

ALERT NEWSLETTER

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SHERIFF'S MESSAGE

Rosie Cordero-Stutz
Sheriff



Looking Back, Moving Forward Together

As we close out the summer months and head into the holiday season, I want to take a moment to speak directly to you—the deputies and professional staff who make up the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO). Every success our agency has achieved this year is because of your dedication, professionalism and willingness to serve. Together, we have laid the foundation for what MDSO stands for: integrity, accountability and an unwavering commitment to keeping this community safe.

This fall marks the anniversary of my election as your sheriff. From the very beginning, I have been humbled by your trust and inspired by the hard work I see from you every day. Whether it's a deputy on patrol, a detective investigating a complex case, a dispatcher guiding someone through an emergency, or a civilian staff member supporting operations, each of you plays a critical role in our mission.

One of our major priorities this year has been fighting corruption and HOA/condo fraud. Those cases are not possible without the investigators, analysts and support staff who put in the hours to follow the evidence and protect our most vulnerable residents. Already, we've seen results—arrests of individuals who abused their positions and dozens of new cases under investigation. These outcomes reflect the kind of professionalism and persistence that define MDSO.

We have also made strides in reducing violent crime. Compared to last year, murders and shootings in unincorporated Miami-Dade are down, and our Homicide Bureau has closed more cases, bringing relief to grieving families. None of that happens without the tireless work of our detectives, crime scene technicians and patrol officers. For families waiting on justice, your efforts mean more than words can express.

Residents now have more opportunities than ever to connect with us. Beyond crime reduction, we've strengthened our bond with the community, through "Share with Sheriff Rosie" events, our Neighborhood Resource Units, and our new "Ask Sheriff Rosie" online tool. But those conversations only succeed because of you—because you carry yourselves with professionalism and compassion in every interaction. I hear it directly from residents: they feel the difference you make.

We've also been shaping the Sheriff's Office itself. This year, we realigned divisions to improve coordination, expanded training at all levels and enhanced wellness programs for sworn and civilian staff alike. We had quite a challenging budget season, in which we were able to resolve a shortfall, to adequately fund our public safety duties.

I am especially proud of the expansion of our peer advocate program, "Backing our Brothers and Sisters in Blue." It grew from seven to 24 peer advocates this year, giving employees more avenues for support. We know this job takes a toll, and our investment in mental and physical wellness is a direct investment in you—our most valuable resource. I encourage you to take care of yourselves and your families. This work can be demanding. The commitment you show day in and day out is what makes this agency strong, and your well-being matters.

I am filled with gratitude—for your service, your professionalism and your willingness to adapt as we build the MDSO into a model of modern law enforcement. Together, we are shaping an agency that honors its legacy while forging a safer, stronger future. Thank you for everything you do. I wish you and your families a safe and joyful holiday season, and I look forward to continuing this important work with you in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Rosie Cordero-Stutz
Sheriff



Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office Launches Nation's First Autonomous Patrol Vehicle

By Brian Ballou

The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) rolled out on October 1, 2025, a first-of-its-kind crime-fighting partner: the PUG Patrol Partner, an autonomous law enforcement vehicle that blends robotics, artificial intelligence and real-time data to expand the reach of deputies on patrol.

The vehicle — a retrofitted 2022 Ford Explorer — represents the first autonomous patrol car in the nation to be formally deployed by a law enforcement agency. Outfitted with the MDSO logo, and equipped with cutting-edge hardware, the PUG, as it's called, is designed to be a force multiplier, offering high visibility patrols without pulling additional deputies from other duties.

"Whenever I hear about something that holds promise as a crimefighting tool, that will enable us to do our job better, well, I naturally want to know more," Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz said. "So, when I heard about the development of an autonomous vehicle for law enforcement about a year ago, it piqued my interest, and we decided to go all in. And so here we are, with America's very first autonomous vehicle designed for law enforcement, to be deployed by us. This is a historic moment, in a year of historic moments for MDSO."

The PUG Patrol Partner is equipped with an "intelligence stack" of tools: 360-degree pan-tilt-zoom cameras, license plate readers, a rooftop drone launch platform, and even a biometric station capable of fingerprint and facial recognition scans. The vehicle can also display public alerts — such as Amber Alerts or community messages — on a side panel, complete with QR codes for residents to scan. The AI-driven system dynamically optimizes patrol routes using "risk terrain modeling," adjusting in real time to crime trends, officer input, or data fed from the agency's Real Time Operations Center. The goal: to anticipate problems before they happen and to patrol where most needed.

The car is considered Level 3 autonomous — meaning it drives itself but a deputy remains in the vehicle as a safety driver. Future iterations could move to Level 4,



where the vehicle is fully unmanned. The PUG can patrol crime hot spots as a deterrent, provide security at major events, monitor perimeters, assist officers responding to volatile incidents, or cover remote areas. In missing person cases, its drone can deploy quickly to scan an area. In counterterrorism scenarios, its sensors and live feeds can be streamed directly into command centers for rapid decision-making.

"The PUG is not here to replace deputies, it is here to assist," Sheriff Cordero-Stutz said. "By pairing highly advanced technology with a trained deputy, the PUG enhances visibility, increases deterrence, reduces risks to our deputies, and sharpens situational awareness. The focus here is safety and trust. We've built safeguards so that residents know this is about protection, not intrusion."

The pilot program, developed in partnership with the nonprofit Policing Lab, comes at no cost to taxpayers. Policing Lab covered the expenses for development, deployment and communications support.

The arrival of the PUG underscores a broader goal for MDSO: blending innovation with community trust. Its deployment marks another step in reshaping how public safety is delivered in one of the nation's largest sheriff's offices.



Inside the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office Guardian Program: Training for Potential Lethal Threats at Schools



Recent graduates of the Guardian Academy at the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Training Center are relied on to provide additional security at public and private schools. (Photo by Angelica Kellner)

For the 15 people who recently graduated from the Guardian Academy at the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) Training Center, the responsibility of their new role was emphasized by the center's commander, Major Yolande Jacinthe.

"As I stand in front of you here today, I want to remind each and every one of you, that you are primarily responsible for preventing, or mitigating, active assailant incidents thereby enhancing the security and safety of students and staff," Major Jacinthe said during the graduation ceremony on July 30, 2025, held inside a large conference room at the training center in Doral. Approximately 80 family and friends of those newly-minted Guardians attended the ceremony.

The Guardian Program was born out of an unthinkable and heinous attack—the February 14, 2018 shooting at Majory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, where a lone gunman opened fire, killing 14 students and 3 staff members, and injuring 17 others in a matter of minutes. The Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program—named after three of the victims, was approved by the Florida Legislature in the wake of that tragedy. It allows trained and vetted school employees to serve as armed school guardians.

"You will be expected to maintain a vigilant presence on school campuses, monitoring the premises and identifying potential threats," Major Jacinthe said. "You will be expected to collaborate closely with law enforcement to insure coordinated response to emergencies. And lastly, I want to remind you what has occurred in the past two decades and remind you what you may encounter."

She mentioned several school shootings that occurred from 1999 through the Parkland shooting, that have taken dozens of innocent lives; the Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, and

the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, Texas.

"I ask you today, to please take your safety drills, and your school safety plans seriously, because students are counting on your training and expertise to stop threats and save lives."

While the program initially focused on training school employees, such as teachers, it was expanded in 2019 to include licensed security guards and other school staff who volunteer. In 2023, the program was expanded beyond public schools, including charter schools, to private schools. The Guardians provide another layer of security, in addition to School Resource Officers, who are sworn law enforcement officers assigned to schools through agreements with school districts.

Eight of the most recent graduates are security guards from Eagle Globe Protective Services, a private security company that offers hourly, daily, monthly and yearly contracts to a wide variety of clients, including schools and retail outlets. There were also graduates from educational institutions such as the Miami Community Charter School in Florida City, and the HIVE Preparatory School in Hialeah.

Each Guardian candidate must pass a 144-hour training course. That includes 80 hours of firearms instruction modeled on Florida's Law Enforcement Academy. With the latest class to undergo training, MDSO has trained 12 classes since the law was established. MDSO's training goes beyond what is mandated- potential candidates must qualify with their firearm at the same standard as a firearms trainer, above the deputy or police officer standard.

The Guardians were put through rigorous training. At MDSO's Guardian Academy, the program is run similarly to an actual police academy. The candidates wear uniforms, bright yellow t-shirts with numbers on the back, black

Continued on page 4



Training for Potential Lethal Threats at Schools

Continued from page 3

cargo pants, and black athletic shoes. They carry around their water bottles everywhere, and run from location to location. They wear gun belts. Discipline comes in the form of pushups or calisthenics. The Guardian Academy does not pass everyone. In the latest class, two people were dismissed.

On a recent training exercise, candidates were put through strenuous physical training moments before they arrived at the shooting range. Out of breath and with elevated heart rates, they performed discretionary shooting- distinguishing a shooter from a victim. The candidates also had to practice clearing rooms at the facility's shoot-house.

The firearms trainers yelled at the candidates when mistakes were made. Performing under such stress is part of the training routine at most academies, including MDSO, to get candidates accustomed to focusing under pressure and fatigue.

"Shooting is eighty-percent mental, you have to have the ability to focus," said the center's lead firearms trainer, Sergeant Armando Borrego.

At another four-hour training session, the candidates spent several hours inside a classroom, where Sergeant Borrego instructed them on how to react to an active shooter scenario.

After the classroom session, the candidates spent two hours on a shooting range. It was nighttime and they were required to use their flashlights and shoot from behind a barrier at a target. One of the finer points of the exercise was getting the candidates to shine their flashlights in a way that the light did not refract off the barrier, which hinders vision. At the end of the exercise, Firearms Instructor Jamie Pino gathered the candidates at the rear of the range to emphasize how proper technique is critical.

"Listen, we can teach you technique, but you have to think, and be able to make decisions quickly. Imagine what it would be like in real life, a hundred times worse," he told the candidates.

School Guardians Rely on Training to Deliver Life-Saving Aid to Teen at School

By Brian Ballou

It was a freak accident – several students at the Somerset Charter School in Homestead were playing around, recording a TikTok video, when one student pushed a 17-year-old boy into bushes. Obscured by the foliage was the sharp edge of a broken branch, and it punctured the boy's inner thigh. In a second, blood started gushing out from the wound. The boy ran to a nearby bathroom, grabbed a wad of toilet paper, and pressed it against the wound. But the blood continued flowing.

It was 2:28 p.m. on December 19, 2024. School Guardians Jorge Remedios and Luis Angulo were at the end of their shift, in the school's administrative office returning their radios and keys. As Guardians, they had been trained to confront threats on campus, especially someone armed. Both men carried handguns, and had undergone numerous hours of training at the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Training Center. They learned how to shoot with accuracy, and how to administer first aid. Mr. Remedios was in the first class of Guardians to graduate from the academy in 2018.

Their shift ended at 2:30 p.m., and both men had already said goodbye to members of the school staff, and were

heading out of the office when they overheard a radio call. There was distress in the voice of the school security guard.

"I heard the words help, blood, bathroom, and cafeteria, so I just ran toward the location," Mr. Remedios said. "I took off running, I didn't know what I was heading to but I knew something was very wrong and they needed me."

When he arrived at the bathroom, he saw the blood first, pools of it on the floor. And then he saw the 17-year-old boy, his lower extremities covered in blood, holding the saturated clump of toilet paper against his upper thigh. But the blood was still flowing out. Luckily, the branch did not puncture an artery, otherwise he would have likely bled out.

Mr. Angulo, several steps behind Mr. Remedios, was on his phone, calling 911 emergency, and unraveling the contents of his first aid kit. He took out gauze and a tourniquet. The two Guardians applied the tourniquet, and the flow of blood subsided. It was 2:34 p.m.

After emergency crews arrived and stabilized the injured teen, he was airlifted to a local hospital. That was when

Continued on page 5



Life-Saving Aid to Teen at School *Continued from page 4*

Mr. Remedios took a deep breath and reflected on what had just happened. He and Mr. Angulo were told by the emergency crews that their actions saved the teen's life.

"The training that I received as part of the Guardian Program was extremely beneficial. It was repetition, so much repetition, to the point that when this happened, I blacked out and the training took over."

Mr. Remedios worked for Eagle Globe Protective Services for seven years, and has worked at various

schools in Miami-Dade County. Every year, he was required to undergo eight hours of training to remain certified. He recently applied to the Biscayne Park Police Department, and is now in his first months as an officer there.

"He's done so well, brought so much common sense to the job, and his experience aligned with what we are looking for," said Interim Chief Jorge Rosero. "We are extremely proud of him."

Good Samaritan Helps to Catch a Predator *By Brian Ballou*

Gwen Cherry Park was abuzz with sports activities on July 8, 2025. Cheryl Donalson was there, watching her daughter, four-years-old, perform with her cheerleading squad. When her daughter and another girl on the squad needed to use the restroom, Mrs. Donalson accompanied them.

Mrs. Donalson is a designated "Park Chair Mom," entrusted to keep a watchful eye on children at the park, a fitting duty for someone who possesses keen observation skills. When she approached the restroom door, her attention was drawn to the dead-bolt lock. The cam was partially extended, but not fully in the locking position. She pressed the door open and walked in to make sure that the restroom was empty. As she put it, "I needed to check the stalls before they go in, that is standard operating procedure for me."

That's when she saw a sexual assault in progress, and she immediately tried to get the attacker off of the girl.

Deputies later identified the suspect as 18-year-old Antwan Johnson. He allegedly lured an 11-year-old girl into the restroom by asking her if she could retrieve toilet paper for him. But then, he followed her inside the restroom and sexually assaulted her.

After Mrs. Donalson intervened, the suspect ran out the

door. Mrs. Donalson chased after him. She recalled that during the entire situation, she did not have any fear for her own safety.

Other people at the park, alerted by Mrs. Donalson's yelling to catch the suspect, gave chase, and they caught

up to and subdued him a short distance from the park. Police arrived moments later and took the suspect into custody. Johnson's next court hearing is in October.

"If he got away, that's all I was thinking, if he got away, where was her justice?" Mrs. Donalson recounted during an award ceremony on August 14, 2025, inside the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office Headquarters in Doral. Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz awarded her a Certificate of Appreciation. "Thank you for stepping up, thank you for speaking up, thank you for taking

action," the Sheriff said. "We appreciate it, we do it as our job, but as a community, we're just grateful for human beings like you."

Mrs. Donalson said her actions were guided by God. "I'm very spiritual, in that God places me where I need to be, so despite all of this recognition, I'm just one of God's soldiers."



Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz recently awarded citizen Cheryl Donalson a Certificate of Appreciation for helping to apprehend a sexual assault suspect. (Photo by Gaston DeCardenas)

A Split-Second Decision and a Life Saved by a MDSO Lieutenant

Just 30 minutes into his overnight shift on April 8, 2025, Lieutenant Carlos Suarez heard the call come through: A car had crashed through a guardrail and landed in a canal near Southwest Eighth Street and 147th Avenue.

He was close—close enough to see the growing commotion and the sinking vehicle, its front end plunged into the water at a 45-degree angle. After parking his car near the canal, he could hear the muffled sound of a man banging against a window from inside the car.

What happened next would be over in seconds, but it would earn Lt. Suarez a Lifesaving Award, a Bronze Medal of Valor—the third-highest honor given by the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office—and recognition as Distinguished Deputy of the Month for May.

But in the moment, Lt. Suarez focused only on reaching the driver.

He removed his gun belt, grabbed his flashlight and ran toward the water. A Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department truck had just pulled up, and a firefighter, Lt. Carlos Rangel, was putting on flippers and rescue gear. Lt. Rangel dove into the murky canal and shattered the car's rear window with a rescue tool.

Then, Lt. Suarez made a decision: He jumped in, uniform and all. "I realized that banging noise had stopped, and thought it would be better if I went out there to assist."

Swimming through the cold, dark canal, Lt. Suarez reached the car and climbed onto its roof. Reaching into the broken window, his fingers brushed against the driver's head. The car started to gradually dip lower. "You couldn't really see much," Lt. Suarez said. He pushed farther in and, unable to find a better grip, grasped the man gently by the neck—just enough to pull. The man, thankfully, had already undone his seat belt.

Suddenly, Lt. Rangel shouted: "Let go, it's going under!" The car sank quickly, and Lt. Suarez drew back a bit, but then both he and Lt. Rangel were pulled down into the depths of the canal. After reaching the broken window again, Lt. Suarez reached in and grabbed the driver. Together, he and Lt. Rangel pulled the unconscious man to shore.

As paramedics began CPR on the driver, Lt. Suarez stood soaked, silently hoping. Moments later, the man regained consciousness and was rushed to a nearby hospital. He would make a full recovery.

On June 26, Lt. Suarez was recognized for his bravery. Inside the second-floor auditorium of the Fred Taylor



Lt. Carlos A. Suarez was awarded the Bronze Medal of Valor and a Lifesaving Award for helping to pull a man out of a car that was submerged in a canal on April 8, 2025. (Photo by Gaston DeCardenas)

Headquarters Building, he walked up to the podium to accept his award. Lt. Suarez is an 18-year veteran of the agency, a career almost exclusively dedicated to patrolling. "I was just doing my job," Lt. Suarez said after the ceremony. "Any one of my fellow deputies would have done the same." But those who know him say his actions reflect years of instinct built from experience—moments when danger came close and demanded quick thinking and steady nerves.

As a rookie, he had a close brush with a dangerous and armed felon, and several years later, he had to subdue a man who lunged at him with two large knives. In both cases, Lt. Suarez was able to subdue the subjects.

For Lt. Suarez, though, receiving awards or attention isn't the point. He prefers to just put on his uniform and help the public. After he assisted in rescuing the driver, he shifted into traffic control mode around the site, helping usher cars by. After that, he went home, changed into a dry uniform and continued his shift. "You never know what kind of call is going to come in," he said. "You just try to be ready—and hope it's enough."

The canal rescue brought Lt. Suarez's quick thinking into sharp focus. Undersheriff Christopher Carothers said, "Lt. Suarez knew the dangers, but he still went in. That's courage."



Marine Patrol Works to Keep Order on Miami-Dade's Crowded, Scenic Waterways

By Brian Ballou



The MDSO's Marine Patrol Unit has the task of patrolling perhaps the busiest recreational and commercial coastline in the country. The Intracoastal District recently received a new boat to help boost patrols. (Photo by MDSO Public Affairs Office)

Miami-Dade County's 84-mile stretch of coastline—from the upper Keys to North Miami Beach—is undeniably a boater's haven. Sailfish, mahi-mahi and snapper are plentiful. The clarity of the water and rich marine life attract snorkelers to vibrant reefs and shipwreck diving sites. Manatees and dolphins are a common sight. On a good summer or fall day, sea turtles glide by with serenity.

But on some summer days—especially holidays—the same stretch can resemble a marine version of a tailgate party gone awry: too many boats, personal watercraft, and far too much alcohol. Miami-Dade has more registered boats than any other county in Florida, which leads the nation with approximately 1,030,050 registered vessels.

The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) Marine Patrol Unit, part of the Special Patrol Bureau, is tasked with maintaining order along the county's coastal waterways, including the Intracoastal areas and the Miami River. Speeding and boating under the influence pose threats to both people and marine life. Deputies also respond to fights that erupt on sandbars and tiny islands—popular party spots—and even at boat ramps, where long lines can fray tempers and spark heated confrontations.

The unit operates out of three regions: Black Point Park and Marina in Homestead, Matheson Hammock Park & Marina in Coral Gables, and Pelican Harbor

Marina in Miami Beach. It collaborates with cities and towns including Sunny Isles Beach, Bal Harbour, Surfside, North Miami Beach, Coral Gables, and North Bay Village. Some of these jurisdictions have their own maritime units, while others rely on MDSO for support. The unit also coordinates with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and federal agencies such as the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security, Air and Marine Operations, and the National Park Service.

The unit is one of the few agencies with a full-time dive team—needed for the more than 220 dives conducted annually.

There are 21 deputies in the unit. Typically, they are people who grew up on the water, learning currents and coastlines long before donning the badge. They undergo rigorous training, starting with a swim test required for entry, followed by an annual swim qualification. Members must also complete an 80-hour law enforcement boating course and a Marine Patrol Field Training and Evaluation Program that takes about six months, even for experienced boaters. Additional training takes place throughout the year.

Most deputies remain avid boaters or fishermen, who

Continued on page 8



Marine Patrol Works to Keep Order . . . *Continued from page 7*

find peace in the quiet rhythm of the ocean. They carry a deep respect for the marine environment and see themselves as stewards of the water—committed to protecting this resource so that it remains safe, beautiful and accessible for all to enjoy.

At the Matheson Hammock Park location, the marina can be a hotspot for problems. Deputies write hundreds of citations in a single

summer month in that location alone. “There’s a lot going on in the marina—not only patrons fighting with each other, but you also have a lot of illegal activity, like illegal charters, people paying to be taken out to a sandbar, illegal rentals of boats and personal watercraft,” said Lt. Michael J. Barrios. He estimated that almost half of all calls involve an intoxicated person.

According to the FWC’s Florida Boating Accident Statistical Report, alcohol was a factor in 24 of Florida’s 81 fatal boating accidents in 2024.

“The sandbars can get crazy,” Lt. Barrios said. “For example, people will play their music, and when they run out of batteries, they will crank their motors around people to charge their batteries. If someone hits the throttle, anyone around the propeller can get cut up really bad.”

He referenced a tragic accident off a sandbar near Key Biscayne on May 4, 2014. Lazaro Mendez, a well-known Miami radio personality who goes by DJ Laz, was operating his 42-foot boat when it became stuck as the tide went out. Several people tried to push the boat while the outboards were still running. One of the men, Ernesto Hernandez, was struck by a propeller and later died at Ryder Trauma Center.

In 2024, deputies at Matheson wrote 2,500 citations. By mid-July of this year, that number stood at approximately 1,300. “It can be full-on confusion, like opening the gates to the zoo and all of the animals running out,” Lt. Barrios said. On the Miami River, it can resemble rush-hour traffic on Interstate 95.

On July 1, five new boating laws took effect. One of them, dubbed “Lucy’s Law,” toughens penalties for



Deputies assigned to MDSO’s Matheson Hammock Park and Marina substation. MDSO operates another substation at the Pelican Harbor Marina in Miami Beach. (Photo by MDSO Public Affairs Office)

reckless boating and leaving the scene of an accident. Named after 17-year-old Lucy Fernandez, who was killed Sept. 4, 2022, in a boat crash near Boca Chita Key, the law imposes a minimum four-year prison sentence for anyone convicted of boating under the influence who fails to report an accident.

The tragedy, which occurred over Labor Day weekend, involved 14 passengers on a

boat that hit a channel marker and capsized. The operator, George Pino, a real estate broker, was charged with careless boating. The public outcry that followed spurred lawmakers to act.

The increased penalty should help deter such behavior, said Sgt. Richard Perez of the Intracoastal District’s Marine Patrol Unit.

“We’ve needed stronger laws for a long time. A \$140 fine isn’t going to deter someone operating recklessly. It’s the cost of a few gallons of gas for most boaters out here,” Lt. Perez said.

He added that some unit members recently met with State Senator Ileana Garcia to discuss tying boating infractions to a person’s driver’s license and requiring insurance for those with a history of boating under the influence or boating-related accidents. “Those are things we would like to see,” he said.

Last year, there was a surge in illegal personal watercraft rentals. At one point, more than 50 unlicensed personal watercraft were active in the area. After sustained enforcement by the Unit, the numbers dropped significantly.

Of particular concern at the Intracoastal District is Haulover Inlet, a corridor between the Intracoastal and the open ocean that can be treacherous for inexperienced boaters. Large waves can overturn vessels or throw passengers overboard. Navigating the inlet at peak times—when other boats are trying to do the same—can be dangerous, as squeezing past others may bring boats uncomfortably close. The inlet has become a social

Continued on page 9



on Miami-Dade's Crowded, Scenic Waterways

Continued from page 8

media sensation, with Instagram pages posting videos of capsized boats, reckless driving, and stunts gone wrong.

To bolster safety efforts, the Intracoastal District recently received a 29-foot patrol boat outfitted with radar and night-vision capabilities. The vessel, unveiled July 24 at Haulover Marina, enhances enforcement in one of the county's most congested aquatic zones.

Funded through a \$366,000 appropriation secured by County Commissioner Micky Steinberg, the new patrol boat joins an existing 25-footer already in use—doubling the Unit's ability to respond to calls, enforce laws, and maintain order.

"Our waterways are vital parts of life in this district, as the sheriff said," Commissioner Steinberg said during the unveiling. "And with increased boating activity, coastal events and environmental concerns, the need for strong marine presence has never been greater. This

boat will help our marine patrol respond quickly to emergencies, enforce safety laws, deter illegal activity, and protect both residents and our environment. Public safety has always been one of our top priorities, and today is a clear example of what happens when we listen to our communities and deliver real solutions."

Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz said the new boat will help MDSO maintain safety and quick response times in the Intracoastal and beyond.

"Our unit responds to calls for service across the county until midnight, reinforcing safety beyond our primary patrol areas," she said. "They assist municipalities without marine resources and collaborate closely with those that do, strengthening regional maritime operations. Our deputies enforce both state and maritime laws while also performing critical rescues involving people and wildlife."

A Softer Answer to the Hardest Calls

By Brian Ballou



The Crisis Response Unit was awarded MDSO's Unit of the Month for June 2025. (Photo by Gaston DeCardenas)

The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) Crisis Response Unit (CRU) blends policing and mental health care — and it's changing outcomes one call at a time.

By June 2025, Miami-Dade's Crisis Response Unit had been on the streets for just over two years. In that short span, the team has handled nearly 2,700 calls involving

people in mental distress — and in 99.92% of those cases, they resolved the situation without force.

That number is more than just a statistic. For the deputies, paramedics, and mental health clinicians who make up the unit, it's proof that their model works—meet people in crisis with calm voices, patience, and expertise.

The unit was awarded MDSO's Unit of the Month for June 2025.

The CRU was born from a reality every big-city law enforcement department knows well. Calls involving mental illness are frequent — more than 5,600 of them a year in Miami-

Dade's South and Northside districts alone — and they require something more nuanced than a standard police response. The team's creation was championed by elected county officials and MDSO's own leadership, who argued

Continued on page 10



A Softer Answer . . . *Continued from page 9*

that mental health crises cut across every demographic, and the county needed a response model that reflected that.

Every CRU deputy undergoes intensive preparation — 40 hours of advanced training in mental health, communication, and crisis management, plus 80 hours of simulation drills. They learn to recognize behavioral indicators, deploy de-escalation strategies, and use negotiation techniques to diffuse volatile situations. They train monthly to stay sharp. Their ranks include deputies with psychology degrees, parents of children with autism, and people who have lost loved ones to suicide. Those experiences, leaders say, help the deputies relate to the people they encounter.

Since its launch, the unit's work has reduced the need for more aggressive police interventions. Calls requiring crisis negotiators or the Special Response Team have dropped by more than a third. Repeat calls from "high utilizers" of mental health services have fallen by nearly 20%.

The numbers also tell another story — one about connection, not just containment. The unit has logged more than 3,100 referrals to mental health providers and nearly 1,000 follow-up visits to check on people they've previously encountered. Fewer than half the individuals they've met required involuntary hospitalization under Florida's Baker Act; in 2025 so far, that rate has dropped to 35%, meaning more people are being steered toward care without confinement.

The calls are rarely simple. In July 2024, deputies responded to a suicidal man standing waist-deep in a lake, clutching knives. His agitation grew as negotiators spoke to him through a loudspeaker. He began throwing objects and then charged toward the shore. A less-lethal bean bag round stopped him, and after more tense minutes,

he dropped the knives. He was taken into protective custody and given medical and psychiatric care.

Two months later, they found themselves coaxing a teen out of another lake after he'd fled from his grandmother. And in December, they twice faced men perched on rooftops threatening to jump — one in meth-induced psychosis, the other in the grip of schizophrenia and paranoia. Both came down alive.

Sometimes the work is more urgent. In March 2025, deputies broke into a locked room after hearing agonal breathing. Inside, they found an unresponsive man who had overdosed. They kept him alive until paramedics arrived. In April, they stopped the bleeding of a man who had attempted suicide by slashing his arm. In both cases, the deputies' training shifted instantly from negotiation to lifesaving medical intervention.

CRU teams typically include two deputies and a clinician from the department's Employee Mental Wellness Office. In high-risk situations, they partner with the department's Priority Response Team — the tactical experts — to ensure scenes are secure before the CRU steps in to talk, listen, and find alternatives to force.

Deputy Alejandro Escalante said the unit's approach is designed to put people at ease. "A lot of individuals suffer from unknown mental illnesses. Sometimes they're very scared to call law enforcement," he said. "That's why we have a modified uniform, that's why we use unmarked cars — it's all to make the subject feel safe."

The approach builds stronger connections between law enforcement and the communities they serve. For the deputies, every successful resolution is a quiet victory — one that rarely makes headlines but changes lives all the same.

MIAMI-DADE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**LOCK IT
OR LOSE IT**



BE SMART. STAY SAFE.

- Always Keep valuables out of sight or in the trunk
- Never leave valuables in unattended vehicles
- Always lock your vehicle
- Notify the Sheriff's Office of any suspicious activity

305- SHERIFF

For All Emergencies Dial 9-1-1



Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz



CHAPLAIN'S

CORNER



The Chaplain's Program offers emotional and spiritual support to professional and sworn staff, and also to families that have experienced trauma. (Photo by Gaston DeCardenas)

The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) has 19 chaplains on call—rabbis, pastors, reverends, deacons, and an imam—who walk with deputies through some of the hardest moments of their careers. They respond after tragedies and traumatic incidents, visit district stations, and quietly remind deputies that they are never without someone to talk to. On chaotic crime scenes, chaplains sometimes become mediators, helping to cool tempers and reach residents in the middle of heartbreak.

The program, built on confidentiality and compassion, runs parallel to MDSO's Employee Mental Wellness Office, which staffs professional clinicians. Rabbi Mark Rosenberg, the Chief Chaplain, explained that Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz has encouraged deputies, and professional staff, to see chaplains as a safe outlet—someone to speak with when the weight of the job becomes overwhelming. Each chaplain is assigned to specific districts, visiting often so that deputies and professional staff see them not as strangers, but as trusted allies who can be called on at any time.

Unlike sworn deputies, chaplains are volunteers. Their role is not law enforcement but support—emotional, spiritual, and human. When a contact shooting or other traumatic call goes out, dispatchers may also notify a chaplain. The thinking is simple: deputies see horrific things, and too often they bottle it up, telling themselves it is “just part of the job.” But the long-term cost can be heavy. Chaplains step into that gap, offering conversations that are private, nonclinical, and completely confidential.

The work is not only about law enforcement. During the 2021 Surfside condominium collapse, chaplains were at the family reunification center daily, listening to anguished relatives as they waited for word about missing loved ones. Rabbi Rosenberg recalled counseling the family of the final victim identified. After weeks of watching others receive closure, the mother's reaction was not anger but relief—an emotional release that he said underscored how devastating the uncertainty had been. Chaplains were also

Continued on page 11

Chaplain's Corner *Continued from page 10*

there for homicide detectives and first responders, some of whom broke down in tears in the middle of the night.

Chaplains also support MDSO's Communications Bureau—the 911 Center where nearly 3 million calls come in each year. Operators there hear the panic of shootings, overdoses, domestic violence, and car crashes in real time, and chaplains are available to help them process the weight of those voices on the other end of the line.

The challenges they face are not abstract. Chaplains often bear the brunt of raw emotion—being shouted at, cursed, or blamed—because they are the human presence in a moment of pain. Rabbi Rosenberg said those moments require patience rather than confrontation. “It’s not about having the last word,” he explained. Sometimes, lowering the tone of an encounter is beyond what a deputy can do on their own, and that is when a chaplain steps in.

The thread running through it all is control. Deputies are trained to restore order, but in reality not everything can be controlled. That truth, Rabbi Rosenberg said, is one of the hardest lessons for both deputies and

civilians: being out of control does not mean a situation is hopeless. Part of the chaplains’ mission is to normalize that struggle, to remind people that it is “okay not to be okay,” and to show them healthier ways of dealing with pain and suffering.

While the job is heavy, chaplains also try to shift perspective. Deputies, Rabbi Rosenberg noted, are constantly exposed to the darker side of humanity—“they rarely get called at 2 a.m. to celebrate a birthday,” he said. Over time, that can distort how they view the world. Chaplains help counterbalance that, pointing out that beauty still exists, that there are still good people, and that acknowledging darkness does not mean ignoring light.

MDSO’s police chaplains are neither therapists nor enforcers. They are listeners, spiritual guides, and sometimes, the only people in the room who are not demanding answers. They remind deputies, professional staff, and residents that even amid chaos, someone is willing to simply stand there with them, quietly, until the storm passes.

The WELLNESS CORNER



Domestic Violence Within Law Enforcement

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological, or technological actions or threats of action or other patterns of coercive behavior that influence another person within an intimate partner relationship. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone (U.S. Department of Justice, 2025).

Domestic violence can occur in multiple settings, such as in a marriage, domestic partnership, dating relationship as well as between former spouses. Other family members, such as children, parents, and the elderly can also be directly or indirectly affected by domestic violence within the household.

Domestic violence is a difficult subject, and even more so within the law enforcement community. Law enforcement personnel dedicate their lives to protecting others, but it’s important to remember that no one is immune to the struggles that occur behind closed doors.

Continued on page 12



Wellness Corner *Continued from page 11*

Domestic violence can impact anyone regardless of age, gender, race, rank, years of service, or reputation. Studies suggest up to 40% of law enforcement families experience domestic violence, with some sources estimating officers are four times more likely to engage in domestic violence than the general population (French & Fletcher, 2023).

Why it matters

In any context, domestic violence can be devastating. But when the perpetrator is a member of law enforcement, the consequences can ripple far beyond the household. It's not just a personal matter: it's a professional, cultural, and community issue that directly affects trust, safety and the integrity of the badge. The law enforcement culture often emphasizes strength and control, and while these traits are necessary on duty, they can sometimes bleed into personal lives. This, coupled with the high stress of the job, exposure to trauma, as well as long hours, can contribute to conflict in the home. Unfortunately, in some cases, this may escalate into abusive behavior.

Signs to Watch For

Domestic violence rarely starts with physical abuse – it often escalates from subtle patterns of control, intimidation or isolation. Recognizing the early signs is critical for prevention, intervention, and support.

- Control of daily life: Dictating what a partner wears, where they go, or who they can talk to
- Isolation: Limiting contact with family, friends, or support systems
- Intimidation: Using weapons, equipment, or professional authority to induce fear
- Verbal and emotional abuse: Belittling, name-calling, or making verbal threats of harm
- Financial control: Restricting access to money,

controlling household spending, or preventing employment

- Monitoring behavior: Constantly checking phones, social media, or following a partner's movements (Mayo Clinic, 2025).

Recognizing the warning signs of domestic violence is the first step towards intervention and safety. In law enforcement families, these behaviors can be especially dangerous. If you notice concerning patterns of behavior in yourself, a colleague, or someone you care about, don't ignore them. Speaking up or seeking help may feel difficult, but it could prevent further harm and save lives.

Resources

Being familiar with the resources that are available can make a significant difference. The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) offers its employees a variety of mental health services as well as community referrals and resources.

For further information, please call the Employee Mental Wellness Office at (305) 591-1106.

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- Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), 22 Jan. 2025 www.justice.gov/ovw/domestic-violence.
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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



Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz



MDSO recently said farewell to 38 employees (29 sworn deputies and 9 professional staff) who retired after periods of service ranging from 8 to 44 years. Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz, the Agency's Command Staff, and the entire MDSO family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

Sworn	
Captain Ricardo Rodriguez	29
Lieutenant Antonio Rodriguez	33
Lieutenant Luis Vasquez	29
Sergeant Heath Genovar	29
Sergeant Sergio Lageyre	31
Sergeant Luke A. Marcklioli	32
Sergeant Douglas R. Mc Coy Jr.	33
Sergeant Timothy W. Reker	32
Sergeant Luz R. Ruiz	25
Sergeant William M. Shanor	29
Sergeant Frederick J. Washington	32
Deputy Milton Arias	37
Deputy Eduardo Barrios	18
Deputy James M. Boone	33
Deputy Angelo Fusco	29
Deputy Mary Holmes	29
Deputy Aaron Mancha	33
Deputy Alberto A. Martinez	33
Deputy Marlo C. Mcgahee	31
Deputy Lazaro Menoud	28
Deputy Monica B. Rios	21
Deputy Luis A. Rivera Jr.	23
Deputy Thomas Rodriguez Jr.	44
Deputy Jamie A. Rozier	34
Deputy Scott A. Rudoff	25
Deputy Danny Torres	28
Deputy Jacquelyn Williams	38



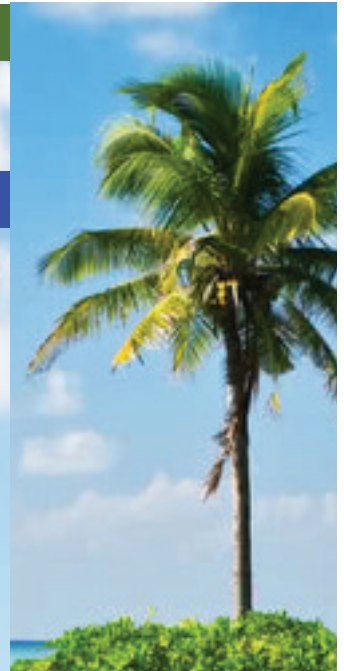


Sworn

Deputy Jorge Yohay 30

Professional Staff

MDSO TV Producer Enrique Bravo Jr. 33
Police Records Technician 1 Catherine E. Buckland 28
School Crossing Guard Support Pablo Flores Caban 9
MDSO School Crossing Guard Julia De Carballo 12
MDSO School Crossing Guard Jose R. Comas 8
MDSO Background Investigator Teresita Horgan 22
Administrative Officer 2 Maria A. Irigoyen-Marrero 25
MDSO Court Support Specialist 1 Karen M. Ringo 35
MDSO School Crossing Guard Gilda M. Tack-Fang 11



OPERATIONAL SHIELD

Devotional



Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz



Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office
The 2nd Tuesday of Every Month
9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

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



Thank You Blood Donors!

The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office and OneBlood held a successful blood drive at the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building on Thursday, August 21, 2025, and at the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Training Center on September 16, 2025. Special thanks are extended to the donors listed below for helping save lives!

Major George S. Perera Jr.

Major Alain Sanchez

Lieutenant David E. Gracia

Sergeant Jessica Alvarez

Sergeant Manuel A. Munoz

Sergeant Steve Sklavounos

Deputy Carlos Castillo

Deputy Sammy Fernandez

Deputy Justin C. Griffin

Deputy Daniel J. Quiles

Deputy Stacey M. Sazo

Police Records Technician 2 Astrid Arizmendi

Finger Analyst 2 Scott Francis Banas

Mr. Christopher Cardentey

Secretary Tracy Lynn Cardentey

Mr. Andre E. Enriquez

Mr. Antonio Innamorato

Police Station Specialist Shirley A. Quiles

MDSO Intelligence Analyst Rodrigo A. Sepulveda

Property Evidence Specialist 2 Cynthia Stanley

Real-Time Crime Center Specialist Savannah R. Walker

Criminalist 2 Erin M. Wilson



Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz

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