



Alert

Newsletter



“Committed to Excellence”

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

GEORGE A. PEREZ

In my teens, I worked as a Disc Jockey (DJ). It was an experience that gave me personal growth, and instilled in me attributes that I've used throughout my law enforcement career. A good DJ identifies the emotions and the energy of their audience. Being able to key in on the crowd, feel the energy, identify with what they want, and pick up on their cues, that is what makes a great DJ.

Being a DJ forced me to speak at wedding ceremonies, to families and in large crowds. I was a shy kid, and through my work, I learned how to be more comfortable in front of crowds, I developed the ability to communicate effectively and with confidence.

Those were very formative years for me, and deejaying showed me the value of a trade. It helped me understand the concept of a business, and allowed me to meet influential people in all walks of life. Being able to establish an immediate rapport with a person, and identify what is important to that person, and how you can connect the resources that you have with that person, are valuable skills.

In every aspect of my career with the Miami-Dade Police Department, I have used those attributes. Identifying a mental health situation, for example; being able to identify crisis versus conflict, is an essential part of what we do. I know that I've been trained and have the tools, but also know that I can make an emotional connection with a person, so they can believe that better days are ahead. Communication is key. The greatest threat to any officer wearing this uniform, is not knowing what the individual they're encountering is experiencing. Through communication, we can learn what they're experiencing, and that is significant, because it has the power to diffuse a situation that might otherwise turn physical.

I am humbled by Mayor Daniella Levine Cava's appointment of me to lead the Department, and I will always hold in my heart the best interests of our brave officers, as well as our professional staff. I will continue to focus on something that my predecessor prioritized, officer wellness.

I've been working with Major Melissa Barosela, of our Psychological Services Bureau, to bring a wellness app, designed for first responders, but also available to the public, to your smart phone. The app is named CORDICO. It was developed by a psychologist and is currently being used by hundreds of first responders across the country.

My vision for this Department is very "community-centric," in terms of how we can leverage our encounters with the public, to identify opportunities and services. The CORDICO app is a perfect example of that. Through our officers, we can help spread the word in the communities that we serve, that this resource is available to anyone who needs mental support. I believe that we are the best positioned entity in Miami-Dade County to identify where the needs are, and with this Department being connected to so many resources, from community-based organizations to County entities, we can help offer solutions that go beyond policing. I want that to be a major focus for us. I really feel that is the answer, for a teenage kid, who is being propositioned a dozen times on a street corner on how to make an easy dollar. How do we replace that? If that same kid is shown a positive path, one that helps him or her attain a sustainable trade, then that's powerful.

My goal, when I started in this Department, at 29 years old, was to achieve the rank of Captain, because that was my rank as a police explorer. It took me five years to take the Sergeant's exam. I felt like my goal was to have a positive impact, to shield my colleagues from things that could have a negative effect on their quality of life. As a Sergeant, if someone in the community had a problem, I could play a bigger role by helping to solve that problem. That was very rewarding, because I got to hear the problem, see the problem, help fix it, and then see the result. I thought back then that if I had that effect with five or six officers, then as a Lieutenant, we could help bring even more positive results to the community. Never did I imagine, even as the Assistant Director, that I would be in this office, as the leader of the entire Department.

To my MDPD Family, it is an honor!

Sincerely,

George A. Perez
Interim Director

On Vacation, Detective Springs Into Action to Save Child Who Drowned In River

By Brian Ballou

Detective Jeffrey Richman's vacation was in full swing. On Wednesday, June 16, 2021, he traveled with his family to the Ron Henry Horseshoe Bend Park in Mineral Bluff, Georgia, to relax and take in the splendor of the gently sloping hills covered with trees, and the winding Toccoa River.

They had visited the park two days prior, drawn there by its reputation as a good fishing spot. One of Detective Richman's sons, Jake, loves to fish, but on that first visit he struck out, did not catch anything. The family hoped Jake's luck would change on the second visit.

From the bank of the river, Jake cast his reel, hunting for trout. Near a picnic area, his twin brother Ryan played with a remote-controlled helicopter. Detective Richman and his wife chatted with several locals.

Nearby, a shirtless eight-year-old boy, wearing a snorkel and mask, and baggy cargo pants, waded in shallow water, occasionally dipping his face in the chilly current. The boy's grandmother observed his activity from a park bench. The river's current is typically light, but as the sun goes down, the dam upriver is opened, and the current intensifies with this daily rush of freshwater. There are advisories along the bank of the river warning swimmers of this danger.

The boy ventured out slightly, and then was seemingly pulled further in by the current. He continued to play, even as his grandmother told him to come closer to shore. The boy told her not to worry, that he could swim. He bounced up and down on his toes, trying to keep his head above water.

"I didn't know if he was playing, but I started taking off my shoes just in case he wasn't," Detective Richman said. The boy's movements got more dramatic. Detective Richman removed his socks, and felt adrenaline course through his body. The boy dropped under the surface, as if he was sucked down by the current. Detective Richman was about 40 feet from the edge of the river, and the boy was about 15 feet into the river. Detective Richman rushed toward the water, throwing his keys and cell phone to the ground while keeping his eyes on the spot where he saw the boy go under. The water was cold, but Detective Richman did not notice that. It was murky too, and that was a problem.

Detective Richman took a gulp of air and swam to the bottom where he saw the boy go down. The depth was about seven feet. He felt around because he could not see anything. He went back up to fill his lungs with air again, and returned to the bottom. He felt something brush against his legs, and when he reached down, he grabbed the boy's shoulder and lifted him up.

"I remember thinking to myself that he felt like such dead weight," Detective Richman said. "As I pulled him



Detective Jeffrey Richman, of the Professional Compliance Bureau, is the Department's 2021 Distinguished Officer of the Year. He was on vacation when he saved the life of a child who had drowned in a river in Georgia. (Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)

back to the shallow water, I saw his face. It was stoic, he was unconscious. His eyes and mouth were slightly opened but he wasn't gasping, so it was clear that he wasn't breathing."

Detective Richman put the child over his left shoulder, like a "Fireman's Carry" and as he pushed through the water towards the shore, he gave the boy repeated back blows. Detective Richman recalled that everything seemed to be in slow motion, despite the entire rescue taking about 35 seconds. He also recalled that he was grateful at that moment that he had paid attention during his First Responder training. He delivered more back blows, and then he heard gurgling, and felt warm water flow down his back. The boy exclaimed, "I can breathe now."

Detective Richman's wife had already called 911, and the twins rushed to the end of the road to flag down the ambulance. The grandmother hugged Detective Richman, told him that God had put him there that day.

For his actions, Detective Richman, who works in the Professional Compliance Bureau's Public Corruption Investigations Section, was awarded the Department's second highest honor, the Silver Medal of Valor, and was named the 2021 Distinguished Officer of the Year. He has been with the Department for 26 years.

"As far as I'm concerned, I did what any other cop would have done, I just reacted," Detective Richman said. "The Training Bureau deserves the real credit, they are the ones who drill it in your head, they prepare us for this stuff."

Latent Fingerprint Examiner Awarded Civilian of The Year for Helping to Subdue Suspect Who Assaulted Police Officer Inside Headquarters

By Brian Ballou



Latent Fingerprint Examiner Julio C. Betancourt is the Department's 2021 Distinguished Civilian of the Year, for subduing a suspect who attacked an officer inside a prisoner holding cell in the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building. (Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)

Julio C. Betancourt's job is discovering fingerprints. In many cases, he will employ high-tech tools to draw out invisible impressions left on guns or bottles or other items. He wears a white lab coat and latex gloves, and there are microscopes and computers on desks, and diagrams on the wall depicting the various identifiable characteristics of fingerprints.

On December 21, 2021, while working in the Forensic Services Bureau, located within the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building, he had to step out of his world of science to subdue an enraged man, who had already viciously assaulted a police officer, who brought the suspect in for fingerprint analysis and was in the process of returning him to the prisoner holding cell.

For his role in coming to the assistance of the officer, Mr. Betancourt was selected as Distinguished Civilian of the Year for 2021. His award letter stated that Mr. Betancourt acted with complete disregard for his own safety and

prevented the officer, and possibly other officers, from suffering further serious injury or death.

Mr. Betancourt recalled that day, saying that he just reacted to the situation because he saw that there was a need to help.

"I was walking out from the latent section to the restroom, and when I exited, I heard commotion, a co-worker running away, nervous, and then I look inside the prisoner holding cell, and see this guy fighting with one of our officers."

Mr. Betancourt has no formal training in defensive tactics or fighting techniques, aside from what he learned many years ago before joining the Department. He used to work for the Miami-Dade County School Board, and took a class on how to restrain autistic children. But Mr. Betancourt is 6'2" and about 215 pounds, with an athletic build from his days playing football and basketball in high school, and baseball in college.

Mr. Betancourt rushed into the room, yelled at the suspect, telling him "get on the wall!" The suspect, who was approximately a half-foot shorter and 50 pounds lighter, stopped, and Mr. Betancourt grabbed him, put his arm behind his back; and with the assistance of the officer, and other officers who responded from the Warrants Bureau and the Headquarters Security Unit, the suspect was restrained, putting an end to a chaotic situation. The officer who was attacked sustained various injuries and had to be treated at a local hospital.

The incident was not the first time that Mr. Betancourt has intervened to subdue a suspect near his workspace inside Headquarters. He recalled that years ago, a suspect broke his plastic flex-cuffs and started swinging. That suspect was much bigger than the suspect in the December 2021 incident.

"That guy years ago, he was like 6'3," a big dude, he was a beast. He just snapped those cuffs, I couldn't believe it. Somehow, we subdued him," Mr. Betancourt said.



NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

APRIL 10 - 16

Miami-Dade Police Department

COVID-19 Nearly Claimed His Life, But Miami-Dade Police Canine Unit Officer is Recovering, Backed by Family, Friends, and Co-workers

By Brian Ballou



Officer Frank Sangineto, a member of the Seaport Operations Bureau's Canine Unit, made a remarkable recovery from COVID-19, and is rehabilitating at home. He hopes to eventually return to work. (Photo by Angelica Kellner)

The initial effects of COVID-19 seemed manageable for Miami-Dade Police Department Canine Unit Officer Frank Sangineto: a stuffy nose, sore throat, and mild cough. But then the virus dug in. The cough became uncontrollable. He saw a doctor and started taking an antibiotic, but his condition continued to worsen.

On August 18, 2021, ten days after contracting the virus, he was admitted to Jackson West Medical Center. His breathing was labored. On August 25, 2021, a chest X-ray revealed his lungs were collapsing. A breathing tube was placed down his throat. If being intubated was cause for worry, then what happened next was cause for alarm, and prayer. He was immediately transported to Jackson Memorial Hospital, where he was connected to a form of life support, a machine that did the work for his heart and lungs, allowing those organs to rest and heal. He was also put into a medically-induced coma. Six weeks later, while still in a coma, he was connected to a kidney dialysis machine.

It appeared that the virus would claim the life of yet another police officer. Because of their close contact with the public, law enforcement officers are at a heightened risk of exposure, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control. COVID-19 was the leading cause of death among officers in 2021, claiming 458 lives nationwide.

But Officer Sangineto, 49, had a lot of fight left in him, and a lot to live for. His 12-year-old son, a close-knit family, numerous friends that grew up with him in the Little Havana area, and a whole police department, the eighth largest in the U.S., were pulling for him and offering support. He is also a former member of the U.S. Marine Corps, but Marines do not consider themselves "former" after they leave; once a Marine, always a Marine. The ability to push oneself beyond limitations is ingrained in "Semper Fidelis."

"The one thing about him, that has always been a part of him, is that he is a very strong-minded and determined person; so, if anyone could get through such a devastating thing, it would be him," said Ms. Elana Morejon, who is the best friend of Officer Sangineto's sister, Ms. Irma Sangineto, and has known him since childhood.

Officer Sangineto lives with his mother, Ms. Irma Gonzalez, who contracted COVID-19 around the same time he did, but she was not hospitalized. His co-workers at the Seaport Operations Bureau visited her, dropped off groceries at her front door, and while remaining outside, spoke with her about her son's condition. After her results came back negative, Ms. Gonzalez was able to visit her son in the hospital. She went to see him every day.

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COVID-19 Nearly Claimed His Life . . .

Fellow Canine Unit Officer Isabel McDonald, who is in the same unit as Officer Sangineto, also visited him every day, and even though he was in a coma, she would sit and talk to him. Over the beeps and hum of the machines that monitored and supported his body, she told him that “prayer chains” had formed and that hundreds of people were praying for him every day, not just in Miami-Dade County, but throughout the state, the country, and even internationally. She told him about his son, how he was collecting law enforcement challenge coins from across the County, with the assistance of the Miami-Dade Police Department. She would tell him about work, as if she had pulled up her police vehicle next to his to chat, as they customarily did at the Seaport. She kept assuring him that he would pull through, even though she had been told by the medical staff that his condition was grave, and that recovery was against the odds.

Officer Sangineto was awakened from the coma on October 18, 2021. Unable to move at all in those first hours, he was also in a mental fog. But slowly he came out of that, and with the assistance of a team of therapists at the hospital, he regained mobility. Officer Sangineto recalled that he used that time to focus on his mental determination to beat his health crisis. He would need the strength for what he was about to endure.

Doctors determined that he would need a double lung transplant and a kidney transplant to live. His family applied at several lung transplant programs, and the University of Florida Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville responded. And then the waiting started, the donor would have to have A+ blood type, and approximately the same weight and height as Officer Sangineto.

On December 10, 2021, Officer Sangineto was wheeled out of Jackson Memorial Hospital on a large gurney. He was swathed in thick white blankets and had a single thin tube in his nose, and two thicker tubes attached to him under the blankets, that were connected to a large machine attached to the gurney. He had lost approximately 70 pounds since he was hospitalized, and his face appeared gaunt and his skin color pale. But he smiled as he saw dozens of Miami-Dade police officers lined up outside to give him a send-off to the Miami International Airport. The support appeared to boost his spirits. He was put on a “Life Flight” to Gainesville, to await a donor at Shands Hospital.

On December 16, 2021, the Department held a barbecue fundraiser at Headquarters, to help defray Officer Sangineto’s medical expenses. The fundraiser took in approximately \$10,000.

On January 4, 2022, Officer Sangineto underwent a

double lung transplant surgery that lasted 12 hours. The next day, he received a kidney transplant. That surgery lasted about five hours. Both operations went smoothly. “They (doctors) told us the surgeries went fantastic and there was no doubt that he would recover,” said Ms. Sangineto, Officer Sangineto’s sister. Dr. Tiago Machuca, who performed the lung transplant surgery, said that without that operation, Officer Sangineto would need to be on life support to survive.

Officer Sangineto remained in intensive care through February, and started rehabilitation. He would stand up and walk short distances, and underwent respiratory therapy. On March 8, 2022, he was driven back to Miami in a medical van, a five and a half hour drive that received a Miami-Dade Police Department motorcycle escort over the last 20 miles. He returned to Jackson Memorial Hospital, this time to the Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Center. After the driver opened the back of the transport van, Officer Sangineto flashed a big smile and gave a double thumbs-up gesture, as his family and friends clapped and cheered his return. He was on a gurney, but his face was fuller, he appeared tan, and there were no tubes attached to his body.

“He looks like himself again,” said Ms. Sangineto. “Being his big sister, I always knew what a special person he is. Seeing the outpouring of support from co-workers, family, and the community, how much he is loved and cared for, kept us going through our darkest days, and he never lost hope.”

It was not clear then how long Officer Sangineto would need to stay at the rehabilitation center; the medical staff said that depended on his progress. But it took only two weeks for Officer Sangineto to get the all-clear to return home. On March 22, 2022, he was released. He strode out of the center with the assistance of a walker, and wore black sweatpants and a black t-shirt with the words ‘MDPD STRONG TO THE FINISH, FRANK STRONG.’

“When Frank got sick, we asked God for a miracle,” said Interim Director George A. Perez, standing next to Officer Sangineto moments after he walked out. Behind them were dozens of officers, and in front of them were numerous television cameras and reporters. “God answered that call.”

Before he got into the family vehicle to head back home for the first time in more than seven months, Officer Sangineto spoke briefly to the media. “I feel like I’ve been given a second chance in life, and with my family... as soon as I get better, and when I can, I want to go back to work.”

Sergeant With a Big Heart Selected as Officer of the Month for January

By Brian Ballou



Sergeant Terry A. Crum, of our Intracoastal District, was awarded the Distinguished Officer of the Month for January 2022, for her numerous acts of kindness towards other employees. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

Sergeant Terry A. Crum, of our Intracoastal District, was recently selected as the Distinguished Officer of the Month for January 2022; the award highlighting three specific acts of kindness on her part towards other employees.

When a Police Records Specialist 1 (PRS1) at the District contracted COVID-19 in January 2021, and her condition deteriorated to the point that she needed a kidney transplant to survive, Sergeant Crum reached out to help. Sergeant Crum coordinated monthly food collections and grocery deliveries to the employee's family, and repeatedly submitted Earned Leave Pool applications on behalf of the PRS1, enabling her to remain in pay status for eight months. Sergeant Crum also enlisted the help of the Office of Departmental Affairs and coordinated a Countywide media request for possible kidney donors, which identified several viable donors.

In February 2021, Sergeant Crum learned that a 911 dispatcher, who helped keep her calm after she was involved in a serious car crash on the Turnpike in 2000, was retiring. Sergeant Crum recalled, "I fractured my knee in the accident, and I was lucky to walk away with my life, and I was very grateful for that dispatcher to be on the other end of the call." Sergeant Crum collected

donations from Intracoastal District employees to give the dispatcher a special send-off into retirement. She surprised the dispatcher with flowers, balloons, and a card, and the dispatcher wept tears of joy on her last day at work.

In April 2021, Sergeant Crum learned that a subordinate officer had tragically lost his brother, and she reached out to the Department's Psychological Services Bureau, which in turn reached out to the grieving employee to provide bereavement counseling. Sergeant Crum also collected donations from her squad to buy an airline ticket for the officer so he could travel home to be with his family.

Sergeant Crum says her nurturing personality comes naturally, but that recent personal tragedy has also strengthened her resolve to help others. "If nothing else comes from anything that I do, I want to inspire others, so that they will pass along kindness," said Sergeant Crum, who grew up in Coconut Grove, and has

been with the Department for 27 years. "I am who I am because my mother and father instilled that in me, I don't do things to be acknowledged, I just do it from my heart."

When her sister passed away, leaving behind a 2-year-old daughter, Sergeant Crum, a single mother with three children of her own, adopted her niece. Another sibling, her younger brother, passed away due to Leukemia. Sergeant Crum's father died in a traffic accident while on his way to have lunch with her, and her mother suffered a stroke during the funeral, and later died of complications. After her mother passed away, Interim Director George A. Perez, then a Major, visited her house on a Saturday to offer his condolences and support.

"I will never forget how I felt at that moment, to just know that someone from the Department, after all these years, cared enough about me to be present," Sergeant Crum said. "That meant a lot to me and I promised to myself that if I made it to Sergeant, I'm going to make that happen for someone else. My mother wanted me to take the Sergeant's exam, but she passed before the test came out. After her death I decided to take the test, to fulfill her wish."

“Special Delivery” By Brian Ballou



Ms. Addy Villanueva, President and CEO of the non-profit organization ‘Little Bear Big Heart,’ delivered 100 teddy bears on February 28, 2022, to Headquarters. The bears were distributed among our officers, who will give them to children to help comfort them during stressful experiences. Pictured, from left to right is South Operations Division Chief Brian L. Rafky, Community Affairs Bureau Major Carmen Castro, Michael J. Welch Sr., President and CEO of University Credit Union, and Ms. Addy Villanueva. (Photo by Angelica Kellner)

A cadre of 100 cute, huggable teddy bears arrived in cardboard boxes at the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building on Monday, February 28, 2022. The stuffed animals will eventually be placed in the arms of innocent children, to turn their attention away from traumatic incidents.

“So many times, our officers encounter children going through the hardest day in their life,” said South Operations Division Chief Brian L. Rafky, accepting the delivery from the ‘Little Bear Big Heart’ President Addy Villanueva. “They will get put towards good use for sure,” Chief Rafky said.

Ms. Villanueva said the mission of her organization is to bring awareness to and educate the public on the importance of helping to comfort abused, neglected, abandoned, traumatized and or trafficked individuals, especially children. She is seeking to have the teddy

bears in family court judges’ chambers, fire trucks, and patrol cars.

“They soak up tears and they bring comfort and love.” Ms. Villanueva said.

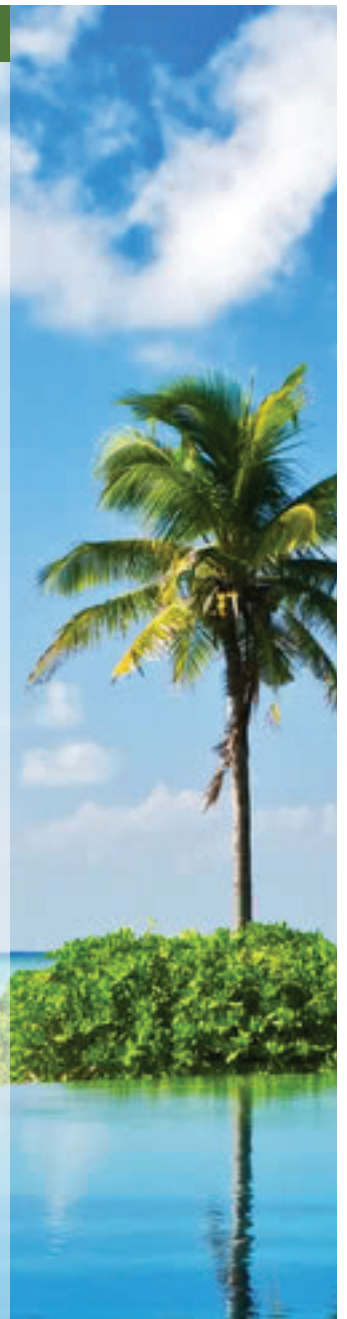




MDPD recently said farewell to 50 employees (33 sworn officers and 17 professional staff) who retired after periods of service ranging from 36 to 10 years. Interim Director George A. Perez, the Department’s Command Staff, and the entire MDPD family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

Sworn

Lieutenant Alain Guilbaud.....	25
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Sergeant Deborah Bradford	24
Sergeant Rosaura Diaz	27
Sergeant James Dixon	30
Sergeant Yolna Ellis	28
Sergeant Tyra Griffin	30
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Officer Latonia S. McIntyre	30
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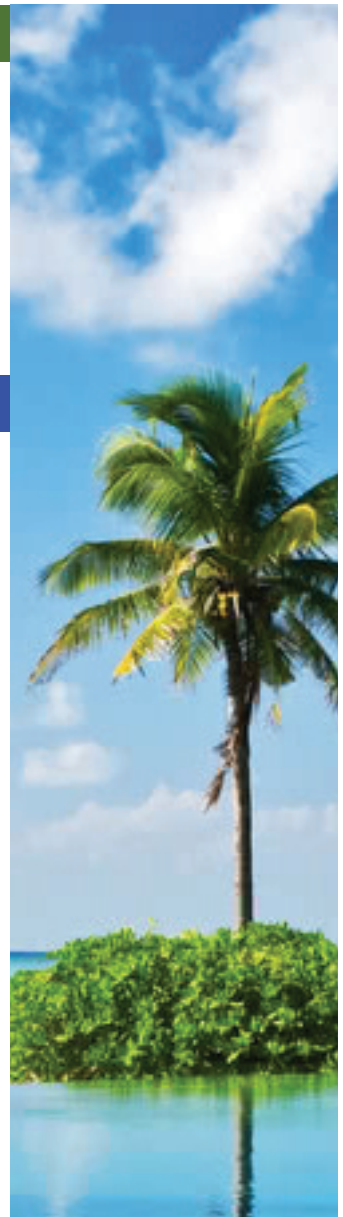


Sworn

Officer Juan F. Rodriguez24
 Officer David Rubinson25
 Officer Kevin Thomas30
 Officer Virgilio Valdes26
 Officer Luis A. Valladares28
 Officer Steve Veingrad40

Professional Staff

MDPD Crossing Guard Supervisor Miriam Arocho 14
 Public Service Aide Matilde Barrett 35
 Police Crime Analysis Specialist Victoria Burgos40
 Police Records Technician 2 Hilda Burrows36
 Police Station Specialist Ana G. Colmenero37
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 Public Service Aide Reynaldo Lopez32
 Police Records Technician 1 Rashondra McCall 14
 Stenographic Reporter Tonya McCarthy35
 MDPD Court Support Specialist 1 Yvette Melendez30
 MDPD Intelligence Analyst Supervisor Samuel Odi36
 MDPD Court Support Specialist 1 Mayra Rodriguez 15
 MDPD Crossing Guard Supervisor Elidor Saint Germain 17
 School Crossing Guard Coordinator Rodella Sanders35
 Administrative Secretary Ivy Scher35



HUMAN LIFE IS NOT FOR SALE

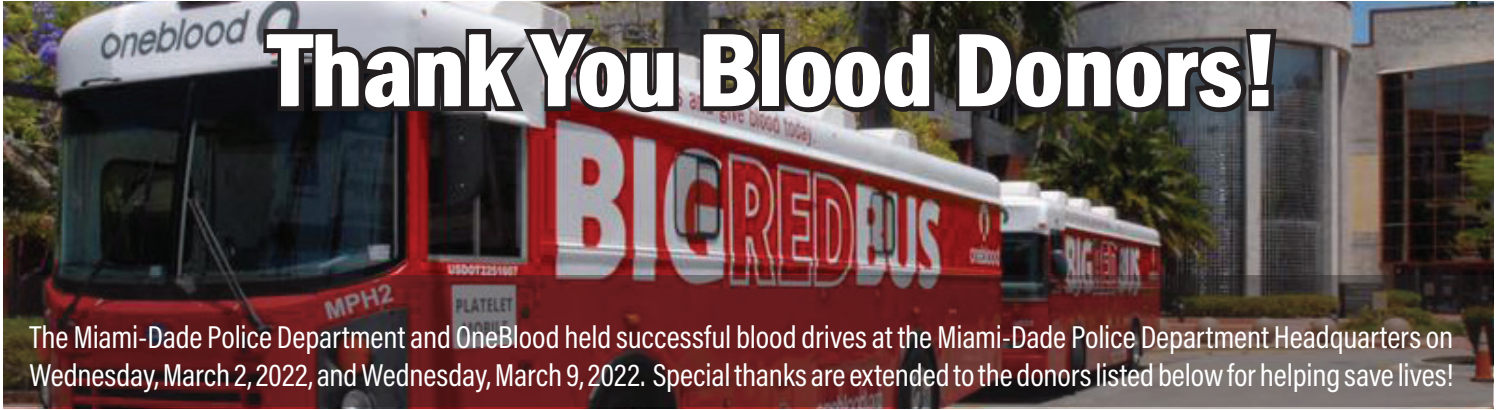
Anyone can experience trafficking in any community. If you have information on human trafficking:

Call 911 immediately.

Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-37-37-888

Text or call 305-FIX-STOP (305-349-7867)





The Miami-Dade Police Department and OneBlood held successful blood drives at the Miami-Dade Police Department Headquarters on Wednesday, March 2, 2022, and Wednesday, March 9, 2022. Special thanks are extended to the donors listed below for helping save lives!

Sergeant Brad L. Burke
 Sergeant Jorge Martinez
 Sergeant Richard Pichardo
 Sergeant Petra R. Reeves-Evans
 Officer Javier Arias
 Officer Shannon B. Jackson
 Officer Cesar A. Ordonez Jr.
 Officer Ulises Perez
 Ms. Monica Alomia
 Police Records Technician 1 Catherine E. Buckland
 Police Financial Investigator Margaret Dunn
 Imaging Records Technician Jeffrey H. Johnson

Mr. Thomas Mikell
 Mr. Raynel Morales
 Police Records Specialist 1 Maria J. Muino
 Personnel Technician Oneida Ortega
 Mr. Giovanni Pacileo
 Mr. Luis Reyes
 Officer Anthony Rodriguez
 Police Records Specialist 1 Jasmine M. Roman
 Mr. Frances Shackelford
 Secretary Tamika Wellons
 Criminalist 2 Erin M. Wilson



Thank you for **saving lives**



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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."