

New Division Chief Among 45 Promotions at MDPD

By Brian Ballou



South Operations Division Chief George A. Perez (left) with Criminal Investigations Division Chief Richard Amion, during the recent Promotional Ceremony. Chief Perez was among 45 sworn personnel who were promoted. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

George A. Perez was promoted to Division Chief of the South Operations Division on February 27, 2019, and has come full circle in a distinguished career. While his responsibilities have multiplied, he says he remains focused on “continuing connections with the community and building bonds.”

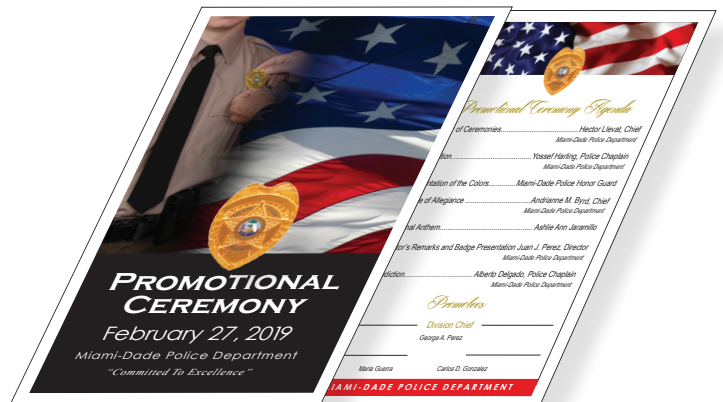
Chief Perez’ 19-year career with the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) began in the Hammocks District, patrolling the community and fostering positive

communication links with residents. Since then, he continued his profession in various assignments, including Homicide, Robbery, and Professional Compliance Bureaus.

Chief Perez was among 45 MDPD sworn personnel promoted earlier this year. In addition to his promotion, there are 2 new majors and captains, 8 lieutenants, and 29 sergeants. Approximately 250 people attended this formal ceremony hosted at the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Headquarters in Doral.

Before presenting their new badges, MDPD Director Juan J. Perez challenged each promotee to rise to the demands of their new supervisory roles. “You have an incredible responsibility, you encourage what you demonstrate, choose to lead for the good,” Director Perez said. “Even when the seas are calm, expect toughness. Be ready for the rough waters. After all, the smooth sea, never made a skillful sailor.”

Director Perez recounted a story told to him by an MDPD police chaplain after Hurricane Wilma had devastated the area. The story was of a daughter who asked her mother why life was so difficult. The mother responded with an example of the effects of boiling water, that an egg “toughens” in boiling water, a carrot falls apart, and coffee beans stay the same, but transform the color of the water to brown. “Don’t change yourself, change the environment,” Director Perez told the promotees.



Susan Windmiller, MDPD's "Dot Connector," Has Retired

By Brian Ballou



Pictured left to right are Lieutenant Jeffrey Schmidinger, Special Patrol Bureau; Former MDPD Governmental Affairs Legal Research Analyst Susan Windmiller, Legal Bureau; Officer Pedro Otano, Special Patrol Bureau's Canine Unit, with bloodhound, Missy; and Commander Janet Lewis, Legal Bureau. (Photo courtesy of Ms. Susan Windmiller)

Ms. Susan Windmiller was the Police Legal Bureau MDPD Governmental Affairs Legal Research Analyst, however, she had a more succinct description of what she did for the MDPD.

"I was a dot connector," said Ms. Windmiller, referring to how she worked with MDPD staff to bring proposed projects, initiatives, task forces or ideas to the County legislative process to become a reality.

Ms. Windmiller retired from MDPD on May 31, 2019. Her career with the County spanned 33 years, with 14 years at MDPD. Grant writing was her primary task for most of her career, helping obtain between seven and ten million dollars annually in federal, state and private funding.

Since 2015, Ms. Windmiller focused on legislation and contracts. She assisted with proposals that led to new County laws (ordinances). One initiative entailed streamlining the process to retire County animals, including MDPD's canines, in which she worked with Lieutenant Jeff Schmidinger, of our Special Patrol Bureau. With the assistance of Lieutenant John Ramos, another

project involved the implementation of rafting restrictions in the wake of a fatal boating accident in 2015. Ms. Windmiller also assisted with law proposals for the 2019 Florida legislature, and wrote hundreds of County resolutions and dozens of contracts.

Ms. Windmiller and Police Legal Bureau Commander Janet Lewis recently created a proposal to allow police officers to use drones in the course of their investigations. Current law does not allow the use of these devices by local law enforcement officers in Florida, out of concern for privacy issues. However, Ms. Windmiller said the proposal outlined specifically what information would be used for investigations. To prepare the proposal, she worked with Captain Gustavo Duarte, Crime Scene Investigative Support Section, and Lieutenant Aviel Sanchez, Special Patrol Bureau. Despite working hard to change the law, the proposal did not get enough votes in the Florida Legislature.

Recently, the Department participated in a partnership for a homeland security grant for joint training exercises to improve security for the Tri-Rail, operated by the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority. The MDPD's Special Response Team is the only full-time special weapons and tactics team in the region and would

play the lead role in responding to situations at Tri-Rail. Ms. Windmiller worked with Lieutenant Frank Rego, of the Special Response Team, to write the resolution for this unique partnership, and the contract to allow for the training exercises between Tri-Rail, the County, and MDPD.

Among her important tasks, she assisted Director Perez and Command Staff members in staying abreast of law enforcement issues considered by the County Commission, the Florida State Legislature, and U.S. Congress. She coordinated with the County lobbying teams in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., advised on legislative issues important to MDPD and law enforcement in general. She worked with our Command Staff to secure their opinion on how proposed changes in federal and/or state policy and law impacted public safety in our community.

"Susan earned a reputation here as a people person, and we have been so happy that she shared her expertise

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Susan Windmiller

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with us over the years,” Commander Lewis said. “She has been very important to this Department and we will miss her.”

Ms. Windmiller’s contributions at work and to women’s causes were recently recognized, as she received the 2019 “In the Company of Women” award in the Government and Law category. The award, presented in partnership with the Miami-Dade Commission for Women and the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade, is given to women who have “excelled

professionally and civically, and have contributed to women’s progress.” Ms. Windmiller is active with the League of Women Voters; she recently served as that organization’s president.

“It was a privilege to work behind the scenes to help our Department and public safety in our community,” Ms. Windmiller said.

A Fifth Fuentes Family Member Joins MDPD

By Brian Ballou

It is not uncommon for people to follow their relatives into a law enforcement career, and there are multiple examples of siblings, married couples, and other extended families working on the Department. Subsequently, the Fuentes family has made MDPD their family business.

The newest addition is Police Officer Katrina Fuentes, who received her silver badge on March 28, 2019, after graduating with BLE Class 122. Assigned to the Midwest District, she is further spanning the family name across the Department.

For Officer Katrina Fuentes, joining MDPD was like marrying into the family business. She is the wife of Officer Adalberto Fuentes, whose parents, Sergeants Diana and Leopoldo Fuentes, wear the brown uniform of the MDPD. Brothers Adalberto and Alejandro Fuentes followed their parents’ career paths and

joined MDPD, and their sister, Police Explorer Angela Fuentes, assigned to the Kendall District’s Explorer Post, is in the same career trajectory.

Sergeant Diana Fuentes is assigned to the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute, Sergeant Leopoldo

Fuentes works in the Economic Crimes Bureau, Officers Alejandro Fuentes and Adalberto Fuentes are assigned to the Special Victims Bureau. “I’m very proud of her,” Sergeant Diana Fuentes said. “The officers with more time give advice to the younger ones, and everyone works hard and love what they do,” she said.

After graduating, Officer Katrina Fuentes received congratulations from her family, all wearing their uniforms. “It just feels great, this is what I wanted to do,” she said. Before going through the police academy, she was a police dispatcher for several years. “This is a passion, and I wanted to pursue it,” she said.



The Fuentes family is five-strong within the MDPD. Pictured left to right are Sergeant Diana Fuentes, Officer Katrina Fuentes, Officer Adalberto Fuentes, Sergeant Leopoldo Fuentes, Police Explorer Angela Fuentes, and Officer Alejandro Fuentes. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

New MDPD Officer Closes Out Year with Numerous Arrests and Earns Recognition

By Brian Ballou



MDPD Patrol Officer Michael G. Cetta, flanked by Director Juan J. Perez (right) and Deputy Director Alfredo Ramirez III (left), was awarded Officer of the Month in February, only six months after graduating from Lateral Class 4. (Photo by Gaston DeCardenas)

It was the kind of month that could highlight an entire career as a police officer, dozens of arrests that took drugs, guns, and dangerous criminals off the streets in the South District. However, MDPD Officer Michael G. Cetta was only four months into his job, after graduating from Lateral Class 4 on August 30, 2018. He transferred from Miami Police Department, where he had worked for two years.

“The time that it took Officer Cetta to go from the graduation stage to Officer of the Month, may be a Department record,” remarked MDPD Director Perez, as he handed Officer Cetta his award during the Department’s February awards ceremony.

Officer Cetta stated that the string of arrests last December was the result of teamwork with other officers.

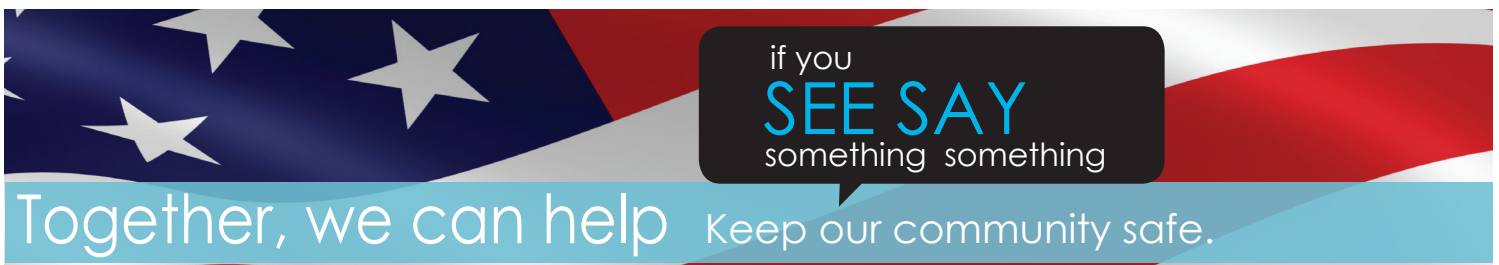
“There is a lot of crime in the South District, but there are many great officers there who showed me around, told me about the places to go, and that helped me get accustomed to the area,” Officer Cetta said. “I tried to focus on getting as many guns off the street as possible. That month, I believe we got six or seven off the street, so that was our main goal,” he said.

Many members of his family, including his father, Mr. Thomas Cetta, attended the ceremony. “I’m very proud of him, I think that his playing baseball and the work he put into it as a young man has helped him in his career,” said Mr. Cetta. “The teamwork was something that was instilled in him at a young age.”

One example of that teamwork occurred on December 22, 2018, when Officers Cetta and Gabriel

Manduley stopped a vehicle that was linked to illegal drug sales. Officer Cetta noticed marijuana in plain view inside the car, and as the suspect got out of the vehicle, Officer Cetta also detected a firearm in the suspect’s waistband. That weapon was immediately seized. A search of the suspect and car yielded \$2,000 in small denominations, multiple baggies of marijuana, and a fully loaded 30-round magazine.

“Officer Cetta’s high degree of initiative has resulted in multiple arrests,” said Director Perez. “Additionally, his ability to work in a team only enhances his qualities and highlights his tactical aptitude.”



A Sobering Reminder to Students

By Brian Ballou

The sound of a heartbeat played through speakers, fading as firefighters delicately extracted a student actor from a mangled car. Another student actor laid on his back on the asphalt, motionless as an MDPD officer covered him from head to feet with a light yellow tarp.

It was only a reenactment of a drunk driving crash scene and the emergency response. However, the message on April 24, 2019, was not lost among approximately 2,400 Southwest Miami Senior High School students standing around a spacious outdoor basketball court.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 29 people in the United States die every day in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. The reminder of what could happen



Prior to the start of prom season, Officer Carlos Chaple and students at Southwest Miami Senior High School participated in a reenactment of a drunk-driving scene. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

was vivid, punctuated by the closing scene of a hearse slowly rolling in, a casket displayed, and MDPD Officer Judy Chacon, playing the role of a grieving mother, crying and shaking, as she spoke to her dead son. “Son, I was there when you took your first steps and lost your first tooth. I dried your tears when you fell off your bicycle and scraped your knee,” Officer Chacon said, as tears streaked her mascara. Her performance cast silence over the crowd.

The 45-minute reenactment contained all the likely scenarios of a drunk driving crash, including arrest. “I think that this will help high school kids realize that these things do happen. Often, kids think oh it will never be me, but it happens, and it can be avoided, that’s the worst part of it all,” said Victoria Diaz, an 18-year-old junior, and the president of her high school’s chapter of Students Together Against Negative Decisions, or STAND.

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Zora Neale Hurston Elementary School Students Get an Inside Glimpse of the MDPD Headquarters

By Brian Ballou



Sergeant Joseph Bermudez recently led students from the Zora Neale Hurston Elementary School on a tour of the MDPD Headquarters Fred Taylor Complex. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

By way of fashion trends, most of the fifth-graders in Ms. Kim Parra's class wore the same brand of shoes to their recent field trip to the MDPD Fred Taylor Headquarters Complex. Some of the 19 students even wore the same exact style and size. But no two shoe prints are identical, each has a unique impression. To illustrate that point, the tour leader, MDPD Sergeant Joseph Bermudez, from the Public Information and Education Bureau, asked two students to show the undersides of their shoes. "If you look at the edge of Kim's sole, it is more worn than that of

her classmates," said Sergeant Bermudez, who is one of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program supervisors.

It was a basic forensics lesson for the Zora Neale Hurston Elementary School students, delivered by Sergeant Bermudez in front of the Forensic Services Bureau's Crime Laboratory. After that lesson, Sergeant Bermudez explained a more complex subject, ballistic signatures.

The field trip was requested by school officials to give students a glimpse of careers in law enforcement.

The children asked many questions and read wall displays. They learned that the acronym BOLO stands for "be-on-the-lookout," and that PC stands for "probable cause." The experience seemed to spark a lot of interest among the students. "I really liked how they can catch criminals with shoe prints," said Kristina Silva, age 10.

The students also visited the office of MDPD Director Perez, Police Legal Bureau, and several other entities.

They also met North Operations Division Chief Ariel Artime, and South Operations Division Chief George A. Perez.

After the Headquarters Complex tour, the students traveled by school bus to the Communications Bureau, where they toured the facility and enjoyed pizza for lunch. "This has been an amazing experience, all around excellent, and I'm sure all the students learned from it," Ms. Parra said.

LOCK YOUR CAR, REMEMBER YOUR KEY

Thank You Blood Donors!



The Miami-Dade Police Department and OneBlood recently held successful blood collection drives at the MDPD Fred Taylor Headquarters Complex. Special thanks are extended to the donors listed below for helping save lives!

Captain Jorge Aguiar
 Lieutenant Pamillia R. Johnson
 Lieutenant Aviel A. Sanchez
 Police Officer Marvin F. Davis
 Police Officer Edhy Mederos
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 Police Records Specialist 1 Jose A. Lopez
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- Review your finances.
- Consider secure payment methods.
- Be skeptical about free trial offers.
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For more information and tips, call 311 or visit www.miamidade.gov/fraudfree.



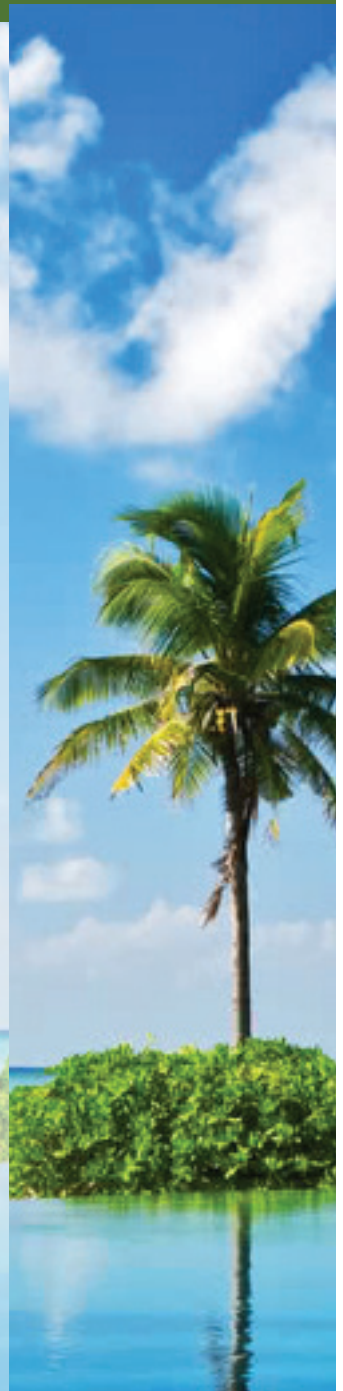


MDPD recently said farewell to 41 employees (32 sworn officers and 9 civilians) who retired after periods of service ranging from 8 to 34 years. Director Juan J. Perez, the Department’s Command Staff, and the entire MDPD family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

Sworn

Lieutenant Erik Palmer	30
Lieutenant James Tietz.....	30
Sergeant Robert Fortich	30
Sergeant Marie Perez	27
Sergeant Benjamin Ross, Jr	30
Officer Jorge Aguiar.....	32
Officer Carlos Alvarez	30
Officer Liam Angelini.....	30
Officer Reynaldo Angulo	23
Officer Mark Bullard	25
Officer Blas Cabrera	24
Officer Michael Castaneda.....	30
Officer Veronica Dixon.....	25
Officer Jose Eduarte.....	30
Officer Lee Funderburk	29
Officer Phillip Hall.....	31
Officer Ana Ibarra	27
Officer David Invernizzi	25
Officer Kenyon Jones III.....	30
Officer John Lopez.....	34
Officer Laura Loyal	31
Officer Joseph Miller	32
Officer Roberto Perez	30
Officer Brigitte Robert.....	27
Officer Roy Rutland.....	25
Officer Christopher Rutledge.....	22
Officer Freddie Simpo	30
Officer Lawrence Stevens.....	31
Officer Gregory Stuver	30
Officer Kathleen Sullivan	28
Officer Joaquin Vila	30
Officer Wendy Yanes	25

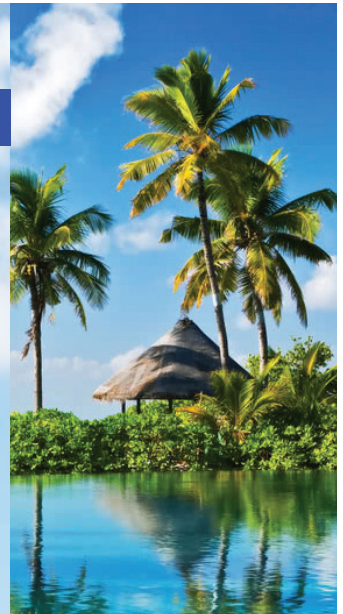
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Civilian

School Crossing Guard Merlyn Marin..... 12
 School Crossing Guard Marta Marin..... 22
 School Crossing Guard Raul Martinez 11
 Photographer Orlando Mendez 35
 Police Records Technician 1 Connie Obando..... 18
 Police Complaint Officer Diana Orner 21
 School Crossing Guard Oscar Torres 8
 Secretary Caridad Venzal..... 30
 MDPD Government Affairs Legal Research Analyst Susan Windmiller 29



Drunk driving tragedies are 100% preventable. Remember, there is NEVER a reason to drink and drive! #ArriveAlive #DontDrinkAndDrive



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