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“Committed to Excellence”

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Like Victims & Survivors Of Violent Crime Police Officers Too Can Be Traumatized



Dr. Scott Allen: “The number one stressor that police officers experience is when they respond to a call for service in which the victim is a child.”

On November 22, 2013, two armed men stormed into Hong Kong Nails located at Northwest 148 Street and 7 Avenue. They robbed the owners, workers, and patrons. As they exited the business, one of the robbers fired into the store. Two people were hit, the store owner, 42-year-old Hai Nam Vu, and his son Aaron, who was days away from his tenth birthday. The child did not survive.

Even in a community used to violent crimes, the murder of this child seemed to hit home particularly hard. For days after, people turned up at Hong Kong Nails leaving flowers and cards, openly expressing their grief. Among them, were officers from the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD). They weren't there as investigators. They weren't on duty. They, like other members of the community, had been hit hard by the violence.

How are police officers affected by the constant exposure to violence, especially when the victims of the violence are children? How are they affected, when they have to fire their weapons in encounters with violent subjects?

News reporters have often raised one or both of these questions with MDPD Director Juan J. Perez and his predecessors.

The MDPD Psychological Services Section

Recently, the same questions were asked of an MDPD civilian employee, who knows a thing or two about how the constant exposure to violence affects police officers. His name is Dr. Scott Allen and he heads MDPD's Psychological Services Section (PSS). “Many people see police officers as almost being robots, automations, and not having human emotions,” Dr. Allen told WTVJ reporter Laura Rodriguez. “They're people like everyone else. They respond to significant traumatic events like everyone else.”

Police officers experience the same stressors that affect everyone else, he explained. They have “relationship” stressors. “Most officers work shifts which might not coincide with their significant others. This causes stress within their families, with their partners and/or their children. So we see a very high rate of divorce.” They have administrative stressors. They have stressors on the road. The sometimes difficult relations between the police and the communities they work to protect, is also a source of stress.

But, says Dr. Allen, “the number one stressor that police officers experience is when they respond to a call for service in which the victim is a child; the injury of a child, or the death of a child. That gravely impacts the emotions of the officers.”

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Like Victims & Survivors...

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The impact often extends beyond the individual officer, to members of his or her family, he says.

MDPD created the PSS in 1980, principally to deal with a distressing problem of officers committing suicide. Dr. Allen was hired in 1983. Currently, the Section has two licensed civilian psychologists, and four mental health professionals with post-graduate degrees, two of whom are police officers.

Both the civilians and sworn officers in the section work regular eight-hour days, but are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "We respond to all officer-involved shootings," Dr. Allen said. "We respond to the hospital when a major traumatic event has befallen any member of the police department, but especially the law enforcement officers."

The trauma of a shooting

On October 20, 2013, Officer Mario Gutierrez backed his patrol car into position at a gas station near Miami International Airport to be able to observe traffic in what was known to be a problematic intersection, and called his wife on the phone. At worst, he expected to be dealing with traffic offenders.

What followed has been documented, from Officer Gutierrez's memory, an observer's cell phone video, and surveillance footage from the gas station cameras.

A man carrying a backpack entered the station, removed newspapers from the kiosk, walked to the last pump (out of Gutierrez's view), where he opened the lid to access the 8,000 gallon fuel tank. At this point, a vehicle moved, which allowed Officer Gutierrez to see what was happening. The man had taken a hose from one of the pumps and was pouring gasoline onto the newspapers and some rags he had taken from his backpack. He was trying to start a fire, a fire that would have unquestionably resulted in a massive explosion. "That's when I freaked out," says Officer Gutierrez, "because in that instance, I realized what was happening."

He told his wife he had to go, dropped the phone, drove to the side of the building where there was an emergency valve that shuts off all the pumps, and "hit the button," effectively turning off all the pumps. He then turned his attention to the would-be arsonist. Officer Gutierrez admits that he was afraid, but he knew he had to deal with the problem. He reached for his taser, and after an initial fumble, managed to hit the subject. The man went down, but was back up in an instant. That's when Officer Gutierrez saw the knife and felt the first stab. He tried to reach for his pistol, but the subject was on top of him,

biting him, stabbing him, trying to get his gun. Officer Gutierrez knew he was in trouble. He thought about his family. This subject was not going to prevent him from ever seeing them again. He was going to see his granddaughter grow up. Rage replaced fear. He found the strength to kick the subject, unholster his pistol, fire, and call for help on his radio.

Calling Dr. Scott Allen

"In every police shooting that I've responded to, firing his/her weapon was the last action that an officer wanted to take," says Dr. Allen. "He or she felt that at that point, they were compelled to shoot to save themselves or others. The officers tend to feel emotionally overwhelmed. There's a discharge of adrenaline in their bodies. They are very agitated. Some of them are a little confused because of what just happened. Shooting another human being is not a natural thing for most people."

This kind of trauma can result in substance abuse, insomnia, or feelings of guilt, Dr. Allen explains. Even though the officer involved is "cognitively and rationally aware" that this had been his or her last option, "they carry a lot of guilt." He says these officers often deal with the trauma by "emotionally withdrawing" from those around them, including their loved ones. In dealing with these traumatized officers, as well as in lectures he gives to trainees at the police academy, he warns against this kind of withdrawal.

The PSS personnel are acutely aware of these possibilities and have programs in place to deal with them. This is why they respond to every police involved shooting, whenever and wherever it happens.

At the same time, Dr. Allen notes, police officers, like firefighters and military service personnel, tend to have a "strong fraternal component to their occupational group." Squad members of a colleague who has experienced trauma, tend to rally around their colleagues. This is enormously helpful.

Officer Gutierrez remembers being in pain and confused when his colleagues delivered him to the Ryder Trauma Center at Jackson Memorial Hospital (JMH). He remembers struggling with hospital personnel as they tried to sedate and treat him. When he regained consciousness, and as he recovered his composure, he remembered the lectures about the psychological impact of traumatic events. "Get me Dr. Allen," he demanded. He knew his body would heal, but there were other issues he needed to deal with. Despite being hailed as a hero, he wondered if he had done as well as he could.

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Like Victims & Survivors...

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He remembers asking then Director J.D. Patterson, "Sir are you mad at me?" The doctors and nurses at JMHS would help in healing his body. He also needed help healing his mind.

"Just like you have physical wounds, you have psychological wounds," Dr. Allen says.

And what about the impact on the doctor himself?

"There are a number of events that I've responded to,

that have been very impactful to me professionally," he says. "I've seen cases of heroism by officers, just trying to survive for themselves and their families. That's inspiring to me."

Dr. Allen also emphasizes that officer suicide, the problem that led to the creation of the PSS in the first place, thankfully is no longer the leading problem it used to be.

For MDPD Forensic Artist Samantha Steinberg...

It's about establishing the identity, and getting justice for the victim



MDPD Forensic Artist Samantha Steinberg. She combines her two passions; a love of drawing and an interest in the forensic side of crime-fighting. "It's about helping bring justice to a victim," she says.

There's an old saying that the best way to make a living is to determine what you are passionate about, and find a way to get paid pursuing that passion. That's what MDPD Forensic Artist Samantha Steinberg has done. In her case, she has combined two passions; a love of drawing and an interest in forensic crime-fighting.

First, the drawing

Samantha's earliest recollection of having an interest in and a talent for art goes back to grade school when she would reproduce characters from popular cartoons, such as Snoopy from Charles M. Schulz's, "Peanuts." Her mother, Sandy Steinberg, remembers it going even further back. She remembers when Samantha was two years old and was drawing fish with an amazing anatomical accuracy; the fish were depicted with dorsal fins, pectoral fins, gills, etc.

Where did this interest and talent come from? Nobody in the family is quite sure. Neither of her parents were artists. Her father, Paul Steinberg, would sometimes doodle on things like restaurant menus, but that was the extent of his artistic pursuits. Neither her brother, nor her sister, who are both older, showed any such inclination.

It was early in middle school, (she attended Ransom Everglades in Coconut Grove for both her high school and middle school years) that Samantha realized she, "had a talent that maybe I should focus on." Paul and Sandy Steinberg still have hanging on their bedroom wall a painting she produced back in sixth grade.

Early guidance in honing this talent came from teachers Beau Siegel, while in middle school along with Jose Rodriguez, who chaired the Fine Arts Department in high school. Mr. Rodriguez had majored in Illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Samantha followed in his footsteps.

Fighting crime with forensics

Samantha's interest with the forensic side of crime fighting goes way back, albeit not as far back as her interest in art.

She assiduously followed the investigation of the July 1981 abduction and murder of six-year-old Adam Walsh. She remembers being captivated by *Fatal Vision*, a book published in 1983 and a television feature the following year, about the February 1970 killing of the McDonald Family at Fort Bragg, in North Carolina.

After she graduated from RISD in 1996, this interest in forensic criminology dictated her reading habits. She was a regular customer at Barnes and Noble and at Borders Books, (this was before the e-book phenomenon, she notes) where her preferred reading category was "true crime books about serial killers."

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forensic Artist Samantha Steinberg...

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Richard, her older brother, used to joke that given her reading preferences, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had probably taken note and the next time there was a serial killer in Miami-Dade County, the police would be knocking on her door.

One of the books she read involved a serial killer who was a long-distance truck driver and had murdered young women. Investigators found skeletal remains of a teenage girl, and needed to put a face to this victim. They turned to a graphic artist who, while working with an anthropologist, was able to put a face to this skull. "I could do that," Samantha thought. "It was in that moment I realized that this could be the perfect marriage of two of my passions; my ability to draw and my interest in forensics, criminal justice, and serial offenders."

She heard the FBI offered training in the forensic facial imaging at its Headquarters in Quantico, Virginia, so with a boldness, which she admits was probably born of youth and naiveté, she called the FBI and asked about becoming a forensic artist. The FBI trained only a limited number of forensic artists every year she was told, and only artists already employed by a police department were considered. Not to be daunted, she called MDPD and was put in touch with Detective Charlie Holt, the closest representative the Department had to a forensic artist. They met, she explained her interest, and presented her portfolio. He explained that MDPD had no such position. They struck a deal. He would teach her the forensic side of criminal investigations and she would help him improve his drawing skills. And so, in June 1998, Samantha Steinberg became an MDPD volunteer.

Over the next year, she worked on "cold cases" doing age progressions of fugitives who had been wanted for more than ten years, using PhotoShop to apply "age progression" to the illustrations. But her work was not limited to "cold cases." She recalls, with obvious pride, a composite drawing for a home invasion robbery, in which there were multiple suspects. When her sketch of one of the suspects was published, he was immediately identified.

However, as helpful as Detective Holt's mentoring was, she worried about her lack of formal training. What if she ever had to testify in court? She would almost certainly have been asked about her qualifications in forensic art. So she sought out retired MDPD Lieutenant Hank Ray and paid to attend a 40-hour training course he was instructing at the Coconut Creek Police Department.

As much as she loved the work, she couldn't continue indefinitely as an unpaid volunteer, a concern she voiced to her supervisor at the time, Lieutenant Jerry Coney. There would be several meetings with him and Commander Harry



At a recent meeting of the MDPD Command Staff, Director Juan J. Perez congratulated Samantha Steinberg, after her "age progression" drawings helped in the capture of a fugitive who had been wanted for more than two decades.

Bolinger, head of the MDPD's Crime Scene Investigations Bureau. "They realized they could have a professionally trained artist doing this work, who would cost them less than a sworn officer," she surmised. In June 1999, she was hired as a Police Crime Analysis Specialist 1, not the job she had hoped for, but one for which she was more than qualified.

Two years later, "after much back and forth and paperwork, the position of Forensic Artist for MDPD was created," and Samantha Steinberg became the first person to such a position.

The work process

While her title is listed as a Forensic Artist, a non-law enforcement person could easily think of her as a forensic detective. She produces sketches of suspects, solely based on descriptions provided by either victims and/or witnesses. She produces facial approximations (or facial reconstructions) of deceased persons, sometimes working with little more than a skull. Her tools range from a portfolio of facial types, to specialized pencils, to computer software programs, to her ability to get witnesses or victims of crimes to open up and disclose information about a traumatic event. While the bulk of her work takes place at the MDPD's Headquarters Building in Doral, she at times responds to crime scenes, or even to hospitals, to interview victims.

Here's a typical scenario: A victim or witness is brought to Samantha's office. She conducts what she calls, "a cognitive interview,"

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Samantha Steinberg...

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all the while working to build a rapport with the person. “If I can get the person to do all of the talking, that’s my goal. I’ll ask them to explain to me where they were before (the event) leading up to it, and in their own words describe what happened.”

She takes notes, asking questions only when she needs to. What emerges, if all goes well, is a description to which her talent and experience can be applied. It can take an hour, or much longer. The goal is to get it right... to capture an accurate likeness.

Another aspect of the work is, “post mortem renderings.” That’s when she’s called upon to put a face to a deceased person who has been the victim of blunt force trauma or the body is in the early stages of decomposition. In those situations, she will use crime scene photos to develop a sketch (Florida law prohibits the publishing of the actual photo). If there is advanced decomposition, she will have to conduct “facial reconstruction” often with the assistance of a forensic anthropologist.

In her almost 20 years on the job, Samantha has worked on hundreds of cases. The majority of the cases have been sex-related crimes, ranging from suspects exposing themselves, to armed sexual assaults. Robbery-related incidents comprise the second largest category.

Exactly how many cases has she worked on? “I couldn’t even begin to guess,” she says. “From the ones I’ve

been informed about, or have found out about through a subpoena, or because I’ve seen it on the news, I’ve had over 400 identifications based on the images that I’ve created. But as far as how many cases I’ve done, I have no idea.”

Part of the reason for this uncertainty, she explains, is that since MDPD serves as the Sheriff’s Office for Miami-Dade County, Samantha is routinely called upon to assist municipal police agencies. The Department also does case work for federal agencies, and for many years, has been receiving unidentified human remains from all over Florida, for post-mortem renderings and facial reconstructions. For her, some cases stand out.

One of those involved more than just rendering a face. It involved the kidnapping and sexual assault of a juvenile female. The victim had been taken to an abandoned house. Based on the victim’s recollections, Samantha was able to sketch the house, the male and female suspect involved, including the jewelry worn by the female suspect. Both suspects were later identified when a tipster saw the composite drawings on television and called in a Crime Stoppers tip.

Her job was done. Another case of forensic artist success. But she doesn’t take credit. “Can you imagine a traumatized young girl remembering those details,” she asks rhetorically. It’s about helping bring justice to a victim.

MDPD Division Chief, Delma Noel-Pratt Appointed Head of City of Miami Gardens Police Department



CONGRATULATIONS: *Division Chief Delma Noel-Pratt. On May 1, 2017, she assumes duties as Chief of Police of the Miami Gardens Police Department.*

Director Juan J. Perez on Tuesday, April 4, 2017, formally congratulated MDPD Division Chief Delma Noel-Pratt, on being appointed Chief of Police of the Miami Gardens Police Department.

In a note to MDPD staff, Director Perez wrote, “We stand with her as she faces new challenges. The community of Miami Gardens will certainly benefit from her skills and knowledge. We wish her the best and look forward to a lasting partnership.”

Director Perez issued his congratulatory note on the

same day that Miami Gardens City Manager Cameron Benson announced that Chief Noel-Pratt would be the city’s next Police Chief, assuming those duties on May 1, 2017.

The City Manager told the Miami Times newspaper, “Chief Noel-Pratt’s nearly 25 years experience with MDPD and her approach to policing, made her “a great fit for Miami Gardens.”

Those sentiments were later echoed by Miami Gardens Mayor Oliver Gilbert, who told television station CBS4, “Her long career with the County brings extensive knowledge and experience to meet the needs of our community. We’re looking forward to taking our police department to new levels of excellence under her leadership.”

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MDPD Division Chief, Delma Noel-Pratt...

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Chief Noel-Pratt started her law enforcement career as a public service aide in the Miami Police Department. She joined MDPD in 1993, and over the next 20 years, rose through the ranks to become Chief of the North Operations Division in 2013. She was appointed Chief of the Special Investigations Division in May 2016.

In news media interviews about her new position, she emphasized that her approach to leading the Miami

Gardens Police Department will be underpinned by community outreach, high visibility, and a partnership with local and federal law enforcement agencies.

“I am proactive,” she told one reporter. “I will be out there with my personnel assuring that they are doing the right things.”

Chief Noel-Pratt will be the first woman to be appointed Chief of Police of Miami Gardens.

Retiring MDPD Detective David Richards Honored by Board of County Commissioners



District 11 Commissioner Joe Martinez, presents a proclamation to retiring robbery detective, David Richards.

On February 3, 2017, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners honored retiring MDPD Detective David Richards, for his “exceptional contributions to Miami-Dade County.” A proclamation was presented to Detective Richards by Commissioner Joe Martinez, himself a former MDPD lieutenant.

The proclamation read:

After more than 30 years of providing dedicated service to the MDPD and the citizens of Miami-Dade County, Detective David Richards will be retiring. Throughout his career, he has displayed qualities that reflect honorably upon himself and the Department.

Detective Richards began his career in law enforcement in 1986 at the South District. During his assignment in the South District, he excelled as a uniformed officer and then as a Crime Suppression Team detective. In 1996, he was detached to the Robbery Bureau’s Robbery Intervention

Detail Unit, where he was one of only six detectives from the entire Department chosen to lead this crime-fighting endeavor. After several years, Detective Richards assumed the role of a robbery investigations detective, where he successfully investigated, solved, and assisted in numerous investigations that resulted in the prosecution of hundreds of violent robbers. In 2007, Detective Richards was assigned to the Robbery Bureau, Street Terror Offender Program’s (STOP) Telecommunication Unit, where he has assisted in the apprehension of over 2,500 offenders and in the recovery of hundreds of missing persons. In each of his assignments, he has made substantial contributions to the community, his coworkers, and the Department.

In June 2014, Detective Richards was contacted by the MDPD Narcotics Bureau, to assist them in tracking the telephone of a human trafficker that was demanding ransom from a family that had paid a group of individuals to smuggle their juvenile son into the United States from Mexico. The subject threatened to kill their son if the money was not delivered. Detective Richards obtained two separate exigent tracking orders for the cellular telephones of the believed subjects. One of the subjects was located in Osceola County, Florida, where Osceola County Sheriffs were able to observe the subject’s vehicle parked at a hotel. The subject was subsequently taken into custody and the juvenile victim was recovered.

In April 2015, detectives from STOP secured an arrest warrant for a subject for his participation in several commercial armed robberies that occurred in the Northside District. Their investigation also uncovered a cellular telephone number for the subject, but no current residence. Detective Richards obtained a Pen Register Trap and Trace for the subject’s phone and began tracking the subject.

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Retiring MDPD Detective David Richards...

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As a result, STOP personnel located and arrested the subject several blocks away from where he was believed to be residing. At the time of his arrest, the subject was armed with a Glock 9mm handgun located in his waistband. He was taken into custody, subsequently confessed to nine of the ten armed robberies he was suspected of committing, and pled to 32 years in federal prison.

Detective Richards was awarded the Employee Excellence Award, and during his last 30 years, has received an "Outstanding" rating 22 times in his annual Employee Performance Evaluations. All credit to his

commitment to the Department, his supervisors, peers, and our community. Additionally, Detective Richards has received over 103 commendations and letters of appreciation for a variety of accomplishments and distinguished service throughout his law enforcement career.

Among those who attended the presentation were Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez, County Commissioners, Director Juan J. Perez, and several members of the MDPD Command Staff.



(Listed in alphabetical order)

MDPD recently said farewell to 28 employees (15 sworn officers and 13 civilians) who retired after periods of service ranging from 16 to 35 years. Director Juan J. Perez, the Department's Command Staff, and the entire MDPD family wishes our departing colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

Officers

- Major Julie Miller30 yrs.
- Captain Janna Bolinger-Heller30 yrs.
- Lieutenant Efren Lopez29 yrs.
- Lieutenant Selisa Mitchell27 yrs.
- Sergeant Michael Cowart19 yrs.
- Sergeant Recenia Pelham29 yrs.
- Sergeant Darla Powell17 yrs.
- Officer Armando Almanza28 yrs.
- Officer Tangela Chipman25 yrs.
- Officer Dominick Columbro21 yrs.
- Officer Eddy Duarte32 yrs.
- Officer Johnnie Harrison30 yrs.
- Officer Derrick Love23 yrs.
- Officer Joseph Medina30 yrs.
- Officer Michael Wordly22 yrs.

Civilians

- Executive Asst. to the Director Annette Mc Cully ...35 yrs.
- Police Records Specialist 1 Grace Boyd23 yrs.
- Police Records Specialist 1 Esther Ramiall28 yrs.
- Police Property Evidence Specialist 1 Joseph Cray .30 yrs.
- Police Dispatcher Lyn Duque35 yrs.
- Police Crime Analysis Specialist 1 Cassandra Rolle 23 yrs.
- Secretary Edna Schelich35 yrs.
- Fingerprint Analyst Michael Sharpless22 yrs.
- Building Manager Supervisor Ramon Garcia Jr.16 yrs.
- School Crossing Guard Beverly Byrne10 yrs.
- School Crossing Guard Felix Castro17 yrs.
- School Crossing Guard Ida Green20 yrs.
- School Crossing Guard Gladys Martinez22 yrs.

Awards And Commendations

In a ceremony at the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building on April 5, 2017, the following awards were presented:

Officer of the Month, January 2017

- Sergeant Emilio Teodoro Midwest District
- Officer Jorge Gonzalez Midwest District
- Officer Andrew Sacasas Midwest District

Unit Of The Month, January 2017

The Human Trafficking Squad of the Special Victims Bureau

Director Juan J. Perez presented the awards and commended the officers for their outstanding efforts and their contribution to the Department.



MDPD Sponsors More Successful Blood Drives

MDPD continues to hold successful blood collection drives at the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute. Below is a list of MDPD staff who contributed at the most recent blood drive:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Sergeant Eduardo Gaitan | Officer Patrick Maignan | Intelligence Analyst Barbara Bonachea |
| Sergeant Waukesha Kenon | Officer Henry Mcpherson | Wellness Prog. Fac. Mgr. Kelly Kennedy |
| Sergeant Theresa Ortiz | Officer Keith Morris | Police Station Specialist Tiffany Patterson |
| Sergeant Glenn Ross | Officer Adrian Ulmer | Police Trainee Julianne Terp |
| Officer Lewis Diaz | Officer Alejandro Venturin | |
| Officer Renzo Herrera | Officer Taneitha Williams | |
| Officer Christopher Hodges | Officer Lymarie Zayas | |



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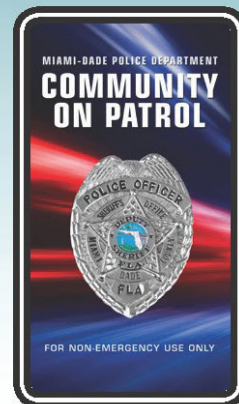
This New Year, resolve to be one of millions of residents on patrol.



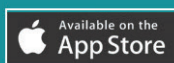
CAPTURE IT WITH THE COP APP

Alert police to suspicious activity in your neighborhood with the **Community on Patrol app**.

Send tips, videos, and photos about possible criminal activity in your community to the Miami-Dade Police Department's Real-Time Crime Center.



Download the Community On Patrol app today!



Working Together To Protect What's Yours

Miami-Dade County wants to protect what's yours. You or your loved ones could be the target of scammers who often use schemes combining new technology with old tricks to get people to send money or give out personal information.

Always stay a step ahead by doing the following:

- **Review your finances.**
- **Consider secure payment methods.**
- **Be skeptical about free trial offers.**
- **Sign up for FREE scam alerts.**

**For more info and tips,
call 311 or visit
www.miamidade.gov/fraudfree.**



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Miami-Dade County provides equal access and equal opportunity in employment and services and does not discriminate on the basis of disability. "It is the policy of Miami-Dade to comply with all of the requirements of The Americans with Disabilities Act."