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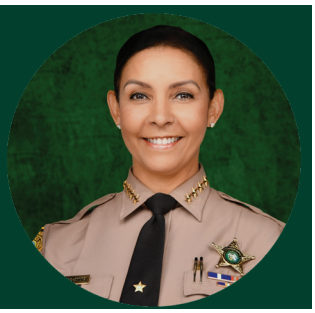
SHERIFF'S MESSAGE

Rosie Cordero-Stutz
Sheriff



This past year has been one of growth, challenge, progress and purpose. Because of you, this agency delivered meaningful results, strengthened public trust and laid a strong foundation for 2026.

One of my first priorities as sheriff was clear: protect the most vulnerable residents of Miami-Dade County and confront complex financial crimes that destabilize families and communities. In 2025, I directed our Organized Crimes Bureau to increase investigations into homeowners association and condominium fraud, which has become far too prevalent in our county. These crimes threaten both financial security and the sense of safety people deserve in their own homes. Homeowners deserve transparency and accountability, and there is no place for this corruption in Miami-Dade County. Our deputies and investigators made significant arrests this year, and this work will continue.

That same commitment guided our response to other major fraud cases. In September, alongside Tax Collector Dariel Fernández, we announced the results of Operation Credit Bust Out — a months-long, multi-agency investigation that dismantled a sophisticated identity theft and vehicle fraud ring. More than 100 vehicles were fraudulently obtained, with losses exceeding $5.5 million. Through relentless investigative work, 53 vehicles valued at more than $4.3 million were recovered. This case showed what is possible when partnerships are strong and resources aligned.

Protecting vulnerable adults remains one of our most solemn responsibilities. On December 23, working with State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, we announced the arrest of a bank employee accused of stealing more than $500,000 from a disabled woman. This Organized Crimes Bureau investigation, conducted with the State Attorney's Elderly and Vulnerable Adult Exploitation Task Force, sends a clear message: those who abuse positions of trust will be held accountable. We will aggressively pursue those who prey on others.

January 7 marked my one-year anniversary as sheriff. Over the past year, I have met residents, educators, clergy, business owners, community advocates and legislators across this county. These conversations matter, and I bring them directly into meetings with my command staff so community voices are heard at the highest levels. The relationships we have built will continue to strengthen this agency and the neighborhoods we serve.

As we enter 2026, I wish you and your families a happy and healthy new year. Let us look out for one another, take time to know our neighbors and invest in our communities and youth. Strong relationships are the foundation of public safety, and we value the trust placed in us every day.

This year, Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) proudly joined the Florida Deputy Sheriffs Association. Investing in the people who protect Miami-Dade strengthens the safety of our entire community. This partnership expands support for our teams, and we will continue to invest in our greatest asset — you.

This year also required us to fight hard for the resources needed to meet growing demands. We advocated tirelessly to ensure MDSO is properly funded and equipped to deliver the professional, responsive and effective service our residents expect. This commitment supports our workforce, strengthens public safety and positions the agency for the challenges ahead.

Finally, we remember Deputy Devin Jaramillo, who gave his life protecting this community. His courage and sacrifice continue to inspire this agency. I extend my deepest condolences to his parents, David and Yolanda, and his entire family. Nationwide, 98 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty in 2025. One is too many. I remain committed to ensuring our deputies have the training, equipment and support they need to come home safely.

As we move into 2026, let us honor the past year through continued service, vigilance and compassion. I am proud to serve alongside you. Together, we will keep moving Miami-Dade forward.

Sincerely,

Rosie Cordero-Stutz
Sheriff

Putting the Pieces Together to Help Solve Crime

By Brian Ballou

Police Crime Analysis Specialist Chante Obadeyi provides deputies with actionable intelligence to better address crime trends. (Staff Photo)

In a quiet cubicle tucked inside the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office's Government Services Bureau in downtown Miami, Police Crime Analysis Specialist Chante Obadeyi sits at her desk and works to put together a puzzle — only the pieces come in the form of numbers, reports, and fragments of historical data that contain small but telling patterns.

As a member of the Crime Analysis Unit, she assembles the pieces carefully, scrutinizing them to predict when and where crime is likely to occur — providing deputies with actionable intelligence as they patrol an extraordinary cross-section of Miami-Dade life.

Because criminal activity rarely stays in one place, often moving from one venue or jurisdiction to another, Obadeyi shares this "operational analysis" with other law enforcement agencies. Her reach extends beyond her bureau's boundaries, connecting a network of analysts and officers across the county.

"We don't have the same patterns and trends as most of Miami-Dade County," she said. "We get a lot of people who come down here to vacation — a more transient population, people staying short amounts of time to enjoy the area. Our major stakeholders are tourists. We don't have many residential areas here — we're more specialized."

The Government Services Bureau's responsibilities are vast — protecting causeways, marine areas, tourist hubs, and key infrastructure. Its patrol area includes Jackson Memorial Hospital, loanDepot Park, Fisher Island, Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, the Metrorail and Metromover, and the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts. Deputies might handle a traffic incident on the Rickenbacker Causeway in the afternoon, and a disturbance at a performance venue by nightfall.

It's a dynamic environment — and one where Obadeyi's puzzle-solving instinct makes a measurable difference. Last March, her analysis helped deputies disrupt a rash of scooter thefts in and around Jackson Memorial Hospital. By studying the timing and location of each theft, she predicted when the next incidents were most likely to occur. Some stolen scooters were later found abandoned on Metrorail platforms miles away. Acting on her analysis, deputies made seven arrests, and the thefts all but disappeared.

That success, like much of her work, was built on collaboration. Obadeyi recently formed what she calls the "Rickenbacker Quad" — a coalition linking MDSO, the City of Miami, the Village of Key Biscayne, and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. The agencies now share data through Flock Safety's License Plate Reader (LPR) system, which includes fixed cameras and other investigative tools. With shared access agreements in place, analysts and officers across the network can view the same real-time information — a major asset in addressing persistent issues such as vehicle break-ins and the use of stolen credit cards for large purchases.

"Partnerships are key to solving cases," she said. Through October, she and other MDSO staff met with Coral Gables Police to compare notes on a string of boat thefts moving through North Miami, Coral Gables, and areas patrolled by MDSO. She also organizes regular Zoom meetings with analysts from nearby departments to strengthen collaboration and information flow.

"PCAS Chante Obadeyi brings something special to the table when it comes to working with other agencies," said Major Patrick H. Calvo, Bureau Commander. "She's got a natural talent for building strong, positive relationships with local law enforcement intelligence analysts, which

Continued on page 3

Together to Help Solve Crime

Continued from page 2

makes collaboration smooth and productive. Her ability to connect and communicate helps everyone stay on the same page, leading to shared insights and smarter strategies. Thanks to her teamwork, the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office and its partner law enforcement agencies, benefit from better intelligence and more efficient research—giving us a real edge in fighting crime together."

Her path to this role began many years ago, behind the front desk at the Northside District, where she worked as a Police Records Specialist 1, from 2005 until 2007. She left the Department but returned in 2011 to work as a Police Dispatcher. In 2013, she returned to the position of Police Records Specialist, then in 2016 she became a Police Station Specialist at the Special Victims Bureau. She left MDPD again to pursue a position as an Administrative Officer 3 with the Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces, but after a year, returned to MDPD as Police Station Specialist. Then, in 2022, she was promoted to Police Crime Analyst 1.

"Numbers, reports, and talking with deputies — that's what I go off of to put it together," she said.

Now, she's helping strengthen the network of analysts across the agency. Working closely with the MDSO Chief Analyst, Obadeyi is helping create more synergy among the office's roughly 160 analysts — from entry-level specialists to Intelligence Analyst Supervisors.

"We're looking to collaborate more, to share ideas and strategies," she said. "I can remember when information wasn't being shared."

One recent case illustrates that evolution. When an individual assaulted an off-duty deputy at the Main Library, the suspect refused to provide his real name. Obadeyi, following a hunch, reached out to the City of Miami Police Department — and discovered that their records contained his true identity. The suspect, from Mobile, Alabama, had a violent criminal history there.

"That's what sharing information does," she said. "It connects the dots that might otherwise be missed."

Never content to stop learning, Obadeyi will attend the Florida Analysts Academy in West Palm Beach beginning in January 2026. The six-month program isn't required, but she sees it as another way to sharpen her skills and bring new techniques back to her team.

"It's about staying ahead of what's coming next," she said.

In a region defined by movement — tourists, commuters, shifting tides, and transient crowds — Obadeyi's work is both quiet and profound. Every chart, spreadsheet, and line of data is a puzzle piece that, once assembled, reveals something larger: a glimpse of where the next crime might occur, and a chance to stop it before it happens.

Deputy Amber Pascual Breaks the Surface — and Barriers — with Underwater Recovery Team

By Brian Ballou

Below the surface of a canal or lake, sound dulls and water turns opaque. The familiar world above vanishes, replaced by a perilous underwater landscape. Sediment clouds the bottom — sand, silt, clay and decaying organic matter — while alligators, venomous snakes and flesh-eating bacteria lurk. This is where Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office divers work, searching for what — or who — has been deliberately hidden.

Deputy Amber Pascual knows this world well. She is the first full-time certified female diver for MDSO's Underwater Recovery Team, part of the Special Patrol Bureau. She follows the path of Deputy Grace Green, who was the first certified female police diver in Miami-Dade Police Department history, assigned to the Marine Patrol Unit.

The Underwater Recovery Team is small, consisting of just three divers. Together, they recover submerged vehicles, locate weapons tied to violent crimes and retrieve human remains that can reopen investigations gone cold. With thousands of miles of canals and lakes crisscrossing Miami-Dade County, the work is constant.

Deputy Pascual is 5 feet 1 inches tall and about 135 pounds. Some of the oxygen cylinders stacked in the Bureau's office are nearly half her size. But underwater, her stature is an asset. She can maneuver through tight spaces — crushed vehicle cabins, narrow openings and twisted metal — that larger divers cannot access.

That advantage was tested on October 28, 2025, during what team members described as a "once-in-a-lifetime" dive. A 100-ton Caterpillar industrial mining truck — 41 feet long, 25 feet wide and 18 feet tall — had plunged over a berm into a water-filled limestone quarry near the Florida Turnpike and West Okeechobee Road. The massive vehicle was fully submerged. The driver's body had not been recovered.

Continued on page 4

Underwater Recovery Team

Continued from page 3

From her cubicle at the Special Patrol Bureau in Doral, Deputy Pascual prepares for dive assignments on a recent day. (Staff Photo)

Deputy Pascual recently went on an underwater recovery of a vehicle at a canal near the intersection of 205 Avenue and 142 Street in Miami. (Staff Photo)

Because of the scale and danger, the dive required extraordinary preparation. The team requested a duplicate truck be brought to the site. On land, Deputy Pascual and fellow diver Deputy Pete Delgado practiced repeatedly, closing their eyes as they moved through the cab, memorizing handrails, door latches and blind angles by touch alone.

When they entered the water, both divers wore hard hats equipped with GoPro cameras, that recorded dive footage that was forwarded to homicide detectives and investigators from the U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Visibility was almost nonexistent. The truck loomed underwater not like a vehicle, but like a submerged building. Its enormous wheels were buried halfway into sediment. Boulders littered the quarry floor. As the divers worked methodically around the structure, they felt rather than saw their way forward, conscious that a mistake could trap or disorient them. The scene was surreal, like a sci-fi movie.

Inside the cab, the front windshield had blown out, likely from pressure as the truck sank. Deputy Pascual located a boot, a lunch-filled backpack and a hard hat inside the cab. The truck driver, she concluded, had likely been pulled from the cab by the force of rushing water. Despite exhaustive searching, they couldn't find the body, but three days later, as they prepared for another dive, the driver's body surfaced.

Deputy Pascual's calm in moments like these is rooted in a lifetime of preparation. She was born and raised in Miami, spending much of her childhood in the water alongside her father, Marco Pascual, a longtime member of the Miami-Dade Police Department's Underwater Dive Team (He retired in 2017 but has since returned, and currently works in the Community Affairs Bureau). As young as eight, she snorkeled with him, hunting for lobster and exploring coral reefs. Family memories centered on boating in the Keys, rafting freshwater springs and listening to stories from her father's career — including high-profile recoveries such as the ValuJet crash.

Following that path was not inevitable, but it was influential. Deputy Pascual attended the University

Continued on page 5

Underwater Recovery Team

Continued from page 4

of Florida, earning a dual Bachelor of Science degree in criminology and women's studies. She initially considered becoming a medical examiner, drawn to how the human body tells its story after death. But the pace felt limiting. Law enforcement, she realized, offered immediacy — the chance to act, not just analyze.

She joined the agency — then known as the Miami-Dade Police Department — as a 911 dispatcher, learning crisis through voices before encountering it firsthand. After graduating from the police academy, she was assigned to patrol in The Hammocks. In August 2021, she completed dive training and joined the underwater unit. The department officially transitioned to the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office in January 2025.

Joining the team required months of grueling preparation. Divers train for zero visibility, entanglement hazards and stress-induced disorientation. Certification comes only after repeated evaluations. Since then, she has completed hundreds of dives. Some are routine — submerged motorcycles, abandoned cars. Others are macabre: corpses, intact skeletons.

"We are a very small unit, we have to trust each other, said Deputy Delgado. "I can close my eyes and know that she is there. We are always on the same page when we are pulling cars or doing complicated things underwater, we can even tell by the way we're breathing, that something may be off."

Deputy Delgado added that working in the unit takes special qualities. "The hardest part is being comfortable in an uncomfortable setting. Panic and fear are the hardest things to overcome. There are lots of things here that can kill you, vehicles shifting, and we work with heavy equipment. We work in an environment that is not conducive to human life."

On a day in mid-December, the team recovered a Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle from clear, shallow water. Hours later, Deputies Pascual and Delgado spent nearly an hour in murky canal water searching more than 800 yards for a submerged Chevrolet Camaro, located by a civilian hobbyist who uses sonar to scan waterways, and then forwards the coordinates of anything he finds to law enforcement.

Each year, the team recovers dozens of bodies, each one triggering a homicide investigation. Fraud adds to the workload, as vehicles are often intentionally dumped to stage insurance claims.

In water where visibility rarely extends beyond an outstretched hand, Deputy Pascual relies on training, muscle memory and a rule drilled into every diver: Do not panic. For her, the danger is inseparable from purpose. Beneath the surface, she carries both her father's legacy and her own — proving that skill, preparation and resolve matter more than size, and that even in the darkest water, someone has to be willing to go in.

The Protector of Those Who Protect, New St. Michael Sculpture Adorns Waiting Lobby of Fred Taylor Headquarters Building

By Brian Ballou

A new figure stands watch in the waiting lobby at the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building—metallic-black and towering, its candlelit vigil cast by a single headlight where a face might be. It is St. Michael the Archangel, patron saint of law enforcement, imagined in the bones of machines that once ventured across Florida's roads.

The 6-foot-8 inch sculpture arrived on November 19, 2025, as a gift from the Pecorelli family. Artist Barbara Pecorelli spent years creating the piece. She used scrap pulled from twisted vehicle heaps at five junkyards—chains, fenders, a transmission, motorcycle parts, and the misshapen steel panels of car bodies that accumulate when vehicles reach their end. All of it is dipped in a special black coating, protecting the work against oxidation, so that it can be displayed outside too. The sculpture breaks down into three parts—the wings, the upper body, and the lower half—but together it becomes something commanding. The work is a family affair, brother Angelo and their father Antonio, pitched in.

"It's scrap materials repurposed, not to let it die as trash," Ms. Pecorelli said. "To show that there is more we can do with things we think are waste. New life, new inspirations, different perspectives—being reborn."

The figure that emerged from that philosophy looks like a cross between a medieval knight and a character from a comic-book universe—half Batman, half Transformer. St. Michael's white wings don't feather outward but trace their outlines in wire, filled with forms that resemble tree branches. The effect is skeletal, almost ethereal, as if the wings are a memory more than an appendage.

Continued on page 6

The Protector of Those Who Protect . . .

Continued from page 5

Pecorelli began working on the sculpture in 2020, in the isolation of the pandemic. The world had slowed. Debris piles, for her, carry metaphorical weight—objects once valued, suddenly discarded, waiting for purpose.

Her career in art began when she was 10, living in Doral as the young city was just taking shape. Her school held a contest to design a seal for the city. "On drives to school, I would look out the window, see cattle and grass and trees, nature, things that stood out in my mind," she said. "I used it in the drawing. At the time, I didn't understand what it was going to be for." The drawing was selected among the best for the contest, a surprise that stayed with her.

Today, Pecorelli works from a studio in Allapattah, creating pieces in laminated copper and ceramics. She recently donated a ceramic sculpture to Doral City Hall. Copper, she notes, feels naturally alive—"a metal known to be conductive of energy." Ceramics, shaped directly from earth, hold a similar pull.

The new St. Michael sculpture carries that sensibility but rendered through steel—metal that once moved at highway speed, repurposed into a still, protective stance. The candle held at the center of the figure's chest glows softly, reflected in the jet-black metal, giving the impression of a beacon burning.

A few feet away, inside the agency's Hall of Honor, stands another statue of St. Michael—bronze, Hellenistic, dramatically life-like, with fully-feathered wings. Along the wall are photographs of the 45 officers and deputies from this agency who have died in the line of duty. Deputy Jaramillo's photo will soon go up there, making it 46. It is sacred space, loud noises are discouraged. Near the new sculpture in the lobby, the same names are affixed to a granite slab. That seated area can get quite busy with visitors, waiting to be ushered through security screening, to conduct whatever business.

Two guardian figures, closely situated but separated by style, medium and artistic tradition, protectors of those who protect.

A new sculpture, St. Michael the Archangel, adorns the waiting lobby at Headquarters, gifted to MDSO by the Pecorelli family. (Staff Photo)

Join us in welcoming our 2026 Spring interns! For the next 4 months, these college students will be learning about the different bureaus and districts within the #MDSO. (Photo by Angelica Kellner)

Deputy Becomes First Original Member of The Hive to Earn Jiu-Jitsu Black Belt

By Brian Ballou

At a ceremony on December 15, 2025, inside the Hive at the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Training Center, Deputy Eddie Quintana is congratulated on his black belt by his five-year-old daughter. (Staff Photo)

Deputy Eddie Quintana knows The Hive well. He arrived there seven years ago as a novice, eager to learn the martial art of jiu-jitsu. He trained almost every day, drilling escapes, guards and submissions until they became second nature.

The Hive opened about a decade ago at the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Training Center in Doral. It is a large room, with little more than a gray mat covering nearly the entire floor. Over the years, it has produced numerous purple and brown belts — but never a black belt. The first one came on December 15, 2025.

In front of his five-year-old daughter, his father, his Priority Response Team brothers, and the deputies he trains alongside, Deputy Quintana was awarded a black belt. He is the first person at The Hive to progress from white to blue, to purple, to brown, and ultimately to black belt.

Deputy Sean Gornewicz, one of The Hive's three founders, presented Deputy Quintana with the belt and explained what it represents.

"A black belt is not just your prowess or the techniques you have on the mat," Deputy Gornewicz said. "It's also about whether you're able to coach, mentor and build other students up. Can you teach anyone walking through the door? Can you teach your advanced students? Can you inspire? Can you sustain a program on your own? And most importantly, can you continue to grow?

Deputy Quintana's path to jiu-jitsu began long before law enforcement. He wrestled at 160 pounds in high school, initially to get in better shape for football. But he fell in love with wrestling and dropped football altogether. He had modest success — winning districts and qualifying for regionals — but never advanced to state competition.

After graduating, he coached middle school wrestling for two seasons, then spent five years coaching CrossFit while waiting to be hired by the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office, then the Miami-Dade Police Department.

In September 2017, he entered the academy. During a self-defense class, an instructor applied a triangle choke.

"I was like, what was that?" Deputy Quintana said.

Continued on page 8

Jiu-Jitsu Black Belt

Continued from page 7

"I made up my mind right then and there that when I graduated from the academy, I would pick it up."

The jiu-jitsu training began in late 2018. Early classes were quiet and methodical, often with only two or three people on the mat.

"The worst part of the training is that you're really bad at it for a very long time, until you get better," Deputy Quintana said. "But the good part is that once you start getting better, you're able to help others, teach them what you learned. You start off not knowing what's going on, and then you learn how the moves translate to something else."

While assigned to the Hammocks District, Deputy Quintana worked midnight shifts. He would get off at 8 a.m., sleep for about an hour in the training center's parking lot, and then train at The Hive. For the past five years, he has been assigned to the Priority Response Team and has continued to train jiu-jitsu almost every day.

"I knew I was getting better, but each belt came as a surprise," he said. That was also true of the black belt. "I had no idea. Then he — Deputy Gornewicz — started giving a speech, and I knew. It's an honor. It's a great feeling. I've been doing this for the last seven years, since I've been a cop. It gives you confidence."

Because jiu-jitsu emphasizes control and leverage, it is especially valuable during encounters when subjects refuse to comply or become combative.

"Punching doesn't always work," Deputy Quintana said. "But if you make somebody feel that no matter how hard they try, they can't get up, they will give up. Almost everyone I've encountered, there's no use of force beyond holding them down."

He trains alongside fellow MDSO deputy Luis Hernandez, a professional mixed martial arts fighter with a 7-0 record, as well as retired boxers and others with varying levels of martial arts experience. The Hive's classes are open to police officers, deputies and first responders, as well as non-sworn members of law enforcement agencies.

The Hive's name reflects its purpose: a collective space where everyone contributes to the strength of the whole.

Sergeant Juan Colon, a member of the Priority Response Team, said he has witnessed Deputy Quintana's growth firsthand.

"I was his instructor in the academy, and we became coworkers in PRT, and I actually recruited him to become a defensive tactics instructor for PRT," Sergeant Colon said. "So I've literally seen him from the beginning, progressing from a beginner to a black belt. It's been a privilege and an honor, and I'm still in awe of him. He's an absolute natural at it."

Astro, Fetch: How a Tactical Robot Dog Won Over a Schoolyard

By Brian Ballou

The cheers came first — loud, spontaneous and unmistakably joyful — as a four-legged visitor trotted into the grassy courtyard of the Bowman Ashe/Doolin K-8 Academy. Students leaned forward, clapped and cheered as the robotic dog paused, turned and seemed to take in the crowd of nearly 300 children gathered to meet it. By the end of the hourlong ceremony on December 17, 2025, the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office robot would have a new name — Astro — and a fan base eager to claim it as their own.

The visit was the result of a partnership rooted in the mutual love of robotics and technology. Bowman Ashe/Doolin is a magnet school with a focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), and robotics has quickly become one of its most popular offerings. The school fields two elementary robotics teams and one middle school team that competes against other schools. The program began three years ago and is building toward a full eighth-grade pipeline. The lower academy serves pre-kindergarten to fifth grade, and the upper academy serves sixth through eighth grade.

"They were so excited to be a part of it, and they learned a lot," said Cristy Nudd, a middle school science, biology and physical science teacher who also oversees robotics. "To be front and center and interact with the robot dog before the presentation, they learned a lot of things."

About 15 students, from third grade through seventh grade, participate in the program. The initiative began through the school's magnet designation, which helped provide students with robotic equipment and kits and team shirts. Their black T-shirts are marked by a bold, graphic design. Across the chest, gray block letters spelled out BDK8, short for Bowman Ashe/Doolin K-8. Below the lettering, a yellow gear formed the centerpiece, its mechanical edges framing a wrench that ran horizontally through the middle. Superimposed inside the gear was the school's friendly dragon mascot.

Continued on page 9

Robot Dog Won Over a Schoolyard

Continued from page 8

MDSO's robotic dog, ASTRO, recently visited the Bowman Ashe/Doolin K-8 Academy, posing with members of the school's robotics team. Included in the photo is the school's principal, Aryam Alvarez, and Deputy Jean Pinero of MDSO's Incident Management Team. (Staff Photo)

Astro moved across the courtyard, directed by a control pad in the hands of a member of the MDSO's Incident Management Team. Though inanimate, the robot displayed the mannerisms of a dog — stopping, pivoting, and even playing fetch. At one point, a student tossed a tennis ball, and Astro extended its clasping arm, picked it up and held it steady, prompting another wave of cheers.

Among the loudest supporters were the robotics team members. Anthony Condte, 12, said, "I love robotics, especially the competitions." Alejandro Ortega, also 12, traced his interest to family influence. "One of my uncles in the Army is a drone pilot, and that got me interested," he said.

For Lia Hernandez, a 13-year-old seventh grader, robotics is part of a longer vision. "I've always been interested in robotics," she said. "When I grow up, I want to be a civil engineer." Matthew Diaz, 13, now in his second year in the program, called the visit a glimpse of what lies ahead. "I love it," he said. "I fell in love with it at a young age. It's going to be our future, technology developing. I loved the robot dog and seeing our robotics teams coming together."

Ricardo Enfante, a 12-year-old seventh grader and team captain for the school, summed up the day with enthusiasm. "I loved the helicopter flyover and the robot moving around," he said. "It was so much fun to watch."

Midway through the ceremony came the moment many students had been waiting for: the name reveal. The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office had invited the school to participate in a naming contest, and students submitted ideas before voting schoolwide. Astro emerged as the clear winner.

"It's a great event, and it's a great partnership," said Principal Aryam Alvarez. "We are a magnet school offering STEAM, and to see Astro really brings it all to life — robotics, Sphero, VEX IQ…" Both Sphero and Vex IQ are robotic toys and tools designed specifically for young students.

Principal Alvarez said the partnership began when the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office reached out to the school in mid-October 2025, after learning about the school's robotics program. "The kids came up with some of the names, we did a schoolwide voting, and the name Astro won," she said. "Seeing the robot come to life kind of pieces everything together for them. It shows them what the future holds."

That future of robotics, students learned, is already part of modern law enforcement. Astro is operated by Deputy Jonathan Streetzel, a 31-year member of the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office and part of its Special Patrol Bureau. He has worked with robotic systems for about two years and explained that operating Astro is surprisingly intuitive. At one point, Assistant Principal Alberto Martinez took the controls, and did a worthy job of navigating Astro through the crowd of students.

"It's really simple, like a first-person video game," Deputy Streetzel said. He told students that Astro's core technology is about 20 years old, though the newer robotic dogs now feature even more advanced capabilities. Astro can transmit high-quality images, including thermal video, and has two-way communications.

"This piece of equipment actually saves lives," Deputy Streetzel said. For members of the Special

Continued on page 10

Robot Dog Won . . .

Continued from page 9

Response Team, he explained, the robot provides a visual of environments that may be unsafe for deputies to enter. "They can see the layout," he said. "They can see if the subject is armed or not."

Deputy Streetzel emphasized that Astro is used in dangerous situations, including barricaded subjects, building searches, and people experiencing mental health crises, offering deputies critical information before they make contact. "It's another layer of security," he said, adding that the robot is unarmed and designed not to hurt anyone.

For the students who sat on the grass and watched, Asto was like a family pet. For an hour, a piece of advanced tactical equipment became something else entirely: a shared experience, a spark of imagination and a reminder that the knowledge they are building in classrooms and robotics labs holds so much potential.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

During this season of Hope, Peace and Joy, we pause to thank you for your courage, sacrifice, commitment and dedication you show every day. While many celebrate with loved ones, you stand watch protecting our communities and answering the call without hesitation.

In the law enforcement profession, much of the most meaningful work happens in the steady presence of those who respond to calls without hesitation, in the patience of those who listen before acting, and in the countless tasks performed by professional incredible staff whose efforts keep the entire system functioning smoothly. Within every position is a real person, someone balancing commitment with personal emotion, public duty with private realities, and moments of strength with moments of strain.

The weight carried in this profession is rarely just the visible kind. It is the call that lingers long after a shift ends, the difficult conversations replayed in the quiet of the drive home, and the emotional charge that accumulates in ways even colleagues may not fully see. Yet through it all, our MDSO family continues to show resilience, courage and faith, not a rigid, unbending toughness, but a living, evolving capacity to keep going. Real resilience acknowledges the challenges, makes room for emotion, and finds ways to stay grounded even when the work feels heavy.

Compassion, too, is deeply woven into this profession. It emerges in subtle choices: pausing to check in on a coworker, offering patience in a moment of tension, or giving someone the space to gather themselves before moving forward or offering a loving embrace. These small acts often go unnoticed, yet they are a vital expression of humanity and the strong brotherhood that we all share in law enforcement that brings us closer to one another.

This is where the Chaplain's presence quietly fits in. A Law Enforcement Chaplain is simply to accompany, to pray and to guide . The role is grounded in listening, confidentiality, and the belief that every person deserves a place to be fully heard, regardless of background, faith or tradition. Whether someone seeks a moment of reflection, a private conversation, or simply a calm space amid the noise of the everyday life, the Chaplain's door is open to all.

In a profession marked by urgency, split second decisions and responsibility, it is easy to forget the importance of slowing down enough to notice our own needs. The Chaplaincy stands as a gentle reminder that we are here to support and strengthen each other every step of the way, God is present in all our lives and is part of everything that we do. God is made present in the actions and interactions that we have daily.

May this blessed season bring you moments of rest, renewed strength, and the reassurance that your service matters more than words can express. You are appreciated, supported, loved and remembered not just today, but all year long. First by the almighty God and secondly everyone you encounter and your family and friends.

May this New Year bring Health, Peace, Joy and blessings to you and your families.

Rev. Fr. Aristidis Arizi
MDSO Chaplain

The WELLNESS CORNER

January 2026 Brings New Opportunities for your Physical Wellness!

The Five Star Wellness Initiative in 2026 brings you a Shredded Sheriff's Office Challenge. Test yourself and your 6 person team of to support those in your Unit or Bureau to see how much body fat your team can lose in 12 weeks. Measure your composition at the fitness center on the InBody between January 15 and 23 to get assessed for a three month team building and fat loss journey. You will be glad you did… It's another opportunity to reset your habits and improve your overall health.

We are working on establishing a Chapter with Toastmasters to improve your professional presentation skills. This new opportunity will help you write your speeches, polish your presentation skills and help your impromptu speaking skills. Keep your email eyes open for that announcement this year!

We also are featuring a new outdoor training performance locker at the Sheriff's Training Center- We want you to have options to train outdoors with plenty of space for your fitness goals. The Performance Locker is from Beaverfit International. The purpose of this new opportunity is to offer options for training in large groups to have items like kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells, jump ropes, and medicine balls to improve power production and overall strength development. If you are an individual that wants access to this container or you are responsible for teaching in a group setting this is a great addition to provide options for instruction. We can train at least 90 people around the container when it is organized to its capacity.

OPERATIONAL SHIELD

Devotional

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

Recent Retirements

MDSO recently said farewell to 31 employees (20 sworn deputies and 11 professional staff) who retired after periods of service ranging from 36 to 8 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

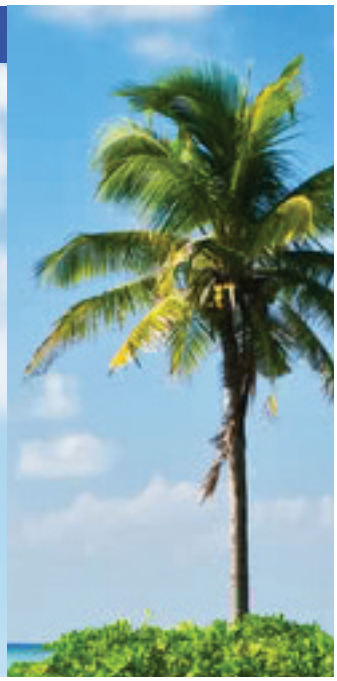
Lieutenant Mishka Lahiff 33
Lieutenant Babette Rox 24
Sergeant Robert Eichler 33
Sergeant Diana D. Fuentes 27
Sergeant Diego O. Gomez 33
Deputy Kenneth Bustos 30
Deputy Gary Cadet 22
Deputy Joseph Diaz 23
Deputy Jorge A. Ghitis 23
Deputy Gary Gobin 33
Deputy Claudia Larrosa 20
Deputy Emilio Macias 29
Deputy James A. Mc Donald 35
Deputy Mauricio Mejia 12
Deputy Jean Pompee 27
Deputy Stephanie Sampson-Byrd 23
Deputy Edward Perry Smith 29
Deputy Hector J. Torres 33
Deputy Keith White 28
Deputy Louis Yanes 33

Continued on page 15

Recent Retirements

Professional Staff

School Crossing Guard Cesar Arana 10
Police Records Technician 1 Harriet Avila 27
School Crossing Guard Cynthia Brown 25
Accountant 3 Angela Diaz 24
Court Support Specialist Ismael Gonzalezs 33
Imaging Records Technician Luis Mena 25
Secretary Yolanda Nunez 26
Clerk 3 Mayratta Pena 36
Police Crime Analysis Specialist Elaine Rahming 26
School Crossing Guard Gregorio Santana 8
Police Records Technician 1 Mary Smith 34



HELP IS AVAILABLE.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS CLOSE TO HOME

Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz

Members of our community are forced into human trafficking and often go undetected. They are forced into sex and labor trafficking within our neighborhoods and our businesses.

If you're a victim or suspect you know one, report a tip, even anonymously, by calling the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP to 233733.

Thank You Blood Donors!

The Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office and OneBlood held a successful blood drive at the Fred Taylor Headquarters Building on Wednesday, November 5, 2025. Special thanks are extended to the donors listed below for helping save lives!

Division Chief Javier I. Ruiz
Major George S. Perera
Lieutenant Joseph E. Kelly
Sergeant Guillermo Delgado
Sergeant Jerry W. Davila Garcia
Sergeant Thomas S. Martinez
Sergeant Michael R. Scott
Sergeant Bianca M. Soto Lalane
Deputy Carlos Catillo
Deputy John P. Childress
Deputy General Counsel Erik Morales
Deputy Luis E. Reyes Jr.
Deputy Luis J. Sierra
MDSO Background Investigator Tasha Bourne
Secretary Tracy Cardentey
Criminalist 1 Evelio M. Feito
Imaging Records Technician Jeffrey H. Johnson
MDSO Property & Evidence Specialist Helena Y. Lyons
Mr. Jesus Moreno
Crime Scene Technician 1 Rory Narinesingh
Police Records Technician 1 Amauri Padro
Police Crime Scene Technician Lixanette Ramirez
Mr. Jason Sandager
MDSO Intelligence Analyst Rodrigo A. Sepulveda

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Sergeant Erin Alfonso, Editor
IO Brian Ballou, Feature Writer
GT Juan A. Perez, Creative Designer

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