DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

\_FREDO "FREDDY" RAMIREZ III

The Miami-Dade Police Department prides itself on protecting our citizens, and one of the ways we have been able to do that so well is by evolving to serve the needs of the community. We continually look for ways to move forward, to better connect with our community while focusing on our mission. To that purpose, we recently launched two new units and a new program that I am sure will continue to move us in the proper direction.

Five officers recently graduated from the Basic Law Enforcement Mounted Patrol Training course and now comprise our Mounted Patrol Unit. The Unit will become a big part of this Department's outreach, a friendly presence at large social gatherings such as parades, National Night Out, and other community-focused events.

We also launched our Crisis Response Unit, which is comprised of 19 officers and 2 Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department paramedics. That Unit has already been busy responding to calls that involve mentally ill individuals or those suffering from a crisis. This unit is highly trained, and is highly necessary in today's times where we routinely receive so many calls that involve people suffering from high anxiety, depression, and mental illness.

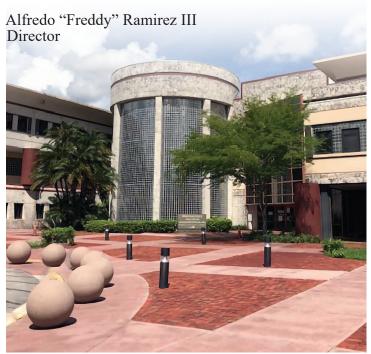
Additionally, the Department has formed a unique reentry program, in collaboration with the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department. This program is focused on decreasing crime through reducing recidivism, by connecting inmates with a variety of social services after their release. The program is coordinated through the Deputy Director's Office and will include a Reentry Specialist Unit, with a supervisor, two reentry advocates, and a victim advocate.

June is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month. Our officers face the worst of humanity on a daily basis, and when they return home, it can be hard for them to leave their experience in the car. The work/life balance is essential to this Department. Through our Mental Health & Wellness Bureau, we stand committed to helping any employee who needs counseling, and I encourage you to utilize their services. Please read the Bureau's latest story in "The Wellness Corner" in this edition of the Alert Newsletter.

Through our Community Affairs Bureau, our summer initiatives are in full swing. Officers and non-sworn staff have been mentoring youth in parks throughout the County. This is an important part of what we do, building relationships with the next generation to strengthen our collaboration.

And finally, Officer Damian Colon returned home on April 19, 2023, after undergoing months of recovery at a facility in Atlanta. He has faced his recovery with grit and fortitude, and I am sure that he will continue to do the same on that long road. He has received well wishes from around the country, and it has been a boost to his spirit as he faces the challenges in front of him. Please continue to keep him in your prayers and in your heart.

Sincerely,



# Reentry Program launched by the Department, Intended to Reduce Recidivism By Brian Ballou

The Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) has formed a unique Reentry Program, in collaboration with the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department, to connect inmates with a variety of social services after their release.

The Reentry Program represents a continuum of outreach initiatives by the Department that focuses on individuals ranging from high-risk youth to felons. With the Youth Outreach Unit, for example, officers serve as mentors to high risk youth within the Northside, South, and Intracoastal Districts. And the Department's Group Violence Intervention initiative focuses on teens who have been impacted by gun violence, have been charged with gun-related offenses, or are known to be affiliated with gangs. The intervention component includes a bevy of social services that will help them achieve a more productive life.

The Reentry Program seeks to reduce recidivism through similar methods, by connecting individuals who have served 364 days or less, with resources that can help them become productive citizens, and counseling services that can help them shed negative behavior. The Program will be run by a newly-created Reentry Specialist Unit, comprised of a supervisor, two reentry advocates, and a victim advocate, all professional staff members.

Prior to the creation of the Unit, Miami-Dade County did not have a reentry plan for individuals returning to the community from its jails. In fact, the County's efforts to develop a reentry program dates back to 2008, when a Blue-Ribbon Advisory Committee produced the report, "Breaking the Cycle: Rehabilitation and Job Training in County Jails." The report came with 22 recommendations.

Seven years later, in 2015, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners created the Miami-Dade Reentry Council Committee, consisting of ten law enforcement and governmental agencies, including MDPD. The committee studied numerous existing reentry programs and services available to inmates. The committee concluded that there was a need for a new model that would go beyond connecting inmates to housing, job training, and educational benefit. The committee determined that a holistic component was needed as well, that would include substance abuse treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy, health and wellness, mentoring and peer learning, and spiritual guidance, among other services geared towards self-improvement.

The assistance will not be a one-size-fits-all approach, but tailored to the specific needs of each individual. A Reentry Advocate will meet with an inmate prior to his or her release to determine what types of social services would be most suitable for them.

Approximately one-fifth of prison inmates from Miami-Dade County return to prison within 36 months of their release, according to the "Florida Prison Recidivism Report: Releases from 2008 to 2020," by the Florida Department of Corrections.

Crime, particularly violent crime, is inextricably linked to recidivism rates, so by offering counseling and other self-help assistance to individuals after their release, the Reentry Program is essentially an anti-crime initiative.

On October 5, 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice announced the awarding of almost \$100 million in grants to "jurisdictions, non-profit organizations, research institutions and other agencies to advance its goal of addressing the needs of people in correctional facilities and to empower those who have been incarcerated to return home as productive and thriving members of their communities."

In January 2021, the Thrive305 Action Plan was launched, the largest public engagement initiative in Miami-Dade County's government history. The plan was developed by the Division of Innovation and Performance, within the Office of Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, after a process that included input from close to 27,000 residents from throughout the County, who shared their priorities and concerns through a resident survey. Additionally, over 500 residents joined in community discussions with County staff to develop a collective vision for Miami-Dade County. One of the priorities of the Action Plan is to "Improve correctional services and prepare incarcerated people for successful reentry to prevent recidivism." A portion of the "Issue Statement" from that priority is:

"We know that our County is safer when people exiting our correctional facilities can re-enter their communities and rebuild their futures. But re-entry needs are complex. And though programs exist that serve the re-entry community — on matters of education, employment, housing, health, and accessing childcare and other benefits — there are still far too many people that are falling through the cracks of this system. Services need to be targeted earlier and be more tailored. As a whole, the system of social supports available to this population requires significant growth and transformation."

# New Unit Created to Respond to Calls Involving Persons in Mental Distress or Crisis By Brian Ballou



The first team of the Crisis Response Unit recently graduated and is now responding to calls in the South District and Northside District. (Photo provided by MDPD Social Media Team)

Every week, the Miami-Dade Police Department's Communications Bureau is inundated with 911 calls regarding people in crisis or with mental health concerns. The calls are highest in the South District and the Northside District, with over 5,600 logged annually, combined, an average of over 15 calls daily.

Calls that involve mentally ill subjects or people in emotional distress have circumstances that demand a different type of response from police than other calls, and that is why many law enforcement agencies in the U.S. have specialized units trained for such scenarios. The Miami-Dade Police Department recently launched its own Crisis Response Unit (CRU), a team of 19 officers and 2 Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department paramedics.

"Now is the time, we know that our community is more than ever suffering from great anxiety, great depression, a huge amount of mental illness, and that plays out unfortunately in crime, in safety issues, people who are at risk in their homes, in their neighborhoods, people who pose risks to others because of their instability, emotional crisis . . ." said Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, during the graduation ceremony of the first CRU class, on Monday, May 1, 2023.

Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III said, "The mental health crisis is a crisis that knows no socioeconomic boundaries, it affects everybody."

The applicants were selected based on their interpersonal skills, such as their ability to empathize with others,

develop rapport, and communicate effectively. Some of the members hold college degrees in psychology, and some have children with autism or other neural disorders, or have lost loved ones to suicide.

"Those lived experiences help them to relate," said Major Melissa Barosela, Commander of the Department's Mental Health & Wellness Bureau, which oversees the Unit.

The team went through four weeks of crisis intervention training that focused on recognizing behavioral indicators of crisis, mitigating crisis situations with minimal use-of-force, and basic negotiating techniques. Their performances during the training scenarios were video recorded and assessed. The Unit is now responding to calls in the South District and Northside District. The Department is hoping to add more officers to the Unit and expand into the Intracoastal District and the Hammocks District, Major Barosela said.

The Unit works in teams of three, with two officers and a clinician from the Department's Mental Health & Wellness Bureau. Officer safety and the safety of innocent persons remains tantamount, and only after scenes are deemed secure and safe by the officers, will the clinicians proceed to offer its specialized response. "The overall goal of the Unit is to de-escalate, assess, and divert those in crisis to behavioral health services in a safe and compassionate manner."

### The WELLNESS







### CORNER

### First Responders and PTSD Awareness

The life of a first responder comes with many sacrifices. Sometimes the impacts of these sacrifices can be debilitating, affecting the person's quality of life. Exposure to certain traumatic events and life-threatening circumstances can lead to concerns with mental health. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), it is estimated that 35% of police officers and 18-24% of police dispatchers/911 operators suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

#### What is PTSD?

PTSD is a mental health condition diagnosed by a mental health professional and must meet a variety of criteria as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fifth Revision (DSM-5). There must be a triggering event, such as a trauma, that is either directly experienced or witnessed. Although symptoms of PTSD may begin within one month of experiencing a traumatic event, it can sometimes take years for symptoms to appear. These symptoms may cause significant problems in relationships, social experiences, and work. Usually, a person suffering with PTSD will seek help or guidance because of these interferences in everyday life.

The DSM-5 states that in addition to experiencing or witnessing a triggering event, certain symptoms must be present to meet diagnosable criteria. These other PTSD symptoms are grouped into four types: intrusive memories, avoidance, negative changes in cognitions and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity.

Intrusive memories may include flashbacks or nightmares about the traumatic event. These intrusive thoughts make it difficult for one to concentrate and focus on everyday life responsibilities. Since these thoughts may be overwhelming and sometimes debilitating, one will try to avoid any reminder of the trauma, further isolating themselves from people and

places. This isolation and preoccupation with the trauma may also cause a sense of hopelessness, resulting in negative thoughts and fluctuations in mood. Negative thinking will continue to affect the person's quality of life and relationships which could lead to changes in emotional and physical reactions. It is common for someone suffering from PTSD to experience a constant state of fear and guardedness or to have trouble sleeping and concentrating. The intensity of these debilitating symptoms varies and can change over time. This is why a major concern for those suffering from PTSD is the prevalence of suicidal ideation or suicide attempts. According to the organization Blue Help, 180 police officers died by suicide in 2022 nationwide. It is unknown how many may have been battling symptoms related to PTSD.

#### June is PTSD Awareness Month

It is important to bring awareness to this disorder since it can affect many people, especially those who may be exposed to potentially traumatic events. Understanding the causes and symptoms may help in identifying someone who may be struggling early on.

It's important to acknowledge that most people who experience a trauma may have difficulty adjusting or coping in the beginning; however, these are healthy temporary responses that usually will improve with time. Having positive coping skills, a strong support system, and practicing self-care can significantly help with recovery from a negatively impactful traumatic event. However, if the negative reactions are ongoing for a month or more, it is recommended to seek professional mental health assistance. Timely intervention, proper assessment and treatment planning can significantly improve the effects of PTSD; and therefore, help to quell the worsening of symptoms.

#### First Responders . . . Continued from page 4

#### **Seeking Help**

Recognizing that there is a problem and acknowledging the inability to control emotions and behaviors can be stressful. That stress, coupled with mental health stigma, can be a deterrent in seeking much needed assistance. Since first responders tend to have an inherent sense of duty and often identify as problem-solvers, they carry added responsibilities and stressors. If suffering from PTSD, this added stress can cause further isolation.

Know where to call for help. The Miami-Dade Police

Department offers its employees a variety of mental health services. The Mental Health & Wellness Bureau, Psychological Services Section, has licensed clinicians available to assist anyone who may be impacted by PTSD or other mental health related concerns. The peer advocate program, Backing our Brothers and Sisters in Blue (BOBS), also provides assistance to employees. For further information, please call (305) 591-1106. Referrals are also available.

# Retired Officers Continue to Contribute to Department as Reserve Officers By Brian Ballou

Whatever leisurely pursuit or activity that Mr. Jorge Carreño wanted to do in the past two years, he made it happen, regardless of the day of the week or the hour. Unencumbered by any schedule, he took vacations on a whim, went fishing or golfing, or had long lunches with friends. His time since June 30, 2021, was entirely his, that was the benefit of retirement after working for 33 years with the Miami-Dade Police Department.

But he missed the camaraderie with his fellow officers, and the sense of pride and purpose that came from serving the community, so after 22 months into retirement, he decided to return to the Department, to serve as a certified Police Reserve Officer, a volunteer position. On Friday, April 21, 2023, he and six other retirees were sworn in by Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III.

"I still consider myself young, and I would like to contribute my knowledge and expertise back to the Department, which I still love, and still want to be the best in the country, if not the world," said Officer Carreño, who retired as a Lieutenant. His last assignment, for seven years was in the Homicide Bureau. He is now assigned to the Homeland Security Bureau. "Eventually I would like to teach at the academy," he said, referring to the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute & Research Center.

Recruiting for Police Reserve Officers is done primarily in-house. When officers retire, they are invited to return as reserves. Police Reserve Officers must be willing to perform 16 hours of service each month or 48 hours every three months. They must also show that they have met or exceed all departmental training requirements, in accordance with the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission. Training consists of classroom instruction, practical application,

firearms proficiency, field patrol assignments, and oral and written examinations.

According to the article, "The benefits of Reserve Officers in modern policing" published in Policel, a leading national law enforcement news website and magazine, 30–35% of all public safety organizations in the U.S. utilize Reserve Officers. With over 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States, more than 5,000 policing agencies are believed to use these officers in some capacity. The total estimate of reserve police and deputies in the U.S. is approximately 77,500.

There are 61 Police Reserve Officers within the Department. They serve in a variety of assignments, and all hold the rank of Officer regardless of their rank at retirement. Police agencies across the country have similar programs to bring back officers to fill important positions, and to spread their expertise to the younger generation of officers. They work alongside full-time officers and are held to the same standards.

The six officers who were sworn in have more than 100 years of experience collectively. Officer Jorge Gonzalez returned after only two months. He retired on February 16, 2023, as an officer after 32 years. Before retiring he was assigned to the Homeland Security Bureau, and is now assigned to the Midwest District. Officer Arturo Perez retired on June 30, 2022, as a sergeant, after 30 years. His last assignment before retirement was with the Communications Bureau, and now he is assigned to the Information Technology Services Bureau. Officer Lazaro Valdez also retired on June 30, 2022, after 30 years. Before retiring he was assigned to the Airport Operations Bureau, and is now assigned to the Midwest District.

### Retired Officers Continue to Contribute . . . Continued from page 5



Seven retired Miami-Dade Police Officers were sworn in recently as Reserve Officers by Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez. There are 60 Reserve Officers working as volunteers for the Department. (Photo provided by MDPD Social Media Team)

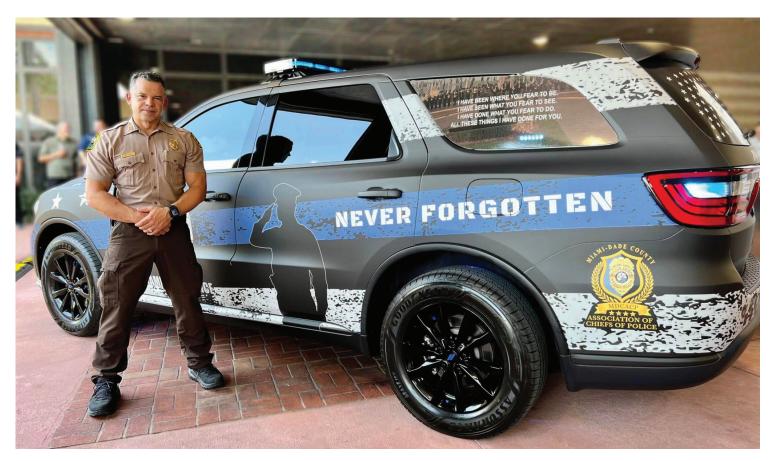
Officer Michael Tang served for 30 years before retiring on April 31, 2021, as an officer assigned to the Airport District. He is now assigned to the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute & Research Center. Officer Jorge Herrera retired on April 31, 2022, as a captain, after 31 years. Before retiring, he was assigned to the Homeland Security Bureau, and is now assigned to the Office of Assistant Director Thomas Buchanan. Officer James Dixon retired on January 31, 2022, as a sergeant after

30 years. Before retiring he was assigned to the Warrants Bureau, and will return there as a Police Reserve Officer.

"This is a great moment for us, this is your home and we are glad that you are back here," Director Ramirez told the Police Reserve Officers during their swearing-in ceremony. The Department continues to add Police Reserve Officers. On Friday, June 16, 2023, retired Sergeant Robert Berris was sworn in by Director Ramirez.



# New Law Enforcement Appreciation Vehicle is Unveiled, Displayed During Law Enforcement Appreciation Month, Ceremonies Honoring Fallen Officers By Brian Ballou



A 2020 Dodge Durango Pursuit SUV is the latest addition to the Department's tribute vehicle fleet. The SUV's design was conceived by a committee of 20 people from within the Department. (Photo provided by MDPD Social Media Team)

From the roof to the wheels, the Miami-Dade Police Department's new Law Enforcement Appreciation Vehicle pays homage to the 168 officers who have died in the line of duty in Miami-Dade County, and to current officers who carry on their legacy.

The SUV was unveiled by Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III on Friday, April 28, 2023, at the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building, two days prior to the start of Law Enforcement Appreciation Month. In May, the Department holds several ceremonies, with other municipal law enforcement agencies, to honor officers who died in the line of duty in Miami-Dade County.

On Monday, May 1, 2023, through the Police Officer Assistance Trust (POAT) Project HERO (Honoring Every Resting Officer), officers with the Department placed an American/Eternal Thin Blue Line flag at the final resting places of 36 law enforcement officers and agents who died in the line of duty. Before those officers traveled to the

sites, Director Ramirez spoke with them briefly.

"We know you'll be out there at each grave, placing the flag and giving your love and respect from this community and this Department, because we don't forget here, that's one thing here in Miami-Dade County that we do not do, we are here forever," Director Ramirez said.

The appreciation vehicle was on display at the Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Prayer Breakfast, held on Wednesday, May 3, 2023, and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Miami-Dade Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony, held the following day.

It took months to create the final design. A committee of 20 people pored over each and every detail, down to the blue tire valve stem caps. The 2020 Dodge Durango Pursuit SUV is wrapped in matte black, with blue and white accents. On the hatchback window, there are 168 stars, representing each officer who made the ultimate

### **New Law Enforcement Appreciation Vehicle ...**

Continued from page 7

sacrifice, and on the rear bumper are 28 seals, of each law enforcement agency of a fallen officer. There is a blue stripe that runs along the center of the roof, with a message in white lettering, a vow to fallen officers, "WE HAVE IT FROM HERE 09-06." The numbers symbolize the code that officers use daily to sign off at the end of their shift.

On the hood, there is a circular display, the image of a lion superimposed on the Stars and Stripes. Two phrases form the circumference, "IN VALOR THERE IS HOPE," and "REMEMBER THE FALLEN."

There are blue lights throughout the exterior of the vehicle, including lights embedded in the push bumper and on the underside. The Department seal is on the driver's door and the front passenger door, and a silhouette of an officer saluting is on both back doors.

The silhouette on the right rear passenger door is that of Sergeant William A. Lopez, a 21-year veteran of the Department, who is assigned to the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute & Research Center, Traffic Skills Unit. "I am very humbled by it," said Sergeant

Lopez, who was on the design committee.

Detective Paul Fluty was also on the committee, a fitting assignment for an officer who almost lost his life in the line of duty on July 10, 2018. He thwarted a likely homicide, but the suspect shot him in the back. Detective Fluty made a full recovery, and was awarded the Department's 2019 Distinguished Officer of the Year Award. "This month is important, to pay respects to everyone who has fallen in the line of duty," he said. "Because of my experience, I understand a little bit more than most," he said.

Approximately 600 people attended the memorial ceremony at Tropical Park on May 4, 2023, including relatives of officers who died in the line of duty. Three officers died in 2022, and their names were etched into the granite walls of the memorial.

Director Ramirez said the vehicle is, "The perfect product that not only honors our fallen officers, but honors the families and honors our officers right now who are putting their lives on the line each and every day."

# Officer Damian Colon Returns to Miami to Begin Rehabilitation By Brian Ballou



Officer Damian Colon was discharged on April 19, 2023, from the Shepard Center, in Atlanta, GA, where he underwent recovery for several months after being shot in the head by a stalker in November 2022. The facility is one of the best in the country for such injuries. He has a long road ahead of him and is now focused on his rehabilitation.

After he was discharged, he was put on a flight that brought him back home to Miami, and was then driven to the place where his rehabilitation will be ongoing, the Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Center inside Jackson Memorial Hospital. Due to the severity of his injury, Officer Colon has not regained the ability to walk yet, but it is the hope of the staff at the facility, as well as his family and friends, that the 17-year veteran from Hialeah will continue to make progress.

The homecoming was attended by his family, friends, and many members of his extended family at the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD). His family wore

### Officer Damian Colon Returns . . . Continued from page 8

black t-shirts with the phrase "HIS FIGHT IS MY FIGHT" on the front, and an illustration of a brain on the back with the phrase "#DAMIANSTRONG." Officer Colon, wearing a baseball-style MDPD cap, and sunglasses, was taken inside the rehabilitation center by stretcher. He thanked his supporters on the way in. Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III was by his side, and later spoke with the media in front of the center.

"We thought we were going to lose him, and now you see him talking and such tremendous progress," Director Ramirez said. "I ask that the community keeps praying for him. He's got a big heart, a good work ethic, and like I told him, a lot more work to do, and he's ready."

As a member of the Department's Crime Suppression Team years ago, Officer Colon responded to domestic violence cases, and was instrumental in protecting citizens from harm. He was headed to work, when the stalker, an ex-girlfriend who used a tracking device to locate him, shot him, leaving him in critical condition. She fled the scene, but was arrested the same night and is being held in jail pending trial on a charge of attempted murder. Officer Colon was rushed to the Ryder Trauma Center where he underwent surgery to save his life.

Director Ramirez offered advice to domestic abuse victims. "Domestic violence affects everyone, you could be a police officer, you could be a doctor, a government official, it knows no boundaries and this is what happens, that's why if you're going through that, if you know someone who is going through that, you need to report it."

If you're the victim of domestic violence, call the Department's Special Victims Bureau's Domestic Crimes Investigations Unit at 305-418-7200. You may also ask the State Attorney to press charges by calling 305-547-0150.

### STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING



#### "Human Life Is Not For Sale"

Anyone can experience trafficking in any community. If you have information on human trafficking:

- · Call 911 immediately.
- Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-37-37-888. Anti-Trafficking Hotline Advocates are available 24/7 to take reports of potential human trafficking.
- Text HELP to the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 233733. Message and data rates may apply.
- Submit a tip online using the National Human Trafficking Hotline's anonymous reporting form. Please note that if the situation is urgent or occurred within the last 24 hours, we would encourage you to call, text or chat.
- Text or call 305-FIX-STOP (305-349-7867)

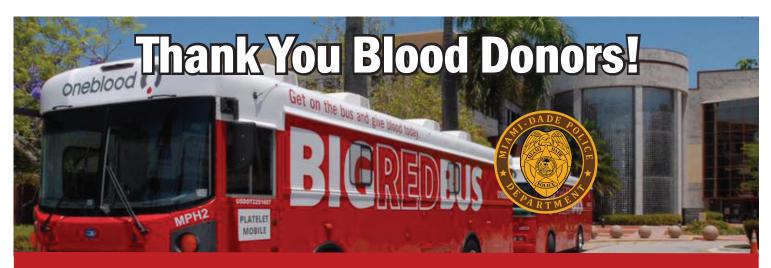






MDPD recently said farewell to 21 employees (13 sworn officers and 8 professional staff) who retired after periods of service ranging from 9 to 42 years. Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III, the Department's Command Staff, and the entire MDPD family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

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| Officer Juan C. Gutierrez                             |  |
| Officer Walter Juarez                                 |  |
| Officer Jorge L. Romero                               |  |
| Officer Max A. Romero                                 |  |
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| Imaging Records Technician Angela Y. White            | 126  |
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The Miami-Dade Police Department and OneBlood held successful blood drives at the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute & Research Center on April 13, 2023, and at the Miami-Dade Police Department Headquarters on April 26, 2023. Special thanks are extended to the donors listed below for helping save lives!

> Lieutenant Pamillia R. Johnson Lieutenant Michael Tabernero Officer Vanessa Uribe Guerra Officer Shannon B Jackson Officer Ricardo Landrian Officer Ryan N. Lindner Officer Yariel D. Mata

Criminalist Erin M. Wilson

Ms. Stephanie Bratrud

Mr. Leonardo Canino

Ms. Leidy Estrada

Ms. Cindy Lopez

Mr. Yansel Travieso



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