



# MDPD Adds 39 New Officers from Lateral Class 5

By Brian Ballou

Mr. Michael Mundy took up flying as a hobby three years ago, taking private lessons from retired Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) Pilot Carlos Perez.

By the time Mr. Mundy retired last year from the North Miami Beach Police Department, he had logged hundreds of hours of flight time and earned his pilot's license. His instructor had convinced him to apply to the MDPD where he could utilize his newly acquired skill to help fight crime again.

Mr. Mundy recently took the oath of office with 38 other new MDPD officers who were part of Lateral Class 5. "I'm ecstatic, I can't wait to get out there and help the community that I was assigned to, which is Kendall," said Officer Mundy, who was chosen as the class leader. "This is the perfect time to join, there are a lot of officers who are retiring from MDPD and they're hiring a lot of new people. That opens up the door to advancements and promotions."

Approximately 500 family members, former co-workers and friends of the officers, attended the graduation ceremony at the Miami-Dade County Auditorium. The keynote speaker was U.S. District Judge Roy K. Altman. Judge Altman spoke of the "rough sword of justice" that is kicking down doors, jumping over chain-link fences, arresting people, and the myriad of other demanding tasks



MDPD Director Juan J. Perez addressed Lateral Class 5 recently before their graduation ceremony, offering congratulations and encouragement. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

that are inherent to the job. He also spoke of the "noble shield," saying it is no less important. "The noble shield is setting the first and finest example," he added. Turning from the lectern to speak to the class, he said, "You, the officers of the law, who simultaneously enforce the law while governing yourselves in accordance with the law, are the essential ingredient in our society that so distinguishes us from the failed autocracies our forefathers all fled."







Congratulations Police Power in Pink Team for raising more than \$85,000 for the American Cancer Society's 2019 Making Strides Against Breast Cancer (MSABC) Campaign. (Photo by Gaston De Cardenas)

## Former MDPD Families Supporting Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Citrus County, Florida



Wearing MDPD pink socks and seated left to right: Joni Barry (husband, Mike), Kathi Law (husband, Paul), Ida King (husband, Jack), Jeanne Gaskill (husband, Wayne), Lesley Cuccaro (husband, Pete), Jorgeann Salemi (Fiancee, Ralph Little). (Photo by former MDPD Bureau Commander Pete Cuccaro)

## Congratulations to Our Top MDPD/MSABC Fundraising Entities:

### 1st Place

Midwest District - Team Captains Officers Addys Silva and Sabrina Toledo: \$12,495

### 2nd Place

Northside District – Team Captains Sergeant Brandy Townsend, and Officers Raziel Fuentes and Joel Pena: \$11,234

### 3rd Place

Robbery Bureau - Team Captain Sergeant Ariel A. Rodriguez: \$8,298

### 4th Place

Airport District - Team Captain Sergeant Lynnise Jones-Curry: \$6,355



# “The Making of a Miami-Dade Police Officer”

By Brian Ballou



Physical training is a substantial part of the trainees' daily routine. (Photo by Brian Ballou)



In their fourth month of training, BLE Class 126 trainees spent hours learning proper shooting techniques from various distances. (Photo by Brian Ballou)



The “Fallen Officer Rock” is a memorial to police officers who have died in the line of duty. It weighs about 25 pounds and members of BLE Class 126 have carried it with them everywhere since their training began. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

The craggy 25-pound rock is painted shiny-black with a thin blue line. The trainees of Basic Law Enforcement Class 126 have carried it with them since their first week in the academy, which started on July 29, 2019. They have placed it on desks in classrooms, tables at the shooting range, bleachers in the gym, and wherever else they are hastily assembled, laying it atop a blue cotton towel.

A binder resembling a Rolodex is affixed to the rock. It has three index card-sized cardboard pages and the bottom page lists the names of 30 police officers nationwide who have died in the line of duty since their training started, based on statistics from the Officer Down Memorial Page, Inc., a non-profit organization created in 1996 to honor police who have died in the line of duty.

The “Fallen Officer Rock” is big and burdensome, hard to overlook, a portable memorial that reminds trainees that the job they will soon undertake is a dangerous one, where a routine traffic stop can erupt into a gunfight. The rock is also a reminder to the trainees to give their all in the academy, to prepare themselves so that they can handle those situations.

There is a distinct flow to everything at the academy. It is a time-honored training that is tweaked to integrate new adaptations in crime-fighting, such as body-worn cameras, and modulated to the proclivities of newer generations, such as the millennials, who are the ones mostly being trained nowadays.

The training also addresses an issue that some officers may face in their career. A recent task for the trainees was to write a 500-word essay on an article that appeared in the Miami Herald on November 1, 2019, about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for first responders. The article detailed, among other things, how the MDPD recently conducted an anonymous survey to gauge the prevalence of PTSD among current officers. “We are trying to change the culture, to let the new generation know that it isn’t bad to seek out help and to take approaches to address PTSD if that is something that they encounter in their careers,” said Drill Instructor Brad Burke.

The training is so repetitive that it becomes second nature. While some of the trainees have military backgrounds, or have worked in corrections or some field connected

*Continued on page 4*



## The Making of...

*Continued from page 3*

with law enforcement, most of them have no relevant experience, and many of them shot a firearm for the first time in their life on week 15. Class 126 includes a former carpenter and a former truck driver for an ice cream company.

The physical training is intense, with push-ups, running, bear crawls, and other exercises throughout the day. Sweat runs down their faces and soaks through their blue shirts. The drill instructors often participate in the exercises, barking out four-count commands while maintaining perfect form.

The repetition is not limited to physical training or shooting or defensive tactics, it also carries into the

classroom, with seemingly endless quizzes and tests. The trainees are graded on every task and must show proficiency in all areas.

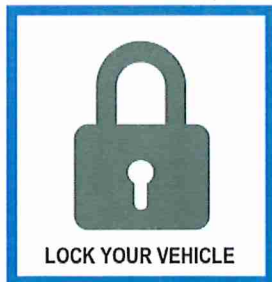
With the intense scrutiny on police work, we will highlight what goes into molding a trainee to become a police officer. There will be hundreds of retirements over the next few years at MDPD and the Department has been busy recruiting new officers to address that attrition. The academy is conducted for nine months, and there are currently four classes training: BLE 125, 126, 127, and 128. An update on the progress of BLE Class 126 will be featured in the next Alert Newsletter.

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# MDPD Internship Program Offers a Rare Glimpse of Police Work to College Students, Along With College Credits

By Brian Ballou

Their college majors vary from biology to geospatial technology, but they all share an interest in police work, a yearning that brought them together this past summer for a 12-week internship at the Miami-Dade Police Department. “A very small percentage of the public will have the experience that you all have had this summer,” said Miami-Dade Police Chief Hector Llevat, the head of MDPD’s Public Information and Education Bureau, addressing nine students during their internship graduation.

After a three day orientation, the students shifted from one section

or bureau or district every week, in order to experience different types of police work. They accompanied officers on patrols, not just in cars, but in helicopters and boats, and observed investigative and training methods. The students also learned how their college majors could potentially translate into a job with the Department. With the advancement of technology focused on crime prevention and detection, such as with police data systems, GPS mapping, and acoustic gunshot detection with ShotSpotter, there is higher demand for recruits with degrees outside of those traditionally linked to careers in law enforcement.

University of Miami senior Leslie Rowell is planning to apply to MDPD after she graduates with a Bachelor’s Degree in Geospatial Engineering. It is an area of study that includes Geographic Information Systems, radar, remote sensors, coding, and spatial analysis. Her field of study could be applied to many areas, such as crime mapping and the deployment of assets to protect the public during large-scale events.

Ms. Rowell said she was initially thinking of joining a local police force to make herself a more viable candidate in the near future to join the FBI or CIA, but after her internship, she is now considering an entire career with the



*Pictured from left to right are Sergeant Martha Melcon, Director of the MDPD Student Internship Program, internship graduates Leslie Rowell, Tiffany Knepper, Marcos Alvarado, Alina Lluvet, MDPD Deputy Director Alfredo Ramirez III, internship graduates Jazmyn Martinez, Johnathan Regalado, Daniela Frias, Katherine Marikos, and Molly Gross.*

Department. “Honestly I think I’d prefer local police work because you get to work with the community. So, I’m definitely applying and I plan on staying,” Ms. Rowell said.

The internships are 16 weeks during the fall and spring terms, and 12 weeks during the summer. Each week, selected interns must work with MDPD Monday through Friday, eight hours a day, forty hours a week. Daily schedules vary and could be either a day or afternoon shifts. All interns are responsible for their own food and housing. The internship awards college credits, typically ranging from 6 to 12 credits. Applicants must be 18 years of age and either a junior or senior at a fully accredited college or university. They must have a minimum 3.0 Grade Point Average in their major and a minimum 2.7 overall Grade Point Average, and must pass a background check.

MDPD Sergeant Martha Melcon oversees the program, and said students always come away with a new perspective on the challenges that face police officers. “If you’re a student and serious about a career with MDPD, this is the perfect way to learn about the Department from the inside,” Sergeant Melcon said.



## Meet Major Enrique Damaso, the Commander of MDPD's Northwest District

By Brian Ballou

He wanted to wear a military uniform, but he was nearly blind in his left eye, and wouldn't have been able to pass the required vision exam to enlist. So, Enrique Damaso shelved his dream, took a job at a local Winn Dixie Supermarket in 1987, where he shelved food and other items instead. He met his future wife at work, a cashier, and became friends with several Miami Police Department officers who worked off-duty assignments at the supermarket. The officers suggested that he participate in a ride-along, and he agreed. "I was hooked after the ride-along, I knew this was what I had to do," he said.

A new eye surgery was gaining popularity. Radial Keratotomy promised to correct nearsightedness and Damaso decided to have the operation. When the bandage came off days later, he saw new opportunity. He applied to the MDPD. About a year went by and MDPD Human Resources personnel called and told him his application had been accepted. He considered his options, but still knew that being a police officer was what he wanted to do. So, he enrolled in November 1989, a 24-year-old rookie with a wife and a small child.

After training he was assigned to the Northwest District, and then he took on several assignments, including being an investigative sergeant at the Midwest District, and the commander of the Narcotics Bureau Money Laundering Unit. His Unit followed a tip that resulted in a drug ring bust and the forfeiture of \$6.9 million to MDPD. That money was used to purchase police vehicles and other necessary equipment. "Almost 30 years later, I still love what I do," said Major Damaso, who will retire in February 2020. "It's been a really good ride for me, I never questioned my decision to become a police officer," he said.

For the past three years, Major Damaso has been District Commander at the Northwest District where he started his



Enrique Damaso, Major. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

career. "It was the coolest thing for me, coming full circle," Major Damaso said. Northwest District encompasses 57 square miles and Major Damaso oversees 136 officers. "It's bittersweet now for me at the end. I figured I could do this for several more years, but I'm at a time that I want to enjoy my family and travel through Europe."

To get involved with the Northwest District, come to one of the monthly Citizen's Advisory Committee Meetings at the Northwest District Station located at 5975 Miami Lakes Drive East in Miami Lakes. The meetings are held inside the CAC meeting room, on the third Wednesday of every month, at 7:00 p.m.

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# Kendall District Wins Inaugural MDPD Basketball Championship

By Brian Ballou

Their season was rough, with only two wins, one by forfeit, in five games. But every team automatically advanced to the playoffs, and for the Kendall District Basketball team, that was all they needed.

In the playoffs, they turned it on, tenacious defense combined with balanced offense. Their style was all about hustle, going for the loose balls, scrapping for rebounds, and running the court. They rode it all the way to the championship game, facing the Intracoastal District team that hung its hat on fierce perimeter shooting, led by a backcourt that specialized in three pointers.

Kendall had actually lost to Intracoastal in the semifinal round of the six-team playoff tournament and was sent to the loser's bracket, where they resurfaced with a win over the Special Victims Bureau's team, setting up the final match-up. The other teams in the tournament included South and Midwest Districts, and a team from the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute.

For most of the championship game, Intracoastal was without its most prolific scorer, Officer Ricardo Benavides, who plays guard but had a work commitment and showed up about halfway into the second half of the game. Officer Benavides averaged 27.3 points per game in the 6 games he played before the championship. He had the second best scoring average of all players, behind Officer Giovanni Joseph from South District, a guard who averaged 28.3 points a game.

Kendall struck early and often in the championship game, opening up a double-digit lead in just minutes and



The Kendall District's cheering squad is comprised of (left to right) Kendall District Major Carmen Castro, Sunnie McMillion (mother of Officer Antonio Gonzalez-Pola, a member of the Kendall basketball team), Nicole Mas (Officer Gonzalez-Pola's girlfriend), and MDPD Crime Analyst Belky Maradiaga, and MDPD Public Service Aide Bronson Samonya. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

expanding it to almost 30 points, with a 59-30 score and seven minutes left in the game. Intracoastal made a run late in the game, cutting the lead to 16 points with three minutes left, but that was as close as they would get. The final score was 70-51. Officer Daniel Aiken Jr., guard for the Kendall District team, led all scorers with 19 points, a combination of three pointers and layups. "Our team is made up of unselfish guys who came together to play hard, they are a great group of guys, and I had a blast playing with them," Officer Aiken Jr. said.

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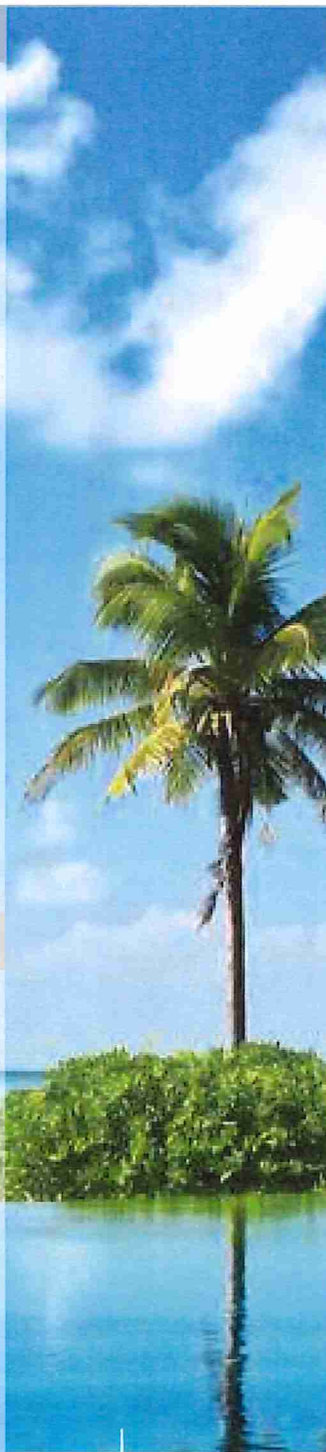




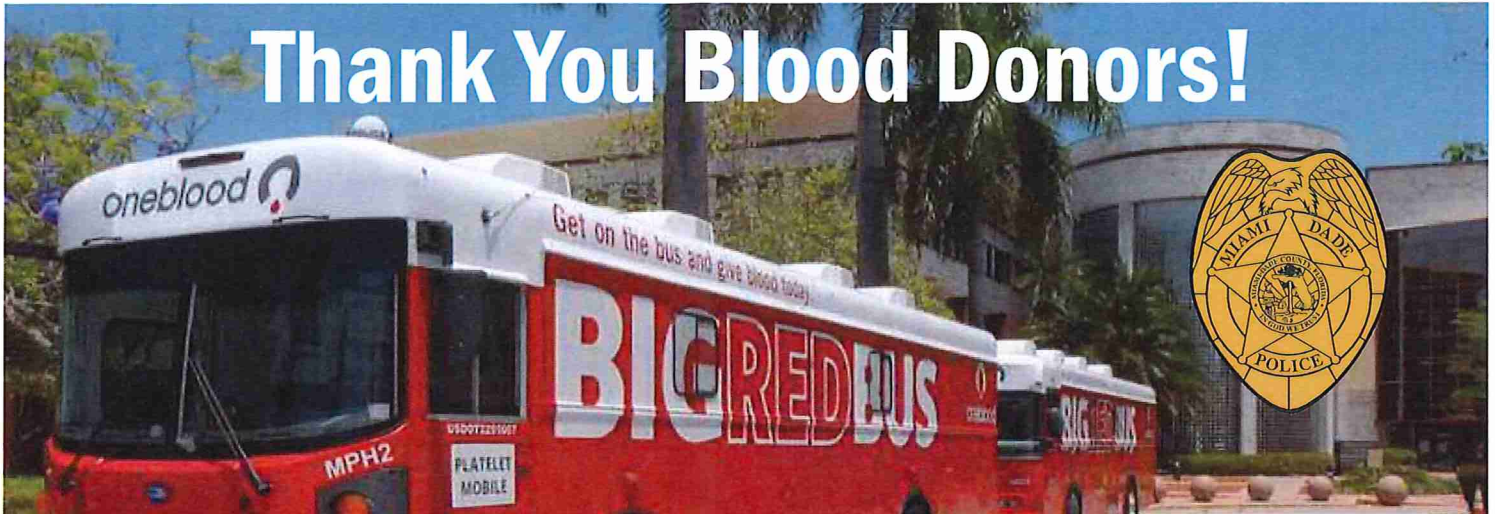
MDPD recently said farewell to 28 employees (20 sworn officers and 11 civilians) who retired after periods of service ranging from 8 to 37 years. Director Juan J. Perez, the Department’s command staff, and the entire MDPD family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

<b>Sworn</b>	
Captain Eugenio Fernandez.....	25
Lieutenant Ruben J. Aleman.....	30
Lieutenant Jose R. Gonzalez.....	32
Sergeant Albert L. Rodriguez .....	30
Sergeant Gilberto Rosario.....	30
Sergeant Patricia R. Sedano-Sliman .....	29
Sergeant Orpheus M. Trammell.....	30
Officer Lydia Armstrong.....	30
Officer Douglas M. Bartelt.....	22
Officer Gregory D. Darling .....	32
Officer Maurice S. Dutoit.....	30
Officer Margaret T. Garrison.....	32
Officer Gerardo Gonzalez.....	29
Officer Carmen Holtz .....	30
Officer Mark Martinez.....	37
Officer Jorge L. Nunez .....	26
Officer William A. Pedraja .....	30
Officer Tomas B. Tundidor.....	30
Officer Kenyon W. Watkins.....	30
Officer Jeffrey L. Young.....	25

<b>Civilians</b>	
School Crossing Guard Zoila Carreras .....	9
School Crossing Guard Miguel A. Concepcion.....	16
Executive Secretary Marta R. Deluga.....	14
Police Records Technician 1 Jack E. Handy .....	19
Latent Fingerprint Examiner Lyoubomir N. Nikolov .....	19
MDPD Mail Center Supervisor Rafael E. Perez.....	12
MDPD Maintenance Repairer Mariana Joseph Poliscat.....	34
School Crossing Guard Jorge S. Quintero .....	8
Police Complaint Officer Albert S. Rosales .....	35
Police Records Technician 2 Pearline Sands .....	31
Stenographic Reporter Maria D. Solares .....	10







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

Sergeant Miguel Espinosa  
 Sergeant Rajesh Maharaj  
 Sergeant William D. Risk II  
 Sergeant Michael R. Scott  
 Sergeant Anthony M. Warren  
 Officer Eric A. Gonzalez  
 Officer Jose G. Hernandez  
 Officer Mario Perez Jr.  
 Officer Robert C. Rembisz

Police Financial Investigator Margaret Dunn  
 Administrative Secretary Lynda J. Pantoja  
 Secretary Yvonne D. Rodriguez  
 Secretary Sabrina N. Smith  
 Criminalist 2 Erin M. Wilson  
 Mr. Mark Diccico  
 Ms. Shaileen Perez  
 Mr. John Siddons



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SPA 1 Allison Bishop-Cooner, Editor  
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 G.T. Juan A. Perez, Creative Designer

Hector Llevat  
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