



# Alert

Newsletter  
Miami-Dade Police Department



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*“Committed to Excellence”*

July–September 2018



## Wear Your “Team Shirt”



*Join Us:*

## Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk

**Saturday, October 27, 2018**

Marlins Park, 501 NW 16 Avenue, Miami, FL 33125



Please join the Police Power in Pink Team at 7:30 a.m. Wear your “Team Shirt” and be featured in our group photograph. For further information, please contact SPA 1 Allison Bishop-Cooner at [abishop-cooner@mdpd.com](mailto:abishop-cooner@mdpd.com)

# New Promotees Come With Depth of Leadership Skills

By Brian Ballou



Director Juan J. Perez presents newly promoted Hector Llevat his chief's badge. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

Together, they have more than 513 years with the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD), a cumulative half-millennium spent patrolling neighborhoods, apprehending violent criminals, crunching payroll numbers, and responding to news reporters, among many other duties.

Twenty-eight MDPD sworn and one non-sworn chief financial officer received their gold badges recently in a promotional ceremony at the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Headquarters, as their families and friends looked on. Director Juan J. Perez said their continuing and new leadership roles come at a challenging time with regard to the public perception of police officers. "Over the last few years, we have witnessed our profession disrespected, condemned, and vilified without merit," he told the crowd of approximately 200 people. The Director said police are also often used for political expediency, supported or shamed by various political groups to curry favor amongst their supporters. "For this reason, I can truly say that I am proud of all of you who have chosen to take this current leadership step. It is admirable that you have chosen this path. You have chosen to lead men and women who will run toward danger, risking their lives," Director Perez said. "You have chosen to guide those without the guns on their side, who work long hard hours in support of those who wear the badges; you have chosen to climb the leadership ladder."

Responsibility and accountability is not easy, but necessary. He ended his speech by telling the officers that their words carry great weight, especially in the context of tense situations or standoffs. He repeated several times, "Choose your words carefully."

## Backpack Giveaway

By Brian Ballou

Recently, MDPD's North Operations Division hosted a Youth Outreach Unit (YOU) Backpack Giveaway, which provided 40 teens, ages 13-18, with backpacks stuffed with school supplies. The Northside District hosted the event and donated pizza and drinks. Fifty MDPD police officers from the Northside, South, and Intracoastal Districts serve as mentors to the teens, as part of the YOU initiative. (Photo by Brian Ballou)



# Ushering Society's Most Precious Commodity

By Brian Ballou



*MDPD school crossing guards practice their services as they are entrusted with the safety of tens of thousands of students every weekday. (Photo by Brian Ballou)*

It is a daily shuffle fraught with danger, students making their way to school amid hurried commuters making their way to work. Where their paths intersect, there is a crossing guard. Approximately, 450 dutiful MDPD school crossing guards are entrusted with the safety of tens of thousands of students every schoolday at nearly 120 schools. It is a job that rarely garners accolades; however, the Department recognizes those employees with a yearly awards ceremony.

Recently held at W.R. Thomas Middle School, the auditorium was packed with crossing guards wearing their uniforms. On the job, their uniform also encompasses a whistle, bright lime-green vest, and a handheld Stop sign.

As the new school year starts, the focus remains the same, to protect each and every pedestrian. "There is an aspect about school safety that goes unnoticed and that is pedestrian safety," said Chief Hector Llevat, head of the Public Information and Education Bureau, which has oversight of the School Crossing Guard Program. "Like bees as part of a beehive . . . it works like clockwork," he said, carrying the analogy further by calling the Program's coordinator, Administrative Officer 3 (AO3) Irelene King Allen, the "Queen Bee." "What's the honey? It's keeping the children safe and we accomplished that this year," said Chief Llevat.

AO3 King added that the 2017-2018 school year was a remarkably safe one for student pedestrians, given the

amount of crossings, the volume of students, the number of cars, and every year, the goal is to create as safe an atmosphere as possible. "Sometimes it's overwhelming, but the citizens and children of Miami-Dade County need you," AO3 King told the crowd inside the auditorium. "Yes, they need you."

School crossing guards work in heavy rain and intense heat and sometimes draw the ire of frustrated drivers who would rather be on their way. Recently, the Program, based at MDPD Headquarters, trained five new hires for its last training class of the year. The trainees watched a video that explained a small child's perception of traffic. Children are not as adept at judging the speed and distance of vehicles as adults. Because of their size, they are also less visible to drivers.

After the classroom session, the trainees went outside to a crosswalk on NW 92 Avenue and took turns practicing. The next day, they reported to their assigned schools, where they were monitored by veteran school crossing guards.

There is longevity in the job; many school crossing guards have worked for decades. During the ceremony, 10 received the Golden Guard Award which recognizes school crossing guards who are 80 plus years. Rigoberto Feliciano, 82, had the most stage time as he sang two songs and danced a bit, while the crowd cheered.

"We did an excellent job, and each year we are getting better and better," AO3 King said moments after the awards ceremony ended. "We're not perfect, but we don't give up and we strive to do better each year."



*MDPD school crossing guards.*

# Hall of Honor Opens in the East Wing of Headquarters — A Tribute to Our Fallen Officers

By Brian Ballou

A flood of emotions fell over Ms. Jenni Haworth Ressler as she touched the picture frame glass over the photograph of her sister, Detective Amanda Haworth. As she reflected, Ms. Haworth Ressler said, “To see her face, it feels so surreal, like she is going to come around the corner; it’s very comforting, and it’s very sad, brings back a lot of emotions of when it happened that day, but it’s a big honor to see her on that wall.”

Ms. Haworth Ressler and approximately 30 other relatives of MDPD officers killed in the line of duty attended the unveiling of the Hall of Honor on June 26, 2018. The Hall is dedicated to the 42 MDPD officers who made the ultimate sacrifice. Detectives Haworth and Roger Castillo were shot and killed on January 20, 2011, while serving a felony warrant on a subject wanted for murder.

In recent weeks, the East Wing of the MDPD Headquarters Building was transformed into the Hall of Honor. New carpet was designed to depict the iconic “Thin Blue Line.” Photographs and nameplates of each officer are affixed on a wall that was recently painted blue. A large statue of St. Michael the Archangel, referred to as the Patron Saint of first responders, was placed at the entrance next to a display of a folded U.S. flag. Plans are underway to include a computer kiosk in the hallway that will offer additional information about each officer.

The unveiling ceremony started with a breakfast in the Headquarters Cafetorium. MDPD Director Juan J. Perez welcomed the families as they enjoyed pastries, fruit, and a hot breakfast buffet. “I am humbled and blessed every single time I come to work, but even more so, when I have time to spend with you, the survivors,” Director Perez told the families. He mentioned Ms. Jane Searcy in his comments, the 87-year-old mother of Officer Frank Searcy, who was killed in an automobile crash on March 27, 1974, that involved an intoxicated driver. “She’s here so that her children, and her children’s children will not forget,” Director Perez said.

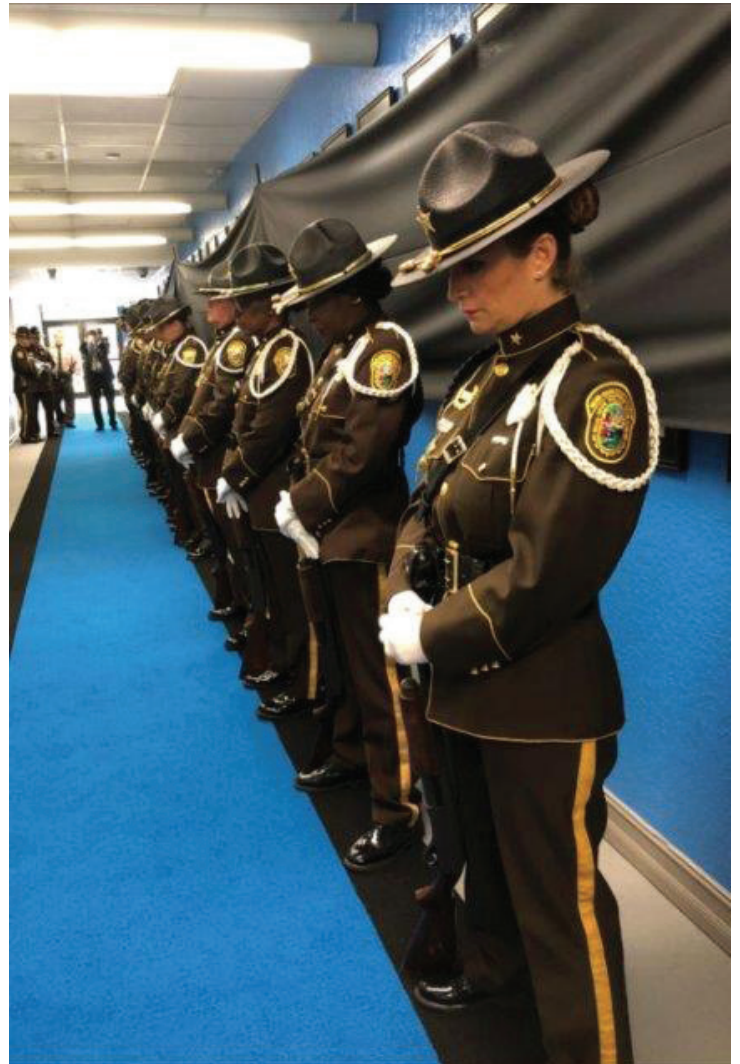
The ceremony then shifted from the second floor Cafetorium to the East Wing on the ground floor. Director Perez cut the blue ribbon to the Hall of Honor and ushered the families inside. The MDPD Honor Guard lifted a long black cover to reveal photographs of the fallen officers.

Ms. Searcy was pleased with the outcome of the Hall of Honor. “I think this is just a wonderful way to recognize the sacrifice of my son,” she said as she looked at her son’s picture on the wall. “He was a good officer.”

It took several years for the Hall of Honor to become a reality. “We always wanted a place here at the Department

for the officers to be remembered,” said Special Projects Administrator 2 Annette McCully, who helped create the Hall of Honor. “It was decided to have it here, because this is where personnel apply to become a police officer,” Ms. McCully said, referring to the East Wing. “It’s a reminder, this is what you are getting into. This is real.”

Mr. Austin Haworth, the 20-year-old son of Detective Haworth, said the Hall of Honor is a fitting tribute to people like his mother who sacrificed their lives to protect others. “It’s a great honor to have not only Amanda’s name and picture up there, but to have all the officers up there. The whole Wall of Honor is very nice for me to see as a family member,” he said.



The MDPD Honor Guard during the recent Hall of Honor unveiling. (Photo by Gaston Cardenas)

# Tip of the Day Program Becomes a Morning Must-Read, Earns MDPD's Police Legal Bureau Recognition

By Brian Ballou

The Legal Tip of the Day began on January 4, 2016, and for an entire year, they came every morning through e-mail. The first one stated, "A search warrant is needed when executing an arrest warrant at a third party residence." MDPD's Police Legal Bureau (PLB) personnel were looking for a way to refresh officers' knowledge of laws regarding search and seizure, stop and frisk, the fourth amendment, and in anticipation of the launch of the Body-Worn Camera Program, later in 2016. PLB staff did not want to overload officers with lectures and thick packets of case law, so they came up with the "Legal Tip of the Day."

It did not take long for those morning e-mails to become must-reads. The tips were conversation starters and many officers passed them along to officers in other local police departments. The tips were easy to absorb, hard to forget, and occasionally packaged with illustrations, photographs, or funny memes. Dozens of law enforcement agencies throughout the state began asking to be added to the PLB's e-mail mailing list. Approximately 400 tips have been sent since the program started, and 44 law enforcement agencies now receive them.

PLB personnel received a lot of positive feedback from sworn and non-sworn employees. One officer wrote that he wished the tips were around when he started his career. Another officer thanked the Bureau for "dispelling foolishness" through tips titled "Real or Rumor."

The Program was recently recognized by the National Association of Counties (NACo), which bestows annual awards for new projects that support responsible and effective government. "We're pleased to support law enforcement in this way, through quick and easy to understand legal tips that officers can read at the beginning of their shift and use for the remainder of their career,"

said PLB Commander Janet Lewis.

PLB personnel transitioned from creating daily tips, to every other day in the second year, and currently sends tips two to three times a week. PLB personnel have issued tips on what defines service dogs, regulations pertaining to fireworks, and even employment law regarding nursing mothers. New laws also become tip subject matter. When the Florida State Legislature passed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act in March 2018, the PLB attorneys offered a simple explanation. Last summer, three tips on new laws governing the use of drones were also issued.

Commander Lewis and Legal Advisor Manager Ivonne Duran create the majority of the tips, along with other legal experts in the office. The tips can sprout from brainstorming sessions, or from daily news stories. Legal questions arise every day from all corners of

the Department. Recent tips were issued to dispel two rumors, one that falsely claimed that MDPD paid some government entity \$300,000 for the right to wear brown uniforms, rather than the green and white uniforms familiar to many sheriff's departments. Another rumor indicated that texting while driving is a primary offense and officers can pull motorists over if they see drivers texting.



The Police Legal Bureau recently received a NACo award for its "Legal Tip of the Day" Program. (Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)



# Turn in a Gun, Get a Computer

By Brian Ballou

The handgun was a gift five years ago from a friend, and was promptly tucked in a closet behind a suit rack and several shoeboxes. It stayed in that spot until recently, when the owner retrieved it and drove to Gwen Cherry Park with his four-year-old son.

“When I saw on TV the MDPD was giving out laptops for turning in guns, I wrote the address down,” said the man, who requested to stay anonymous. “Now I’m here and want our son to get more familiar with computers. I shop online a lot, so this is something that we will use all the time.”

On July 28, 2018, the MDPD collected 58 firearms and gave out 58 Lenovo laptop computers in return as part of two “Computers for Guns” events from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at Gwen Cherry Park and Goulds Park respectively. The laptops were purchased using the Department’s Law Enforcement Trust Fund. Police asked that the weapons be stored in a box or case, and free of ammunition and magazines.

Anyone who turned in a weapon remains anonymous, as indicated in the Department’s posters advertising the events, “No Name, No ID, No Questions.” The weapons were then destroyed.

“We’ve had gun buyback events, but this one is different,” said Assistant Director Stephanie V. Daniels. “You turn in a gun this time and we’re giving you a laptop computer. The importance of the laptop computer is for the educational piece. We want the individual to use that computer to actually get some type of computer training. A lot of folks do not realize that you can get jobs in the technology field after being certified.” The Computers for Gun events offered computer training on the spot. “We want to make sure that when people leave here today, they have substance,” Assistant Director Daniels added.

There was a variety of firearms turned in during the event, ranging from a Flintlock pistol to a shotgun. An MDPD Firearms Safety Instructor made sure the firearms were in safety mode and that there were no rounds inside the weapon.

Mr. Vince Bennett saw a recent advertisement about the event at Gwen Cherry Park, while surfing the web. He dropped off a handgun and picked up his laptop. He opened it up inside the gym and showed it to his 11-year-old son, Caleb. “He’ll end up utilizing it for school work and little things that he does online,” Mr. Bennett said. “Who knows, maybe it will become a career choice for him.”



Police Property Evidence Specialist 1 Alexis Rivero examines a gun received and ensures safety for processing.  
(Photo by Brian Ballou)



**ARE YOU  
READY?**

Hurricane Season  
June 1 – November 30

# Teens Get Up-Close Glimpse of the Special Patrol Bureau

By Brian Ballou

It was a crash-course on the MDPD's Special Patrol Bureau and it ended with a bang! The bang was an explosives demonstration, for the benefit of 27 high school students from throughout south Florida who participated in the Florida International University's (FIU) High School Summer Institute for National Security Studies. This curriculum is a pre-collegiate outreach program designed for high school students interested in careers in national security and law enforcement. Participants are exposed to a variety of state and local law enforcement agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Central Intelligence Agency. This was the first year the MDPD participated.

As the teens sat and stared at the opposite end of a shooting range at the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute (MDPSTI), a member of the Department's Bomb Disposal Unit counted down from three and then detonated two powerful explosives down-range. Moments earlier, the students witnessed a demonstration by the Special Response Team at the Tactical Shoot House. From an observation deck, the students watched as officers went from room to room in the maze-like structure. The officers detonated flash bangs and fired at cardboard targets with simulated ammunition as a demonstration.

The students also observed a Canine Unit presentation, with a canine chomping down on a bite sleeve worn by an officer. Another officer gave an overview of the Special Patrol Bureau's three sections: Tactical Operations, Specialized Patrol and Events Section, and the Police Operations Section. The students also gathered around a remote-controlled robot, called the HD1, which is used by the Bomb Disposal Unit.

"It was a very informative experience, you get to see things that otherwise you would only see on TV," said Ian Wilson, a 17-year-old junior at Mast Academy on Virginia Key, Florida. He plans to join the U.S. Air Force as a Combat Rescue Officer. Ian learned of the two-week program through his high school counselor, who e-mailed him an application, given his interest in national security issues.

"The presentation by the MDPD ranks as one of the best the students have seen so far," said Aldo Fonseca, senior coordinator for the FIU program. "It was our first time at MDPD and we had a great visit. The Department is definitely competing hard for being the highlight of the entire program and its personnel did a great job."



MDPD exposes students to variety of tactical situations during FIU's High School Summer Institute for National Security Studies. (Photo by Anthony Nuñez)

# MDPD Officer Who Survived Shooting Recounts Ordeal, Recovery, and New Assignment at Marine Patrol

By Brian Ballou

The parking lot of the Walmart Supercenter on NW 79 Street in Miami was filling up with Christmas shoppers, when off-duty MDPD Officer Manuel Gonzalez, four hours into his security detail for the store, caught up to a suspected shoplifter between rows of parked vehicles. Officer Gonzalez asked the man for identification.

The subject had a history of violent felonies and had recently been released from state prison after serving 11 years for aggravated battery with a firearm. Prior to that, he served nine years of a 20-year sentence for murder. He was on probation, and had a loaded gun in his waistband.

Officer Gonzalez grew up in Hialeah, and spent countless hours fishing with his father on his boat. He joined MDPD in 2011 and was assigned to the Hammocks District. He spent two years as a patrol officer and then transferred to the Northside District. In his five years there, he worked as a patrol officer, as a member of the Neighborhood Resource Unit, and in the General Investigations Unit.

Officer Gonzalez had worked the security detail at the Walmart since 2016. On December 6, 2017, he came face-to-face with an armed and dangerous felon. The suspect reached toward the small of his back and Officer Gonzalez caught a glimpse of the butt of a handgun tucked in the suspect's waistline. The suspect drew his gun and Officer Gonzalez drew his. Adrenaline coursed through Officer Gonzalez' body as he returned fire and backed up to seek cover. He felt a burning sensation on his leg as he fell down sideways.

Moments later, the gunfight was over. Officer Gonzalez stood up, his gun pointed at the lifeless body several feet away. Blood gushed from the officer's leg and his vision blurred. He took several deep breaths and called for help on his radio. A woman approached, asked him if he was OK, and he replied "Don't let me fall." He swung an arm

around her shoulder.

"From the moment I saw the gun, my training kicked in, everything happened so fast, but I was able to rely on my training to neutralize the shooter," Officer Gonzalez said. "When my vision got blurry, I concentrated on my breathing and applied pressure to my wound, and that brought me back."

Fellow MDPD Officer Kevin Diaz was first on the scene and rushed Officer Gonzalez to Jackson Memorial Hospital. Officer Gonzalez thought that he had been

struck twice, but in a trauma room, a nurse found six bullet wounds on his legs, buttocks, back, and shoulder. Despite the multiple wounds, Officer Gonzalez was released from the hospital three days later. However, an infection would send him back to the hospital, where he underwent several surgeries and spent two more weeks hospitalized.

By April 2017, Officer Gonzalez started exercising

again, and returned to the Northside District. He is now assigned to the Marine Patrol Unit at Black Point Marina. Officer Gonzalez has learned fisheries regulations as well as how to navigate a boat. He recently monitored the activities of numerous fishermen during this year's lobster mini-season. With a smile, his supervisor, Sergeant Anthony Warren said, "We are happy to have him here and he has adapted well."



Officer Manuel Gonzalez patrolling by boat at Black Point Marina.  
(Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)





# Police Explorer Academy Offers Young High School Students a Preview of Police Work

By Brian Ballou



During the summer, 23 high school students learned about police work while attending the MDPD Police Explorer Program. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

The strenuous physical training left some of the teens questioning their decision to enroll in the three-week 2018 MDPD Explorer Academy, but after trudging through the obstacle course on day six, Jason Valce began to question his career choice. “I’m scared I might not be a police officer,” the 16-year-old youth told several other exhausted explorers, each sweating through their baby-blue t-shirts after nearly an hour spent jumping and climbing obstacles at the MDPSTI. Jason’s expression displayed his doubt, as several of the explorers gathered around him, unsure of what to say as their own expressions began to bear uncertainty.

MDPSTI Officer Angel Rodriguez was also within earshot, and approached the kids. If any of the instructors set the rigorous tone for the Academy, it was Officer Rodriguez. Days earlier, he told them, “If we mess with you, if we single you out, don’t take it personally; you have to develop thick skin in this profession and no one is better at making fun of cops than other cops. It’s done in a loving way, we have nothing against you. I’m going to yell at you and I may get in your face,” said Officer Rodriguez. Later, as he began talking to the teens after their tough workout on the obstacle course, Officer Rodriguez took a nurturing tone not unlike a parent trying to motivate his/her child after a tough experience. “Listen, whatever

you choose to do in life, you are your own obstacle, your own impediment,” he told the explorers as they stood on the paved oval track that encircles the obstacle course. “As long as it is in your mind, and in your heart and in your soul; if you can dream it, you can achieve it.”

There would be more inspirational messages from the training advisors. Supportively, on June 28, 2018, graduation day, the 23 explorers sat and listened to Major George Perez recount his own youth, filled with gloom and rebellion until he ran into a group of explorers at the former Cutler Ridge Mall. It was this encounter that would change the course of his life. Soon after, he became an explorer. “I am what has become of that 15-year-old explorer,” said Major Perez, who now leads the Department’s Professional Compliance Bureau. He told them of his greatest memory, his own explorer graduation, and the way his family

looked at him on that day. “It was a sense of pride and a certain look I had never seen before that day,” he said.

After his speech, the explorers received graduation certificates and plaques recognizing their accomplishments. They shook hands with Director Juan J. Perez and other members of the Department’s Command Staff. Approximately 200 people attended the graduation ceremony, including family members of the explorers, MDPD personnel, and Doral Police Department staff. The event was held at the Fire Fighters Memorial Building.

“What we are doing here is really mentoring young people and building the future. The MDPD Explorer Program has been around for quite a long time,” Director Perez told the attendees. “While it is under the law enforcement purview, it is about much more than law enforcement, it’s those lessons that will last them way into the future in whatever they decide to do.”

Police Explorer programs have been ongoing nationwide for more than 50 years, offering teens an overview of basic law enforcement, through their local outpost or district, and providing an experience similar to a police academy. The MDPD Explorer Program accepts high school students ages 14 to 16 with a minimum 2.0 grade average. The academy starts on the first Monday after school lets out

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## Police Explorer Academy

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for the summer. Explorers with the Doral Police Department also participate in the Academy.

The explorers were introduced to the MDPD's Special Response Team, received instruction on how to communicate with the dispatcher on the radio, and learned the basics of crime scene investigation. They took turns on DUI simulators and underwent scenario training, such as responding to domestic disputes. They learned about the capacity of various types of firearms. The explorers were constantly quizzed on police codes and law enforcement terminology and procedures. The days started at 7:00 a.m. and ended at 3:00 p.m. By the third day, the training instructors assigned rank for squad leaders, platoon leaders, and the class leader.

The importance of uniformity was stressed daily. Each explorer would wear two pens in their left breast pocket, Paper Mate ballpoints, medium, black ink. Some explorers wore watches on the first day so they had to decide whether to make watches a requirement throughout the Academy. They voted not to wear watches. They learned to march in unison and each explorer carried the same brand of water bottle. When one student decided on the second day to do a flashy type of push-up, closed fists and knuckles to the ground, a training instructor noticed, and made all the explorers do the same type of push-up.

Many of the explorers in the 2018 class are sons and daughters of current or retired police officers, who have instilled a devotion to community service. When a training instructor asked the class, during the first week, how many of explorers were planning to become police officers, approximately eight attendees raised their hands. By the third week, when asked the same question, approximately 18 explorers raised their hands.

Graduation from the Academy is a resume builder, and with the high number of applications for police officer jobs, it can make a difference. "There are 5,000 people competing for 160 jobs, so we have to look for the most qualified," said Major Michael Dieppa, of the MDPSTI. "By doing well in school, and attending programs like this, it is a big block that you can check off," he told the class during a visit on the second week of the Academy.

For Explorer Jason Valce, the Academy taught him as much about himself as police procedure. He is still planning on becoming a police officer. "Looking back to that time, I thought it would be too hard, but I put my mind to it, and I told myself that it would be cool. I'm happy that I stuck with it," said Explorer Valce.

## For Agricultural Patrol, Farmland Presents a Unique Perspective on Policing

*By Brian Ballou*

The tapestry of fields covered by crops, trees, grass, and weeds stretches from Biscayne Bay to the Everglades, 440 square miles of fertile earth that bears fruit and vegetables and sustains livestock. However, crime exists even in these idyllic pastures.

Horses and other animals are sometimes abused, neglected, or stolen for their meat. Expensive farm equipment is stolen. Old tires, construction debris, and even boats and vehicles are dumped in remote fields. Trespassers steal fruit and vegetables by the bushels. And, ATV joy-riders spin "donuts" over corn stalks, strawberry patches, and other crops, crushing months of hard work in seconds.

The MDPD's Agricultural Patrol Section provides community-oriented policing here; an average of four officers patrolling the vast region at any given time. For some of the officers it is familiar territory, having been raised on farmland, but for other officers, it is a new perspective.

"We work well together, it's a great mixture," said Sergeant Deborah Puentes, who has been assigned to the Hammocks District's Agricultural Patrol Section since 2005. She grew up on a farm and has owned a horse since she was a child. She was assigned to the MDPD's former Mounted Patrol Unit for seven years, and has attended multiple

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## For Agricultural Patrol

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training seminars for law enforcement officials assigned to agricultural units or sections. Sergeant Puentes' knowledge of agriculture is wide-ranging. She has experience with farm animals, and is familiar with the varieties of fruits and vegetables grown in the region.

Officer Scott Hilson also grew up on a farm. When a call came in recently about a six-foot alligator that had encroached on a house, he responded. Officer Hilson got on the back of the animal and held it down while an official from the Florida Wildlife Commission taped its mouth shut. They lifted the alligator onto a truck and relocated it to a far-off canal.

Agricultural Patrol officers monitor the entire County. The Section also assists other agencies on a case-by-case basis, but their area of concentration remains the swath of farmland that runs along the western edge of the County. Because the officers patrol the region daily, they are familiar with the area and can spot things that are out of the ordinary. They conduct traffic enforcement, and investigate crimes such as break-ins, larceny, and violent crimes, which are seldom.

Mostly, they handle a vast number of cases that would not normally occur in urbanized areas.

The carcasses of stolen horses are often dumped alongside dirt roads and in bushes after they have been slaughtered for their meat. Last year, officers cited at least six unlicensed vendors selling orchids on Krome Avenue on Valentine's Day. Officers recently responded to a call for a camel on the loose and helped return the animal to its owner. Section personnel are still investigating the case of a stolen Japanese Koi fish valued at \$30,000.

Illegal dumping of construction debris, vehicles, and boats is a chronic problem. This violation is easy to go undetected in such a low-populated area where lighting is at a minimum and vegetation grows tall. Recently, while traveling on a dirt road alongside a crop field in the Redland

area, Officer Mario Fernandez, who works the day shift, spotted a small boat in the middle of tall corn stalks. He parked his 4 x 4 police truck to investigate. Pushing the stalks aside, Officer Fernandez walked around the boat and looked for a hull number or "FL numbers" that could be used to track down the owner. But like almost all other cases, the markings were obliterated prior to dumping. If the owner cannot be located, the proper disposal of a dumped boat rests with the landowner.

Sometimes, the perpetrator leaves a clue behind, like a receipt or mail with his/her address attached. Officers recently investigated an illegal dumping case in which a

large pile of construction debris was left in the middle of a dirt road. A resident who lives nearby and had grown weary of all the dumping near her home, including three boats, snapped a photo of a commercial truck in the act of dumping trash. The officers found a receipt in the debris and traced it back to the address of the person who made the purchase. When officers arrived at the address, they noticed the same truck depicted in the photo was parked in the driveway. The driver was arrested and



*Agricultural Patrol Section officers recover this stolen and illegally dumped boat. (Photo by Brian Ballou)*

forfeiture proceedings were initiated on the truck. "The driver was likely paid by someone to properly dispose of all that trash, but it appears that he was simply pocketing that money and just dumping everything he picked up," Sergeant Puentes said. "There's no telling how long he may have been doing that."

Farmers are heeding the advice from police to put up surveillance cameras. "We're actually getting pictures now. We recently got a man who drove into a nursery pretending to be looking for work. In reality, he stole a purse that was left in the office by a lady who was out in the fields working," Puentes said. "We were able to get pictures and distribute them publicly. The thief ended up seeing himself on TV and turned himself in."

Section personnel keep in close contact with farmers.

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# For Agricultural Patrol

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The officers carry a phone that is used only for communication with farmers. Officer Puentes and Lieutenant Richard Garcia take turns attending monthly meetings by farming organizations, such as the Miami-Dade County Farm Bureau and the Tropical Fruit Growers of South Florida. At those meetings, data is shared on arrests, civil citations, burglaries, and problems with ATVs. “It’s a different world out here,” Officer Fernandez said, as he passed a farm tractor traveling about ten miles an hour. “You have to have a lot of patience sometimes because this isn’t the city, it’s a much slower pace, different priorities, and different way of life.”



*Agricultural Patrol Section officers interact with local nurseries.*



MDPD recently said farewell to 23 employees (13 sworn officers and 10 civilians) who retired after periods of service ranging from 11 to 37 years. Director Juan J. Perez, the Department’s Command Staff, and the entire MDPD family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

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# Thank You Blood Donors!

**THE MDPD AND ONEBLOOD WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THREE RECENT BLOOD DRIVES HELD AT MDPD HEADQUARTERS, THE MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING INSTITUTE, AND THE COMMUNICATIONS BUREAU.**



## THE MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS READY TO SERVE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A STORM

And now you can download the Community On Patrol (COP) mobile application to stay in touch with us.

You can send tips, videos, and photos about possible criminal activity, file a report online, and even receive emergency alerts.

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# DIRTY CRIMES CARRY FINES

ILLEGAL DUMPERS can expect penalties, fines and possible jail time.  
Dispose of your trash and debris properly!



**For more information or to report illegal dumping  
call 311 or visit [www.miamidade.gov/311Direct](http://www.miamidade.gov/311Direct)**



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