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra on July 29, during FSA's summer conference. Twenty-eight riders, escorted by motorcycle officers from the St. Johns, Flagler, Putnam and Volusia Sheriffs' Offices, rode to St. Augustine then the Florida Sheriffs Youth Camp at Barbourville. For information on the next ride, contact Terry Meek, meekt@mindspring.com, or 850-545-5775.



of more than 17,000 free bumper stickers. Pearson also has arranged three billboards and artwork on eight bus benches, 15 Yellow Cab tops, 14 bus shelters and 10 buses. The local

cable television produced a commercial that can be viewed on her Web site: [www.genepearson.org](http://www.genepearson.org). She says she's also visiting local motorcycle clubs to gain support for the campaign.

Pearson says she is especially interested in networking through law-enforcement groups. Anyone with interest in helping this effort can contact her via e-mail: [diane@gulfaero-space.com](mailto:diane@gulfaero-space.com) or call 727-797-0176. For additional information, visit Pearson's Web site: [www.genepearson.org](http://www.genepearson.org).

## Polk PIOs Win Statewide Golden Image Award

The Polk County Sheriff's Office Public Information Unit was recently recognized by the statewide Florida Public Relations Association for exemplary performance in Crisis Communication. They were presented with the FPRA Golden Image Award during the Association's annual award ceremony August 8.

More than 200 professionals and students from around the state were considered for various categories. PIOs Donna Wood and Carrie Rodgers were recognized for their outstanding professional performance during the very difficult circumstances following the ambush killing of Deputy Matt Williams and his K-9 partner DiOGi on September 28, 2006. Deputy Sheriff Doug Speirs was shot and injured during the incident, and two Lakeland Police Officers were fired upon by the suspect. The suspect, Angilo Freeland, was found the next day and was shot to death by a team of law-enforcement officers when he raised a handgun instead of surrendering.



Polk Sheriff Grady Judd congratulates PIOs Donna Wood (left) and Carrie Rodgers.



## BRIEFS

### Jax PIO Jefferson Wins State Award - Again

Jacksonville Sheriff's Office PIO Ken Jefferson was named Public Information Officer of the Year by his peers for the second consecutive year.

Members of the Florida Law Enforcement Public Information Officers Association honored him at their annual conference in June. He is the only officer to have won the award two consecutive years.

In receiving the award, Jefferson

said, "I am a very blessed man to have been able to win this award for two consecutive years." Because of their sacrifices, he thanked his wife and child "for being my beacon of support and understanding that this is a part of my calling."

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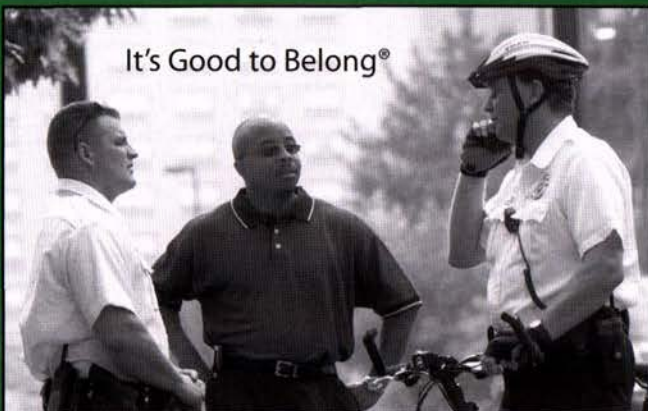
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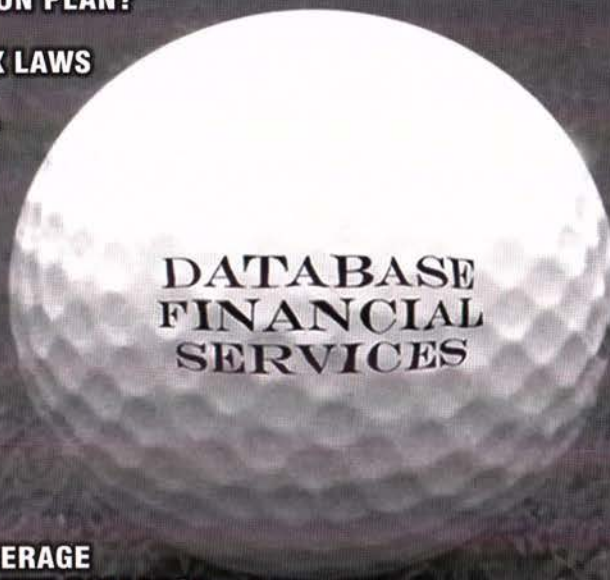
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