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New Miami-Dade Police Department Director – A Humble, Family-Oriented Man

By Brian Ballou

There were no empty seats at the Storer Auditorium on the campus of the University of Miami (UM) Friday morning, February 21, 2020, as the new Director of the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD), Alfredo Ramirez III, took the oath of office during his Investiture Ceremony.

It was a symbolic return to UM for Director Ramirez, who was appointed by Mayor Carlos A. Giménez to succeed retired Director Juan J. Perez, and assumed leadership of the Department on January 13, 2020. Nearing his graduation from UM in 1995, Ramirez met with a guidance counselor. Ramirez had ambition and dreams, but also two small children and a fiancée. Acknowledging this, his head spun, as he assessed his future and his toddlers rolled about on the office floor. In his own words, he had a “big heap of responsibility.”

Simultaneously, Ramirez also heard his grandfather’s words in his ears, still echoing from numerous late night dinner table lectures in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where Ramirez was born and raised. While enjoying croqueta sandwiches, his grandfather would tell him about his own hardscrabble upbringing in Cuba and why hard work mattered. “My family, led by my grandfather, always preached the importance of hard work as a means to improve one’s life,” Director Ramirez said during the ceremony. “Those conversations were seared in my mind.” What also stuck in his mind was a job he had at a warehouse back in Elizabeth, the same place where his father and grandfather had worked for many years. It was

backbreaking work and the younger Ramirez wondered how his father and grandfather were able to do it for so long. But he realized they did it to carve out a better future for the family. It was enough motivation to push him, to help him get through the five-month police academy

without any pay, and to dedicate himself to his career, which started at the then Cutler Ridge District.

“His hard work and devotion to family set the blueprint for us to follow,” said his son, Brandon Ramirez, who is an MDPD officer. “My father has served this Department for just under 25 years, and now at 25 years old, I can say I’ve had the honor and pleasure of watching his entire career. I’ve watched my father apply the hard work instilled in him by his family day in and day out, and the amount of hard work he’s put into his job is beyond admirable.”

Ashley Ramirez, the oldest of the Director’s four children, who is in medical school, said in her speech that her father has always put family first, and that he considers the MDPD, both sworn and non-sworn employees, to be a part of his family. “There is not a single

conscious memory that I have of my father not being involved in the police department and the community from field trip chaperone, from take your child to work day, from all sorts of extracurricular activities, our lives have revolved around the MDPD as has my father’s,” she said. “And I welcome that, truly and completely.”



Left to Right: Mayor Carlos A. Giménez and Director Alfredo Ramirez III. (Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)

Director's Message

ALFREDO "FREDDY" RAMIREZ III



In my 25-year career with the MDPD, I have seen countless acts of bravery and sacrifice by our officers in the course of protecting the community. This has been the legacy of the MDPD. Many men and women gave their lives for this community and our badge. This agency was bestowed to us by the blood, sweat, and tears of those before us. I strongly believe that we must always protect that legacy.

Under Director Perez's leadership, we created an amazing bond with the community. It is a relationship that is never taken for granted and is truly appreciated, and we will continue to focus on nurturing strong ties with the community. Those bonds form a powerful alliance against issues that threaten to diminish the quality of life for residents, especially gun violence.

We will continue to be more innovative and deliberate in our strategies to ensure safe neighborhoods.

I want to create an environment where the greatness we exhibit on the outside is felt on the inside of our agency. We support one another and we encourage each other. We expect a lot from officers and from our civilian staff, and when we are down, we lift each other up.

Police officers often confront the dark side of society. This fact is part of our duty and we accept that responsibility, but traumatic situations can leave an imprint. That is why I am focused on "officer wellness" as one of my top priorities as your Director. It should never be considered a sign of weakness for you to seek help through our Psychological Services Bureau. These professionals are highly trained and I encourage you to talk with them. You are family to me and it hurts me every time I see one of us fall. Therefore, we will focus on handling warning signs before they become a problem.

I am humbled by Mayor Gimenez' trust in me to lead this Department. I will work as hard as possible to provide you with the resources needed to carry on the "MDPD family legacy." Thank you.

Northwest District Detective Paul Fluty Named MDPD Distinguished Officer of the Year for 2019

By Brian Ballou



Officer of the Year for 2019 Paul Fluty.
(Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)

The investigation revealed that the suspect arrived at his ex-girlfriend's house on the night of July 10, 2018, with handcuffs, duct tape, a body bag, and a digging tool in his trunk. He had been violent toward her before and was wanted for armed kidnapping. But on this night, it appeared that he returned with deadly intentions.

"He went there to kill her that night," said Detective Paul Fluty, who on January 24,

2020, was awarded the MDPD 2019 Distinguished Officer of the Year award, for his role in thwarting the likely homicide. Detective Fluty was one of several officers from the Northwest District's Crime Suppression Team who responded. He was dressed in street clothes and was heading home after his shift when the call came in, a domestic violence in progress at a familiar address.

During previous calls to the address, the suspect would disappear before police arrived. But on this night, after he had shown up and left before police arrived, he attempted to return to the house later, assuming police were gone. Consequently, he was met by officers from the Northwest District and fled the scene. Detectives lost sight of his vehicle but drove to his address, where they again spotted him. Police attempted to make a traffic stop but the suspect fled. During the chase, the suspect crashed his vehicle into a median near Amelia Earhart Park. He got out of the car and fled on foot.

The suspect was armed with a rifle and handgun.

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Detective Paul Fluty Officer of the Year

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Detective Fluty chased him and the suspect turned and fired. Detective Fluty fired back, but ran out of ammunition. The suspect continued to fire as Detective Fluty sought cover, hunching behind a tree. Tragically, a bullet fired by the suspect ricocheted and struck Detective Fluty in the back. "Life is weird, when you're stressed out everything slows down to milliseconds, I saw a tree, and I dove behind it," Detective Fluty said. He called for backup and additional officers arrived.

Detective Fluty returned to his car to reload, still unaware that he was hit. Adrenaline was still coursing through his body as he felt a chill on his back, as if a droplet of water had fallen on his shirt and a light gust of wind permeated the fabric. But then a fellow officer told him, "You've been hit." Detective Fluty was airlifted to Ryder Trauma Center at Jackson Memorial Hospital. He had surgery a week later to extract the bullet. He has made a full recovery.



Left to Right: Director Alfredo Ramirez III and Officer Paul Fluty. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

The suspect continued to engage with MDPD police. Approximately an hour later, he was found dead.

Detective Fluty surmised how events can turn deadly in a blink of an eye. "You can't base what might happen on what has happened before, and this case is the perfect example of that, because we had been at the location a bunch of times," Detective Fluty said.

BLE 125 Achieves Highest Marks

By Brian Ballou



MDPD Director Alfredo Ramirez III congratulates BLE Class 125 during their graduation ceremony on February 6, 2020. (Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)

There is an unwavering demand at the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute (MDPSTI), brought forth by drill instructors and expected of every trainee, to do their best on every task that is piled on them during their 40 weeks at the Institute. The demand yields results that are measurable, in physical and academic testing. There

have been plenty of overachieving classes, but never before has one performed as well as BLE 125, the latest graduating class.

There are several "exit points" of testing in the police academy, from the state officer certification exam to

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BLE 125 *Continued from page 3*



Officer Jill Llinas, who was an MDPD Public Service Aide for 19 years, gets her badge pinned on by retired Hialeah Police Sergeant Bonnie Andres, who was Llinas' Sergeant when she was a Hialeah Police Cadet. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

defensive tactics, to shooting, to the physical standards that must be achieved in order to graduate. "Somewhere along the line, somebody always kind of slips up and misses one of them, but nobody in this class failed anything," said Major Carlos D. Gonzalez, the MDPSTI's Commander. "That's an incredibly difficult accomplishment and it's a token to their drill instructors and sergeant regarding the curriculum that they have..." Major Gonzalez said. "They didn't let anyone fall under their expectations and as a result, they created a standard."

Among that class was Officer Jill Llinas, who was an MDPD Public Service Aide (PSA) for 19 years, a non-sworn support position. Officer Llinas raised two children while working as a PSA. She also became a Training Advisor in 2006, teaching other PSAs and even police officers, always dreaming of becoming an officer herself. "It just finally got to the point where I was tired of working in a classroom and I got bored, and my kids are older, and I have the support of my dad, and once the timing was right, I took the chance, and the opportunity," Officer Llinas said. She is now assigned to the Northwest District.

The graduation ceremony for BLE 125 was held at the Fire Fighters Memorial Building in Miami, and was attended by approximately 1,500 family members, friends, and fellow officers.

Director Ramirez presided over the ceremony, his first as Director. "What I expect from all of you is to show respect to others, including your community and peers," Director Ramirez said. "You will be exposed to the best and worst of humanity, to the point that you think you are immune to it, but you are not..." he said, referring to the Department's Wellness Program, which provides mental health counseling to officers who may encounter traumatic situations.

MDPD Trainees Endure Tear Gas and Pepper Spray

By Brian Ballou



Trainee Celina Lopez helped Trainee Paul Madrigal rinse pepper spray from his face during chemical testing day for BLE Class 126. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

Thick white smoke billowed from a small wooden shack at the MDPSTI in Doral, Florida, as 37 MDPD trainees stood nearby and fastened gas masks to their faces. The smoke was tear gas, designed to make humans flee by targeting their mucous membranes with a severe irritant. This is a required part of training to become an MDPD officer. The objective of the exercise is for the officers to learn how to focus under extreme conditions and trust their protective masks.

The trainees of BLE Class 126 were divided in several small groups. Inside the shack, they were instructed to remove their masks and recite the class motto. Under clear skies, with fresh air in their lungs, their recital is robust, in crisp unison, and they can be heard at the other end of the sprawling complex. But tear gas is unbearable, it smacks the senses, and their recital quickly degraded into an incoherent jumble, as tears and nasal mucous flowed

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Trainees Endure Tear Gas

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from their faces. The trainees were held inside for a minute and then they were dismissed. Outside, they bent over or dropped to their knees and spat and gulped fresh air.

That exercise was not the worst part of their day. That moment came about 40 minutes later when a drill instructor summoned them one by one, and sprayed a thick stream of orange-colored pepper spray across their foreheads. The liquid seeped down their faces until it reached their eyes and burned like fire. As the burning sensation ramped up, they were sent off to complete four tasks. At one station, they read case law from a piece of paper, at another they delivered punches and kicks to a hand-held pad, and at a third station, they applied handcuffs to a trainee. The fourth station was to wash off. The trainees dipped their heads under faucets and rubbed baby shampoo over their faces. "This day was definitely worse than I imagined," said Trainee Adrian Madrigal, as he rubbed a towel over his face. "Painful, very painful."

The entire testing lasted about three hours, another

challenge that the class accomplished on their way to graduation in April.



Members of BLE Class 126 went on a jog wearing their gas masks as part of their chemical training day at the MDPSTI. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

MDPD Presents "The Longevity Project," Guidance For a Healthy Retirement

By Brian Ballou



Certified Yoga Instructor Veronica Borrego visited the MDPSTI recently to offer information to MDPD employees about meditation and the benefits of Yoga. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

There are examples to take from communities throughout the world on how to live a healthy and active lifestyle, from a mountainous region in Sardinia, Italy, where residents in their 90s tend gardens and eat what they grow, to Loma Linda, southern California, where a cluster of active elderly residents maintain a strong social network.

A pilot program initiated by MDPD, touched upon the best practices of several small communities across the globe known for longevity. The program delved in to other keys to healthy living during an eight-hour class on January 17, 2020, titled the "Longevity Project." The session was held at the MDPSTI and hosted by Dr. Kelly J. Kennedy, the MDPD Wellness Program Facility Manager. Thirty sworn and non-sworn employees attended, most of whom are nearing retirement.

"We have to keep a balance in our lives, we have to continue to move, to exercise, and to make sure that we are getting the proper nutrition," said Dr. Kennedy, an exercise physiologist. She referred to several communities throughout the world where residents are active into their

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Guidance for a Healthy Retirement

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80s and beyond. A published study of those communities revealed several commonalities, such as a mostly plant-based diet, regular exercise, and strong ties to family and friends.

Dr. Kennedy said that too often we try to make our lives easier or try to free up our time by “outsourcing” things that keep us active, such as mowing the lawn or walking the dog. “We have to think about how to put those things back into our routines to optimize our lives,” she said.

The class also included an hour-long Yoga session led by certified Yoga Instructor Veronica Borrego. She taught the participants various poses and meditation techniques. Yoga is widely considered to be a highly-effective stress reliever. The class included a holistic approach to life, stressing the importance of healthy relationships, eating vegetables, reducing exposure to chemicals and toxins, refraining from smoking, and limiting alcohol consumption, and if necessary, getting

proper counseling or treatment for addictive behaviors. The Longevity Project included a presentation by two members of MDPD’s Psychological Services Bureau, Dr. Maria Brooks and Dr. Quina Munson, who talked about the benefits of “Positive Psychology,” a focus on the positive aspects of life. “The connection between the mind and body is very important, and our approach to health should always include both” said Dr. Munson.

The Psychological Services Bureau offers MDPD employees counseling on substance abuse, relationships, and trauma intervention. MDPD Director Ramirez said that officer wellness is one of his top priorities. “Our officers need to know that they are supported, and that it’s okay for them to seek help,” he said.

The Longevity Project class is scheduled for March 31, 2020, and will continue quarterly. Participants filled out an evaluation after the class and their feedback will be used to improve the program.

Thank You Blood Donors!



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

Chief Ariel Artime
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Recent Retirements

MDPD recently said farewell to 22 employees (15 sworn officers and 7 civilians) who retired after periods of service ranging from 25 to 37 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.

Sworn

Director Juan J. Perez	25
Major Enrique J. Damaso	30
Major Garry F. Jeanniton	30
Captain Carlos M. Vasquez	33
Lieutenant Amado A. Ojeda	33
Lieutenant Lisa M. Vila	33
Sergeant Norberto Gonzalez II	37
Sergeant Brendolyn E. Spence	32
Officer Lionel Espinosa Jr.	32



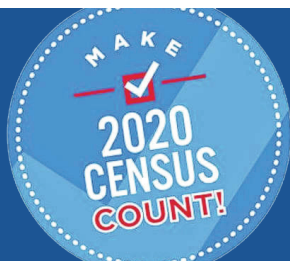
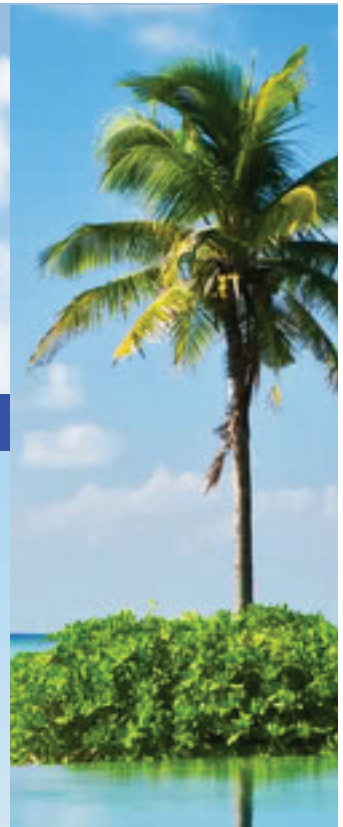
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Officer Kees Van Gils30
 Officer Jorge A. Lobato30
 Officer Dannette D. Rollins30
 Officer Bertha C. Rubio27
 Officer Kurt T. Schabbel27
 Officer James P. Sickles25

Civilians

MDPD Intelligence Analyst Betsy Ashley32
 Special Projects Administrator I Allison Bishop-Cooner35
 Police Records Technician 3 Lana C. Brathwaite35
 MDPD Intelligence Analyst Maria I. Luaices 35
 Fingerprint Analyst 2 Brian E. McElhaney 27
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