



Newsletter *Alert*



"Committed to Excellence"

@MiamiDadePD

Vol. 37, No. 4

October - December 2021

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Welcome 2022



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

ALFREDO "FREDDY" RAMIREZ III



COVID-19 has been with us for almost two years, and through it, you have carried out your duties with a high level of professionalism. On Thursday, June 24, 2021, amid the pandemic, we responded to the Surfside building collapse, a catastrophic event that called for many of you to suspend vacations, put aside family time, and even sleep. From the search and rescue phase, to the second-largest death investigation in the County's history, to the continued processing of debris from the collapse, your performance has been exemplary.

Our ability to serve our community is a collective effort, involving the newest members of our family who have been on the job for just months, to those who are just months from retirement. This year, for the first time in the Department's history, there were five cadet classes training at the same time at the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute. As we welcomed our newest officers and professional staff in 2021, we also bid happy retirement to 149 employees, who collectively had almost 4,000 years of experience.

We have learned a lot from those longtime employees, both sworn and professional staff. As we look to the future, we will continue to embrace the things that have been passed from one generation to another, and we will continue to evolve. We have acquired new technology that aids in our investigations, such as our Real-Time Crime Center's use of cutting-edge software, and we are continuing to work closely with the community, as a partner,

in helping to solve crimes. This year, we implemented the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) in our Northside, South, and Intracoastal Districts. GVI elevates the role of community support and social services in our strategy to reduce gun violence in Miami-Dade County. We also integrated new training to help our officers recognize the signs and symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and effectively communicate with individuals who have the developmental disability.

We started Operation Summer Heat, an initiative that focused on getting illegal guns off the streets. That effort partnered with dozens of other law enforcement agencies throughout the region and was so successful that we continued it through the end of 2021, under the new name Operation Community Shield.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava's Peace and Prosperity Plan will expend \$90 million over 19 years to address the underlying causes of gun violence and poverty. Much of the plan focuses on high-risk youth, with year-round educational and mentoring programs. The plan includes funding for several Department programs, including the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) Police Athletic League program; and the MDPD Turn Around Police Academy, an 11-week program designed to support positive youth behaviors. Additionally, we have strengthened our long-time relationship with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, to reach more families through mentorship and after school programs that would pair more police officers with youth who are seeking mentors.

I want to extend a "Job Well Done" to each of you. I know it has not been easy over the past year, but your resiliency has been remarkable. Recent history has taught us that things can be quite unpredictable, but when we work together, anything is achievable.

Sincerely,

Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III
Director



A Salute to Her Law Enforcement Career and Heritage, Chief Rosanna Cordero-Stutz Named, “Woman of the Year” by Dominican Law Enforcement Officers of Florida

By Brian Ballou



North Operations Division Chief Rosanna Cordero-Stutz inside her office at the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building (Miami-Dade Police Department Headquarters) in Doral. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

To help her mother pass the U.S. Citizenship test, ten-year-old Rosanna Cordero quizzed her on the names of U.S. Presidents, the First Amendment, the branches of government, and other facts. The study sessions, at the kitchen table inside their small Washington Heights apartment in New York City, lasted for hours. The preparation paid off, as her mother passed with ease.

The Oath of Allegiance at a naturalization ceremony was next for both mother and daughter. It was the culmination of a long process. The family got dressed up. On their way to the subway station to catch a train that would take them to a downtown courthouse, they walked past Dominican Restaurants that featured popular dishes such as Sancocho and Mangu, and Dominican Churches, and dozens of Dominican flags that adorned storefronts and balconies in the neighborhood, which was predominately Dominican.

At the courthouse, they stood with approximately 100 other citizens and took the oath. Chief Cordero-Stutz said that although she dreamed back then of becoming a police officer, she did not imagine that she would rise to the rank of Chief, in the eighth largest law enforcement agency

in the U.S., and that she would be honored in the way that she was on Saturday, November 13, 2021, when the Dominican Law Enforcement Officers of Florida named her their “Woman of the Year,” during their annual gala.

“What it means to me is that I’m acknowledged by not just my fellow law enforcement brothers and sisters, but by my Dominican law enforcement brothers and sisters,” she added.

Chief Cordero-Stutz credits her parents for instilling in her a strong work ethic, and an attitude that she should not let others define her limitations, but strive to do the best at whatever she set out to accomplish. “To receive this award, it gives me a lot of pride. My mother passed away, but my dad, and my siblings, they are so proud of me,” Chief Cordero-Stutz said.

As North Operations Division Chief, she oversees the Intracoastal, Northside, Northwest, and Midwest Districts, and the Town of Miami Lakes, and approximately 700 officers and 200 civilians. In receiving the award, her leadership during some of the most challenging times in the Department’s history was acknowledged. There was the COVID-19 pandemic, and civil unrest, followed by the tragic Surfside building collapse. “We were literally going crisis to crisis,” Chief Cordero-Stutz said.

The Dominican Law Enforcement Officers of Florida organization was established in 2017 to recognize the accomplishments by law enforcement officials throughout the state and on the federal level, said William Castro, the organization’s president.

“She’s a trailblazer, not only as an example for us, who are Dominican, but anyone in law enforcement,” Mr. Castro said during the gala. “She went up the ranks starting a long career, it’s time she deserves the respect.”



Homicide Detective Jessica Alvarez Receives 2021 Victor Pidermann Investigator of the Year Award

By Brian Ballou



Homicide Detective Jessica Alvarez speaking with Mrs. Kim Pidermann, the widow of former Homicide Detective Victor Pidermann. The annual award is named after Mr. Pidermann, in recognition of his career at MDPD. Also pictured, far left, is Homicide Bureau Major Jorge Aguiar, and right, in uniform, Captain Sergio M. Alvarez. (Photo by Brian Ballou)

Homicide Detective Jessica Alvarez has a reputation for being relentless when it comes to seeking justice for victims; she recently spent countless hours over two years following a trail of evidence that led to the arrest of three individuals for the fatal shooting of Gabriela Aldana, a 17-year-old girl, outside a Hookah Bar in West Miami in 2019. Her tenacity in that and many other cases has earned her the 2021 Victor Pidermann Homicide Investigator of the Year Award.

“What I saw, your commitment to that case, was just incredible, I saw you in there, you didn’t want to go home, a lot of people will probably never recognize in their eyes, what you did for those families, but I thank you for what you did, it was amazing,” said Major Jorge Aguiar of the Homicide Bureau, speaking to Detective Alvarez during the award presentation on Monday, November 29, 2021. The presentation was held inside the third floor break room at headquarters.

Detective Alvarez, who is married to Captain Sergio M. Alvarez, thanked her supervisors and her family for inspiring and supporting her throughout her career. She has been with the Department since 1997, and with the

Homicide Bureau since December 2007. “Honey, I can’t thank you enough for everything that you’ve done, you’re very special, especially those days at Surfside, when I couldn’t go home, and you came to me, and brought me clothes, and you brought me the kids. . .” she told her husband, wiping tears of joy from her eyes as her co-workers looked on. “And all those call-outs, all these years you put up with me gone, and you stepped up with the kids, I’m so grateful.”

As the lead law enforcement agency for Surfside, the Department’s Homicide Bureau investigated each of the 98 deaths that occurred due to the collapse, and Detective Alvarez and her fellow team of detectives played a central role in those investigations. She assumed the duties of processing and identifying the human remains that were recovered from the debris of the building collapse, and early on she set up a triage area near the collapse site and worked with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, the Miami Beach Police Department, and the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner Department. She virtually worked around-the-clock for approximately a month, until the last remaining victim was identified.

The annual award is named after former Homicide Detective Victor Pidermann, who passed away of natural causes on October 13, 1997. His widow, Mrs. Kim Pidermann, attended the ceremony.

“This is such an honor,” Mrs. Pidermann said. “And every year when somebody gets designated in his name, it makes me happy that it is continuing and I know that a lot of you never met Victor. . . didn’t know him, and as the years go on, I see more and more people who didn’t work with him, but yet, here we all are, honoring him, thank you so much.”

Detective Alvarez often reminds herself of advice she was given many years ago by a supervisor, that in doing investigations, she has “all the time in the world, but just one chance to get it right.” She now finds herself giving advice to young investigators in the Bureau.

“Keep grinding, don’t do it for the glory but because it is the right thing to do,” she said.

Two Longtime MDPD Chaplains Retired

By Brian Ballou

Chaplains Eddie Rivero and Ralph Gazitua were among a group of seven clergy members who started volunteering with the Department two decades ago. Both men have played a role in the Department's focus on officer wellness, and have spent countless hours counseling not only sworn, but also professional staff members. While their official role with the Department ended with their retirements on December 31, 2021, their legacy will be lasting.

Police Chaplains were traditionally relied on for internal counseling, but their roles have expanded over the years, and they have been vital to helping the community heal. In addition to being pastoral counselors, spiritual leaders, and "prayer warriors" for the Department, our Chaplains have sat with families of victims of the parking garage collapse at the West Campus of Miami-Dade College on October 9, 2012, the Florida International University bridge collapse on March 15, 2018, and most recently, with relatives of people who died in the Surfside building collapse, which occurred on June 24, 2021.

Chaplain Rivero is retiring to devote more time to his church, to help rebuild services that nearly faded away due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said he will cherish his time with the Department and is humbled by the opportunity he has had over the past 20 years to help so many people through personal crisis. "There were many times, when people were facing some challenging situations in their lives, and after sitting and talking with them, I have walked away knowing that I've helped them, that is fulfilling," he said.

Chaplains Rivero and Gazitua were members of the "God Squad," riding with other clergy in golf carts in South Beach during Memorial Day weekends, to promote good will and keep the peace. That weekend typically draws huge crowds, and some unruly behavior. The duties of Chaplains do not involve anything that would put them in a dangerous position, but they have calmed situations that could have gotten worse.

Recalling 20 years ago, Chaplain Rivero said that the primary difference between now and then was that there was not much attention paid to officer wellness throughout the profession. He said that Director Ramirez has done an amazing job emphasizing officer wellness.

"I have seen that as one of his focal points, and it's something that 20 years ago, wasn't really talked about much, and in fact there was a stigma attached to officers



A retirement breakfast for Chaplains Eddie Rivero and Ralph Gazitua was held on Thursday, December 16, 2021, at Sergio's Restaurant in Doral. Pictured from left to right, at the breakfast, are: Communications Bureau Major Jose A. Fernandez, Organized Crimes Bureau Captain William Gonzalez, Chaplain Walter T. Richardson, Psychological Services Bureau Major Melissa Barosela, Chaplain Aristidis Arizi, Retired Chaplain Eddie Rivero, Chaplain Vensen Ambeau, Retired Chaplain Ralph Gazitua, Assistant Director George Perez, Compliance and Standards Division Chief Gina M. Beato-Dominguez, South Florida Police Benevolent Association Executive Vice President David Greenwell, and Chaplain Thomas Hanlon.

seeking that kind of help," Chaplain Rivero said. "I'm very proud of the fact that the MDPD has a Psychological Services Bureau staffed with professionals and I think that we add to that as chaplains, we're not expected to be police psychologists, but we can be that sounding board."

Chaplain Gazitua's decision to retire was also related to the pandemic. He contracted COVID-19 in August 2021, and was hospitalized and nearly died. At the same time, his wife, Maria Elena "Cookie" Gazitua, had COVID-19, and was quarantined at home, and his son, Sean Gazitua, who had been running the family business, a supply chain logistics company, also had COVID-19.

Coming out of that health scare, Chaplain Gazitua decided to spend more time with his family. He has devoted 35 years to ministry in detention facilities, hospices and with the Department. He said that while his family was sick, he felt what it truly means to be a part of the "MDPD Family." Numerous officers called his wife daily to check in on her and to offer to pick up groceries or medication so they could deliver to the Gazitua home.

Chaplain Gazitua said he is grateful for all the friendships he has made during his time with the Department, and

Continued on page 6

MDPD Chaplains Retired *Continued from page 5*

while he will be stepping away, he will continue those friendships for the rest of his life. “This is the best Chaplain program in the United States, we have such diversity and the Department truly respects our role, and cares for everyone who works at MDPD,” he said.

The Chaplain program is under the Department’s Psychological Services Bureau. Major Melissa Barosela, the Commander of the Bureau said, “Chaplain Gazitua is

a dedicated, disciplined, and compassionate role model who has shared his faith with so many members of the MDPD throughout the past 21 years, and Chaplain Rivero is a humble, wise, and caring man of faith who embraced his role as a Police Chaplain and touched so many lives within the MDPD family during his 20 years of service.”

The Military Appreciation Vehicle Is a High-Octane Splash of Red, White, and Blue

By Brian Ballou

The Department’s newest tribute car is wrapped in the stars and stripes and the emblems of the six branches of the military, and pays homage to our Wounded Warriors, Prisoners of War, and those Missing in Action.

The concept came from a committee of officers who have served in the military, including Officer Manuel Quesada, of the Special Response Team, who serves in the U.S. Marines. The design was created by Graphics Designer Juan A. Perez. On Friday, November 5, 2021, the MDPD Military Appreciation Vehicle was unveiled, at the Intercontinental Hotel in Doral.

“When we came together as a committee, we had one aim in focus, we wanted it to represent all the branches equally, and to connect with every veteran group of all ages,” Officer Quesada said. “I think that’s what we came

up with, if you look at the car, you will see every branch, including the newest branch of the military, the Space Force, as well as the red, white, and blue of our flag.”

The Department has more than 250 employees who have served or are serving in the military.

“It’s so humbling, and it’s so honorable, to know that there are men and women in this Department who not only serve the community with dignity and respect, but also serve this country abroad, keeping us safe at home and abroad, and leave their families behind for long periods of time,” said Director Ramirez. “I think that this event is a great way to show our appreciation, our love for them, and that we have their back. I think this is more of a celebration of their careers and their commitment, and everything they have done for all of us.”



The MDPD Military Appreciation Vehicle features the emblems of the six branches of the military on the hood. The vehicle is being used for special events related to departmental activities, throughout South Florida. (Photos by Brian Ballou)



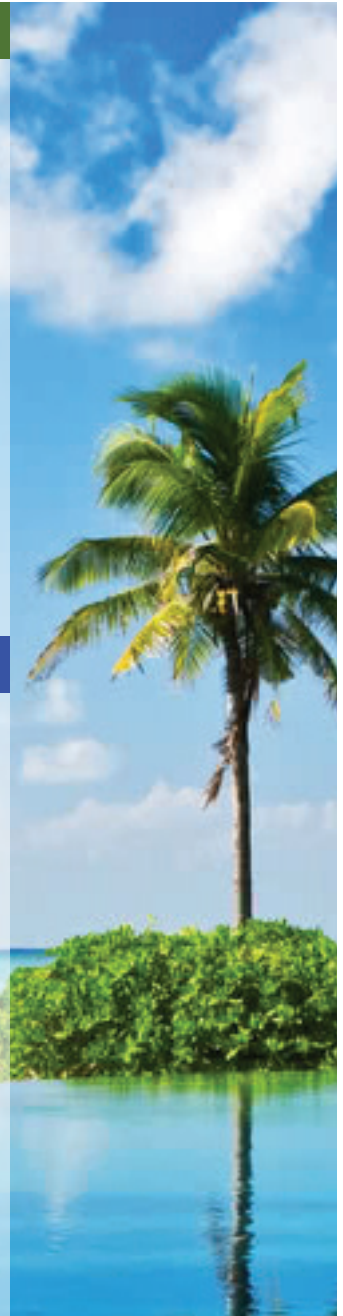
MDPD recently said farewell to 25 employees (12 sworn officers and 13 professional staff) who retired after periods of service ranging from 36 to 10 years. Director Alfredo “Freddy” Ramirez III, the Department’s Command Staff, and the entire MDPD family wish our colleagues many, many years of happy retirement.

Sworn

Sergeant Dennis F. Alvarez	30
Sergeant James T. Barrett	28
Sergeant William Risk II	31
Sergeant William Sanchez	28
Sergeant Bernardo Suarez	29
Officer Randall W. Booker	28
Officer Jose R. Gonzalez	28
Officer John H. Jones	35
Officer Vyvyan Williams Rodgers	25
Officer Jorge D. Roza	31
Officer Carlos Sanchez	22
Officer Wilfredo Sanchez	19

Professional Staff

Police Records Technician Marva Adams	24
MDPD School Crossing Guard Xiomara Benavides	14
MDPD School Crossing Guard Fannie Goldman	26
MDPD School Crossing Guard Aleida Gonzalez	12
MDPD School Crossing Guard Rosa Gonzalez	10
MDPD School Crossing Guard Leocadia Martinez	17
Building Maintenance Supervisor Raul Montelongo	28
MDPD School Crossing Guard Supervisor Carmen Ortiz	32
Imaging Records Technician Maritza Padilla	28
Police Crime Analysis Specialist 1 Francisco Penabad	35
MDPD School Crossing Guard Harriett Pivacco	26
MDPD School Crossing Guard Ruben Varela	14
Police Complaint Officer Cynthia Wills	36



Thank You Blood Donors!



The MDPD and OneBlood held successful blood drives at the Miami-Dade Police Department Headquarters on Monday, November 15, 2021. Special thanks are extended to the donors listed below for helping save lives!

Lieutenant Aviel A. Sanchez
 Sergeant Carlos J. Lopez
 Sergeant Richard Pichardo
 Officer Jairo Barosela
 Officer Peter J. Judge
 Officer Fredy Rojas
 Criminalist 2 Arthur P. Andrade
 MDPD Criminalist Supervisor Sarah J. Johnson
 Personnel Technician Madison C. Mera
 Public Service Aide Candace M. Osborne
 Criminalist 1 Michelle A. Roza
 Police Property Evidence Specialist 1 Alberto Vieites
 Ms. Paulette Almeida
 Mr. Richard Arroyo

Mr. Kevin Azevedo
 Mr. Jorge Castellanos
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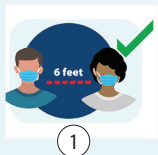


Thank you for **saving lives**

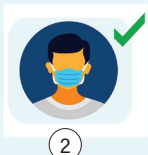
CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) SAFETY TIPS

CONSEJOS DE SEGURIDAD POR EL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)
 TI KONSËY SEKIRITE SOU CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

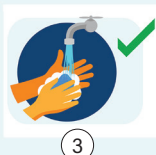
miamidade.gov/coronavirus



1



2



3

1 **Practice social distancing**
 Mantenga la distancia social
 Pratique distans sosyal

2 **Wear a face covering**
 Use una máscara facial
 Mete yon Kouvèti vizaj

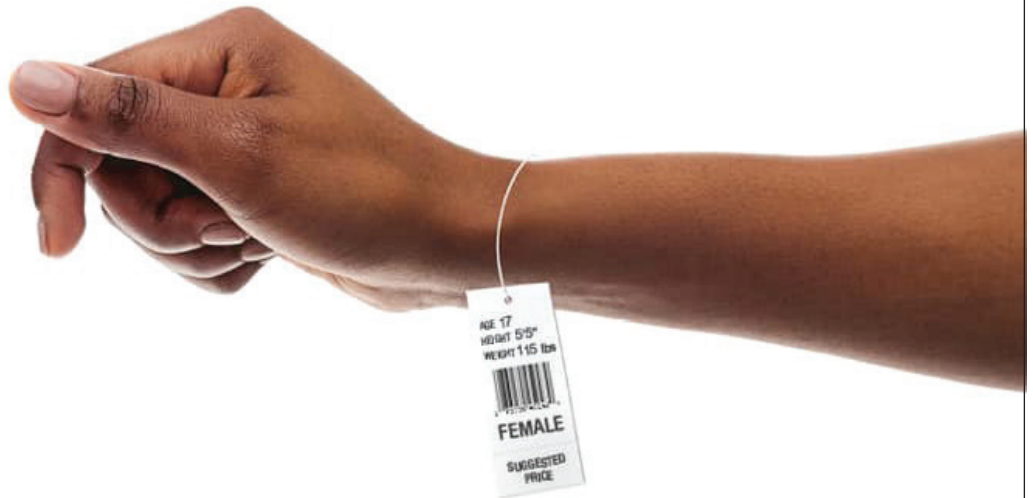
3 **Wash your hands often. When soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer**

Lavese las manos frecuentemente. Si no tiene agua y jabón, usedesinfectante de manos.

Lave men w souvan. Lè savon akdlo pa disponib, sèvi akdezenfektan pou men.

Help
is
Available.

Human Trafficking



“Human Life Is Not For Sale”

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

- Call 911 immediately.
- Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-37-37-888. Anti-Trafficking Hotline Advocates are available 24/7 to take reports of potential human trafficking.
- Text **HELP** to the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 233733. Message and data rates may apply.
- Submit a tip online using the National Human Trafficking Hotline's anonymous reporting form. Please note that if the situation is urgent or occurred within the last 24 hours, we would encourage you to call, text or chat.
- Text or call 305-FIX-STOP (305-349-7867)



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