



Alert

Newsletter



“Committed to Excellence”

@MiamiDadePD

Vol. 40, No. 2

April - June 2024

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Stephanie V. Daniels



We kicked off the second quarter of 2024 by unveiling our Autism Acceptance Vehicle, a visual symbol of this Department's goal to raise awareness, acceptance, and support for autism. The vehicle has already made appearances at dozens of events throughout the County, such as the Autism Awareness event at the Urban Air Adventure Park, tailored for children with autism and sensory processing difficulties. Internally, we implemented in late 2021 a training program to help our officers recognize the signs and symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and effectively communicate with subjects who have the developmental disability. In April 2024, we launched our Occupant with Autism Program. We have been providing decals free of charge, to anyone in Miami-Dade County. The decals can be placed on windows in the front of homes, or on rear windows of vehicles, to signal that there may be an occupant or passenger inside with autism. Citizens can also choose to register for the program without displaying a decal, so that arriving officers will be aware that a person with autism lives in the home, allowing officers to draw on their autism training. We are thankful to Miami-Dade County Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado for her collaboration on this project.

I was honored to participate in our first ever Women's Leadership Academy. It was certainly a fulfilling course, and I was happy to see over 40 women participate, both sworn and professional staff. Graduation from the 12-week program was on April 11, 2024. During the academy, we focused on interpersonal skills, developing effective negotiation skills, conflict resolution, and building a network of peers and mentors, among other things. The program is structured after women's leadership courses at Harvard and Yale Universities, and I would encourage all of our female employees to take advantage of the academy.

There is more information in an article published in this edition of our newsletter.

Also of significant note, we held a Promotional Ceremony for 30 officers, including 16 first-time supervisors. As you continue to lead the next generation, remember it is very important that you stick to the integrity of your position, that you walk the walk and talk the talk, to serve as an example and inspire others.

For the third year in a row, our officers worked tirelessly to protect and serve the public during the Formula One Grand Prix race in Miami Gardens. Every year the event grows in scope, and we have done a great job in keeping pace with that growth. A lot goes into the planning, we literally start working on next year's days after the checkered flag is waved. I appreciate all the work that goes into making this event safe!

Sincerely,

Stephanie V. Daniels
Director



Department's Crackdown on Intersection Takeovers Fuels State Senator's Push for New Law

By Brian Ballou



The Miami-Dade Police Department has conducted dozens of enforcements against illegal street takeovers, including this one that was recently broken up as the result of the Department's ongoing investigations and surveillance of those dangerous events.

An urgent solution was needed to address the frenetic pace of intersection takeovers and the dangers associated with them. Fights and shootings often broke out, and spectators were being struck and thrown through the air by out-of-control cars performing reckless stunts. The clamp-down of intersections by teenagers, using their cars as barriers to form an inner stage, prevented first responders from traveling through intersections to respond to 911 calls, posing a critical public safety threat.

Over a dozen times, beginning in early 2022, the Miami-Dade Police Department had pounced in to arrest drivers and organizers, and issue citations to spectators. The Department's Media Relations Section distributed to the public press releases announcing the arrests. One of those press releases, detailing the arrests of two drivers who were part of an illegal street takeover in Miami Gardens on February 3, 2024, was read by State Senator Jason Pizzo in his address to the Florida Legislature on February 6, 2024, urging his fellow lawmakers to back a bill that would increase the penalties against those who organize and participate in illegal street takeovers.

"Those press releases provided the information needed to impart to my colleagues the urgency to act, and the dangers of what was happening," said Senator Pizzo. "And this is something that is happening throughout the state, every week."

Concurrent to the Department's increased enforcement

over the past two years, law enforcement agencies throughout the state were beefing up their own responses. Lieutenant Michael Crabb, assigned to the Orange County Sheriff's Office Traffic Enforcement Section and Government/Legislative Affairs, said the prevalence of the takeovers can be traced to Hollywood movies glamorizing brash young drivers who push their cars to the edge for the adoration of spectators.

Lieutenant Crabb said one of the most egregious, and brazen, incidents occurred on April 3, 2023, when an Orange County Fire Department fire truck, responding to an emergency call at 1:02 a.m., for a car on fire, was trapped inside an illegal street takeover at the intersection of Sand Lake Road and Winegard Road in Pine Castle, Florida. A 25-year-old man driving a Dodge Charger Hellcat, a vehicle that is preferred by many drivers, was circling the fire truck, preventing it from leaving the intersection. Several months after that incident, based on video footage, the driver, Elijah Grove-Thomas, was arrested. Grove-Thomas has a history of participating in street takeovers.

Senator Pizzo wrote the first bill back in 2022 that specifically addressed street takeovers, making it a misdemeanor to perform dangerous stunts such as "burnouts," "doughnuts," and "drifting," or organize such

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State Senator's Push for New Law *Continued from page 2*

gatherings. Spectators also faced \$65 fines. The new law, signed by Governor Ron DeSantis on May 6, 2024, went into effect on July 1, 2024. It was written by Lieutenant Crabb in collaboration with Senator Pizzo. The new law changes the offense to a felony for organizers and drivers, with a possible fine of \$2,000. Additionally, there is a vehicle forfeiture provision. Spectators still face a misdemeanor, but the fine increases to \$400. A “coordinated street takeover,” according to the new law, “means 10 or more vehicles operated in an organized manner to effect a street takeover.”

The takeovers often pop up in the middle of heavily residential areas, and usually between midnight and 2 a.m., shaking residents from their slumber with the roar of engines, squealing tires, and loud crowds. According to the Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, between 2018 and 2022, there were 6,641 citations issued for either street racing or stunt driving, and the typical age of participants and spectators ranged from 16 to 29.

“This is something that our Bureau has been combatting for the past three and a half years, so it does feel good to know that we are making a positive impact, not just in Miami-Dade County, but throughout the state, and this is something that is going to make the community safer,” said Lieutenant Jorge Audino, from the Department’s Homeland Security Bureau, which conducts enforcement efforts against illegal street takeovers. Officers have made dozens of arrests and have also confiscated numerous firearms and illegal drugs.

During takeovers, spectators will use their cars to block the roads and essentially create a center stage, which they refer to as the “pit,” for drivers to perform stunts. The drivers seek “street cred” and the more daring their stunts, the more adulation they receive from the crowd. The spectators take videos of the stunts, that they later post on social media.

“This law is going to allow for greater inter-agency cooperation, and makes it more difficult for the individuals committing these crimes to get away with it,” Lieutenant Audino said. “Having Senator Pizzo sponsor the change to this law was something that motivates us to continue to work. We do this for the community.”

Three years ago, Senator Pizzo found himself trapped behind an illegal street takeover. He was returning home, with his Chief of Staff, from an awards ceremony in Orlando, when he was stuck behind at least 20 cars near the intersection of North Miami Avenue and 62 Street, in a residential neighborhood just north of Little Haiti. It was approximately 2 a.m., a time when there should have been little to no congestion.

Five minutes passed, and then ten, and still no movement. Senator Pizzo got out of the passenger’s side of the car to find out what was holding up traffic. He could see thick white smoke lifting from the intersection, illuminated by a circle of car lights, and he could hear the screeching of tires and cheering coming from the

intersection. Senator Pizzo noticed that his car was parked right in front of the City of Miami Fire Station 9. If firefighters there had been called to an emergency, they would not have been able to leave the station because of the jam of vehicles. The chaotic scene at the intersection lasted for about 30 minutes until police showed up and the crowd scattered into the night.

Senator Pizzo, incredulous at what he had witnessed, decided to utilize his legislative left to create a new law addressing street takeovers. After the law passed in 2022, he started hearing feedback from law enforcement officials throughout his district, which encompasses Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, and throughout the state. They told him that while the law helped, it was not effective enough to make a significant impact.

The Department’s Police Legal Bureau worked to get the issue in front of state lawmakers, and it was included among a list of priorities carried by the County’s lobbyists to Tallahassee earlier this year. The Bureau’s efforts buttressed those of other law enforcement agencies throughout the state, including the Florida Highway Patrol, to strengthen the law.

“It was so fabulous,” said Bureau Commander Janet Lewis. “It usually takes a couple of sessions to run it through Tallahassee and for it to get the traction to actually pass both houses, and get signed by the Governor, but this time it was easy,” she said.

Lieutenant Audino said the Department’s Homeland Security Bureau conducts its enforcement with the Department’s Robbery Intervention Detail, and its Priority Response Team, as well as Miami Police officers, and other local law enforcement agencies.

Two cases stand out among the stack of the Department’s press releases. In April 2023, officers with the Bureau arrested a teen who was organizing illegal street takeovers through an online chat room. In that chat, he suggested to anyone attending to throw objects at police should they arrive and get out of their vehicles. He suggested that participants bring fireworks.

And on January 17, 2024, officers arrested Jose Martinez, a 32-year-old Miami man who had been organizing through his Instagram account, large-scale street takeovers since June 6, 2022. Many of his events drew hundreds of spectators and often resulted in violence. According to a Department incident report, “As a result of the defendant facilitating and coordinating illegal intersection takeovers, there has been a slew of aggravated rioting committed within the intersections where the defendant directed crowds to gather and commit criminal acts. During the course of these crimes, MDPD personnel responded to numerous calls to include triple shootings where innocent bystanders were shot, several aggravated battery on law enforcement officers, criminal mischief (burning of County roads and traffic light poles), fleeing

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and eluding, spectators jumping on marked police vehicles and numerous fireworks thrown at law enforcement personnel.”

Lieutenant Audino said the new law has the potential to become a deterrent. “Making it a felony is the biggest change, because it gives us more authority to go after subjects who cross jurisdictional boundaries. The forfeiture component is also big, because we were stopping people, but because the car belonged to their dad, and they hadn’t been convicted yet, we couldn’t start any forfeiture procedure. That’s one thing we are excited to start trying . . . working with our Police Legal

Bureau to see if we can start seizing cars in order to make the most significant impact possible.”

Both Lieutenant Audino, and Lieutenant Crabb said they were working on publicity campaigns to inform car club members, and the general public, about the changes in the law.

“We will release a video about the new law,” Lieutenant Crabb said. “We are not trying to be anti-car culture, and if you want to show off your car, we are not against that, but if you act stupid and do dangerous stuff, we will put you in jail.”

Thirty-Nine Women Graduated from Inaugural “Women’s Leadership Academy” *By Brian Ballou*



Director Daniels offered leadership advice to officers and professional staff attending the workshop. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

The inaugural class of the Women’s Leadership Academy celebrated their graduation on Thursday, April 11, 2024, marking the culmination of the 12-week program. The focus of the academy is to cultivate leaders and build a network of peers and mentors to support women in what

is traditionally a male-dominated profession.

“If we had had these kinds of opportunities for mentorship and companionship and support when we were coming

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Thirty-Nine Women Graduated. . . *Continued from page 4*

up in the Department, it might have been a different experience,” said Assistant Director Rosanna Cordero-Stutz, who served as an instructor for one of the courses taught in the Academy-Risk Taking in Leadership.

The first class consisted of sworn and para-professional employees from the Department and from the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department. The courses, 14 in total, were held at the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute & Research Center. The course topics ranged from “Dealing with Difficult People, Conflict Resolution,” with Major Maria Guerra as instructor, to “Developing Effective Negotiation Skills,” with Chief Stephanie Stoiloff as instructor. Mayor Daniella Levine-Cava served as an instructor for the first course, “What is Leadership.”

The next Academy will start on Wednesday August 21, 2024. Enrollment begins in June, and there is a 45-person limit. The courses typically run three hours and are held in the mornings.

The Academy draws inspiration from women’s leadership courses at Harvard University’s Professional & Executive Development program, and Yale University’s School of Management. Director Stephanie V. Daniels, when she was Deputy Director, created a Special Projects Unit with three lieutenants, and directed them to create programs to invigorate the Department and its employees through skill training, and applying fresh approaches to improve efficiency and streamline operations. Lieutenant Keira Velez was one of the three lieutenants selected, and through researching policing trends, she found examples of women’s leadership trainings offered at the prestigious higher education institutions. She studied the methodology of those courses and created, in early 2023, the lesson plan for the Academy.

“This is something that we have never done here,” Lieutenant Velez said. “I have 25 years on and have experienced challenges in being a woman in a male-dominated profession, and I know some of those challenges come from my being a woman. I know that other women have experienced similar challenges. The only way to get over that is through education, to teach other women how to navigate through those challenges.”

Lieutenant Velez served as instructor for the course “Innovation” that was held on Thursday, March 21, 2024. “Why did I choose to do a class on innovation, well basically I shared what my role is here, and how everyone can have an impact on making this Department better by creating new things,” she said. “If you have a great idea, share it, we can all make this Department better.”

On graduation day, prior to receiving their certificates, the participants divided into several small groups to conduct their final project for the Academy, creating a plan for a program or initiative that would benefit the workplace. In their respective groups, the women brainstormed for approximately an hour, and then presented their ideas to the entire class. At least two proposals are currently being evaluated for possible implementation, creating a more efficient way for investigators from the Department to interview inmates at the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center, and creating a QR Code that would allow for the public to submit feedback to the Department.

Assistant Director Cordero-Stutz gave some advice to the graduates as the inaugural Academy ended. “I want to challenge all the students of this class to remember this quote, as you depart with all your new wisdom, into your future bright careers, in the words of Laurel Ulrich, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, ‘well behaved women seldom make history.’”



Longtime Public Information Officer Alvaro Zabaleta Retires After Serving As Lead Spokesperson For 19 Years

By Brian Ballou



Former Senior Public Information Officer Alvaro Zabaleta received well-wishes from friends and family during his retirement party on Friday, May 3, 2024, at the South Florida Police Benevolent Association Hall in Doral. (Photo by Angelica Kellner)

He has helped craft public statements on behalf of the Department for 19 years, and throughout that time, he has made himself available to respond to scenes of crime at a moment's notice, whether it was day or night, weekday or weekend. After 26 years with the Department, Detective Alvaro Zabaleta retired on April 26, 2024.

He began his career in September 1997, with Basic Law Enforcement Class 190. Upon graduating from the police academy, he was assigned to the Kendall District. While at the Kendall District, he quickly gained the respect of his peers and supervisors. After demonstrating his commitment and dedication to the job, he was transferred on June 2005 to the Media Relations Section. For the next 19 years, he served as a Public Information Officer (PIO) where he was responsible for communicating with media outlets through various forms, including on camera interviews, radio interviews, and written press releases. He quickly became a valued asset to the Section, demonstrating an exceptional mastery of professional PIO skills. Through the years, his vast knowledge and experience has garnered respect from the community and among members of the Department.

Detective Zabaleta responded to numerous historical incidents that occurred in Miami-Dade County, including Hurricane Irma, the Florida International University bridge collapse, and the collapse of the Champlain Towers South building. During these difficult incidents, he remained steadfast in his commitment of supplying accurate and current developments to the community and the media. Through the relationships he built with all the local media outlets, he was able to mobilize them no matter the location or time.

During his career, he received over 79 letters of commendation and departmental awards for courtesy, dedication to duty, teamwork skills, resourcefulness, outstanding professionalism, and alertness to duty. Many of his personal commendations were received from municipal law enforcement agencies, private citizens, local religious organizations, and not-for-profit foundations for his outstanding service to the community. In 2014, he was nominated for the prestigious National Association of Government Communicators, Communicator of the Year Award.

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Alvaro Zabaleta Retires . . . *Continued from page 6*

Detective Zabaleta has taught hundreds of spokespersons and other governmental officials, including our own PIOs, attending the annual Public Information Officer Workshop. In those week-long workshops, Detective Zabaleta explained various techniques of the trade related to communicating with the public and media. He is a master of the “Bridge and Block” technique, and other approaches. The feedback from his sessions has been incredible. Hundreds of PIOs have thanked him for helping them take the next step in their careers. But a true testament to Detective Zabaleta’s effectiveness has been that many

PIOs have returned year after year, and have brought along their understudies.

Kenia Fallat, the Director of Communications for the City of Miami, has collaborated many years with Detective Zabaleta during the workshop, as an instructor, but also worked with him numerous times when she was the spokeswoman for the Miami Police Department. Their careers intersected for 17 years.

“We’ve shared many scenes, unfortunate scenes,” she said. “He has been someone who I can go to, who I can professionally ask for opinions.”

The WELLNESS CORNER



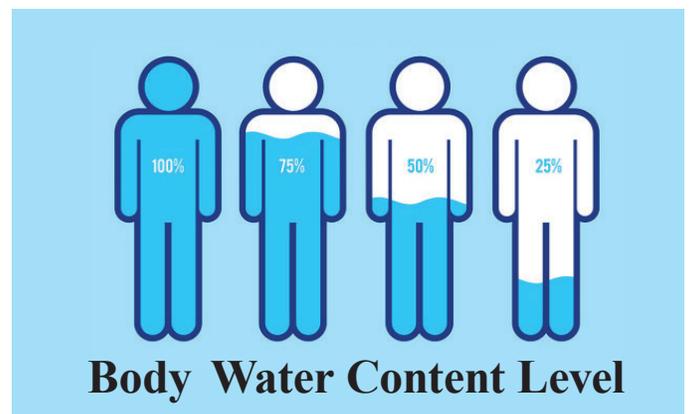
It’s been Hot Outside!

When considering how hot it is outside consider some of these key signs (something you can see) and symptoms (something you feel) to watch for:

1. **Thirst:** While feeling thirsty is a common early a high-stress environment where attention may be focused elsewhere.
2. **Dry Mouth and Lips:** Dryness in the mouth and lips can indicate insufficient hydration.
3. **Dark Urine:** Urine that is dark yellow or amber in color suggests concentrated urine, a sign of dehydration.
4. **Decreased Urination:** Reduced frequency of urination or producing very small amounts of urine can indicate dehydration.
5. **Fatigue:** Feeling tired, lethargic, or lacking in energy despite adequate rest.
6. **Dizziness or Light-headedness:** Feeling dizzy or light-headed, which can affect an officer’s ability to perform tasks safely.
7. **Headache:** Dehydration can cause headaches, which may be mild to severe.
8. **Muscle Cramps:** Cramping in the muscles, particularly

in the legs or abdomen, can be a sign of dehydration.

9. **Dry Skin:** Skin may feel dry, cool, or flushed.
10. **Confusion or Irritability:** Dehydration can affect cognitive function, leading to confusion, irritability, or difficulty concentrating.
11. **Rapid Heartbeat:** Increased heart rate, especially during physical activity or in hot conditions.
12. **Fainting:** Severe dehydration can lead to fainting or passing out.



Promotions



Deputy Director Christopher J. Carothers, second in command in the Department, was among 30 sworn officers who attended the promotional ceremony on Wednesday, April 17, 2024. (Photo by Angelica Kellner)

Director Daniels welcomed a new group of leaders during a Promotional Ceremony on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, recognizing 30 officers for ascending the ranks, from second-in-command to 16 first-time supervisors. The Director offered advice to the supervisors, saying “Effective communication is going to be the lifeblood of any organization, and it’s definitely going to be yours, if you’re going to be a successful leader. As leaders you must be skilled communicators capable of conveying information clearly, concisely, and accurately. Listen actively to the concerns and feedback of your subordinates and ensure that their voices are heard and valued.”

Those promoted included (with their new title):

Deputy Director: Christopher J. Carothers

Police Division Chief: Jose L. Rivero

Major Sergio M. Alvarez, Yolande Jacinthe, Raul J. Nunez, Rita-Maria Rodriguez

Captain: Michael Landestoy, Alexander Diaz De Villegas, Christopher M. Wallace

Lieutenant: James G. Chery, Roody Desroches, Daniel Figueroa, Dominique C. Narcisse, Huberto Rodriguez Jr.

Sergeant: Erik J. Armas, Juan A. Besu, Nicole M. Del Rio, Kevin Diaz, Dennis Garcia Jr., Luis E. Hernandez, Shakira Herrera, Silvia L. Hollis, Richard Munoz Jr., Angelica S. Pratt, Ishak Riaz, Kristina T. Rivero, Antonio H. Salcedo Jr., Victor A. Sanchez, Darrian L. Washington, Merlande William.

Options, services
and hope for crime survivors.
NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS
HOW WOULD YOU HELP?



Take Your Child to Work Day Draws Dozens of Admiring Children to MDPD Headquarters

By Brian Ballou



Employees of the Miami-Dade Police Department brought their children to work on Thursday, April 25, 2024, to see their workplaces up close, and some of the tools and techniques that the Department utilizes in its ongoing mission to protect the public. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

Take Your Child to Work Day on Thursday, April 25, 2024, gave dozens of children a glimpse into their parent's workplace at MDPD Headquarters, and possibly what their own future could look like, if they choose to pursue

a career in law enforcement.

That field is quite expansive, as was evident by the numerous stations that dotted the front outdoor space at Headquarters. The Forensics Services Bureau showed youth how they take fingerprints, and nearby, members of the Special Response Team placed utility vests and helmets on children. The Mounted Patrol Unit brought horses, and the Community Affairs Bureau brought therapy dogs. There were many other apparatus on display during the event, showcasing just how broad the specialties are at MDPD, the eighth largest law enforcement agency in the U.S.

The atmosphere was carnival-like outdoors, down to the hot dogs and chips that were served, the costumed action heroes who posed for photos with admiring fans, and the deejay booth that boomed popular music over speakers. Inside Headquarters, the sons and daughters of employees toured the facility. Along the way, they viewed the second-floor display case leading into our newly-built conference room, and even completed reps on the exercise equipment in the gym room.

The Department expresses its gratitude to everyone who helped make the event a memorable one for our children!



OPERATIONAL SHIELD *Devotional*

Miami-Dade Police Department
Auditorium
The Second Tuesday of every month.
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Any questions please contact:
Officer Carla Ginebra De Garcia
305-281-0760



Recent Retirements

MDPD recently said farewell to 25 employees (16 sworn officers and 9 professional staff) who retired after periods of service ranging from 41 to 9 years. Director Stephanie V. Daniels, the Department’s Command Staff, and the entire MDPD family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

Sworn

Lieutenant Eduardo Cruz	31
Lieutenant Jilbearte M. Sanchez	31
Sergeant Lorenzo Gilbert Jr	27
Officer Wayne Blackwood	30
Officer Donald Bohne	29
Officer Selma Curtis	37
Officer Dennis Delgado	28
Officer Lance Holness	21
Officer Joel Merz	26
Officer Joseph Naranjo	28
Officer Kimberley Penson	28
Officer Richard Raphael	29
Officer Gregory Roberts	32
Officer Raimundo Rodriguez	41
Officer Eric Torres	29
Officer Alvaro Zabaleta	26

Professional Staff

Police Records Specialist 1 Florence Bain	20
Intelligence Analyst Claudia Guerra	32
Police Complaint Officer Marta Marquez	35
Police Records Specialist 1 Rebeca Susana Matus	22
Crime Analysis Specialist 1 Rosenna Reed	34
School Crossing Guard Martha Rosario.....	27
Administrative Officer Patty Simmons	33
School Crossing Guard Enrique Stevenson	9
Police Records Technician 1 Gloria Underwood	34





The Miami-Dade Police Department and OneBlood held a successful blood drive at the Miami-Dade Police Department Headquarters on June 12, 2024. Special thanks are extended to the donors listed below for helping save lives!

Captain Evens Gabriel Jr.
 Sergeant Justin S. Anglin
 Sergeant Eduardo J. Gaitan
 Officer Alexis Hernandez
 Officer Mario Perez Jr.
 Ms. Doretta Crooks
 Police Crime Scene Technician Carolina I. Cuello
 Secretary Sei Y. Luo
 Criminalist 1 Natalia A. Rodriguez Martinez

School Crossing Guard Marlon A. Martinez Solis
 Digital Evidence Specialist Jennifer Mena
 Police Records Technician 1 Amauri Padro
 Police Station Specialist Shirley A. Quiles
 Police Crime Scene Technician Lixanette Ramirez
 Investigative Specialist Rodrigo A. Sepulveda
 Criminalist 2 Erin M. Wilson
 Police Crime Scene Technician Ineirys M. Zapata

Thank You Blood Donors!

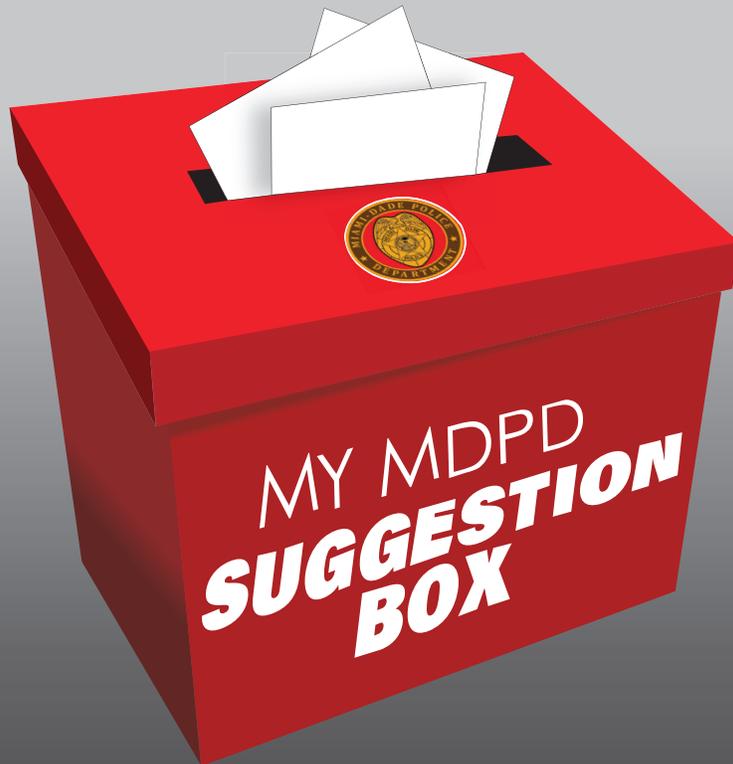


HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS CLOSE TO HOME

Learn more at miamidade.gov/humantrafficking



Human trafficking hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text help to 233733



MDPD WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Ideas are the basis of progress. Share your ideas to further develop, innovate, and fuel your MDPD.

The Suggestion Box application is now online through the MDPD portal, Popular Links.
This application is not an avenue for complaints.



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Daniella L. Cava
Mayor



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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."