

FLORIDA SHERIFFS & DEPUTY SHERIFFS

APB

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ALL POINTS BULLETIN

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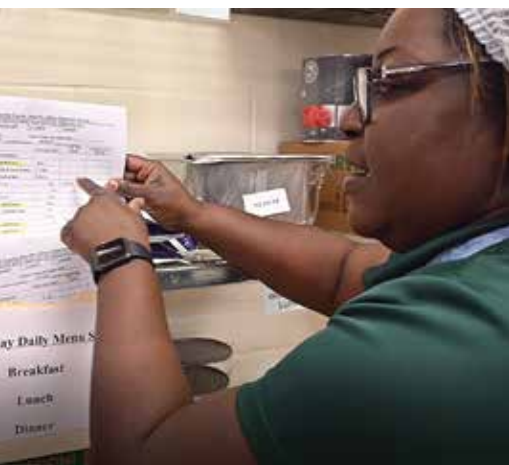
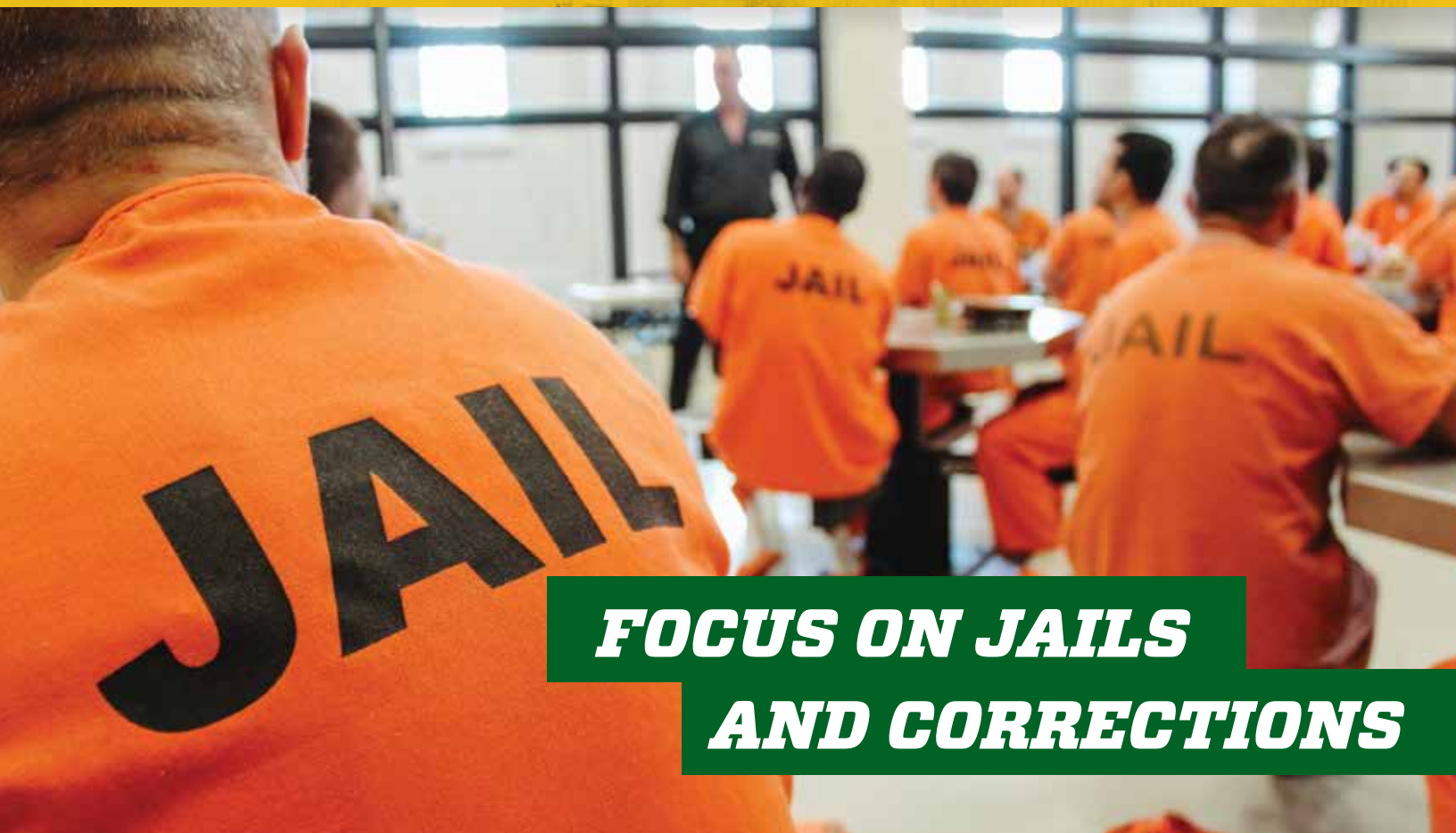
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FLORIDA SHERIFFS & DEPUTY SHERIFFS

APB ★ 2020
ALL POINTS BULLETIN

All Points Bulletin is published quarterly by the Florida Sheriffs Association in spring, summer, fall and winter. The content of APB is intended to reflect the opinions of various criminal justice professionals and those who serve law enforcement, which means articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Florida Sheriffs Association. We welcome articles and topics of interest to the law enforcement and corrections practitioner. To request writing guidelines or information on advertising, please email the editor or contact us at the address at right.



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FDSA CONTINUES GROWTH, WELCOMES (BACK) NEW PRESIDENT



**BY KEITH DEAN
DIRECTOR, FLORIDA
DEPUTY SHERIFFS
ASSOCIATION**

Last month, I had the pleasure to update Florida sheriffs about the progress and impact of the Florida Deputy

Sheriffs Association. Last year was significant for our association, and I was pleased to share the good news at the FSA Winter Conference in Pasco County.

It is hard to believe that what started as a dream is now an organization with 13,000 members, which represents one-third of all the deputies in Florida. And so far in 2020, we already have a commitment from one sheriff to bring his entire agency onboard this fiscal year. That is amazing!

Thank you to all the individual members, as well as the sheriffs who have signed up their entire offices, for your support so we can continue to provide the many benefits of FDSA membership.

In other news from the FSA conference, our board has elected Franklin County Sheriff A.J. Smith as FDSA president. As many of you remember, Sheriff Smith was a deputy for many years, served as chief deputy in Walton County and was the first executive director of our association. In fact, he was instrumental in the first few years of its existence. Sheriff Smith succeeds Sheriff Gordon Smith of Bradford County, who held the office for seven years and moves to immediate past president.

Flagler County Sheriff Rick Staly will serve as vice president, Bradford County Maj. Brad Smith will serve as treasurer and Citrus County Sheriff Mike Prendergast will serve as secretary.

This association was again active in providing for the immediate needs of members in 2019. We paid more than \$100,000 in benefits last year, including to the family of a Pinellas deputy who was killed while off duty and to a Putnam deputy who lost his foot. While these are tragic events, I am grateful for the benefits their families received because of their FDSA membership.

In addition to providing direct FDSA benefits, we were able to distribute more than \$50,000 through our Lend A Hand program. Lend A Hand typically provides \$1,000 checks to those in need or to their families – sometimes the same day. These funds are raised through the generosity of individuals, sheriffs offices and corporate sponsors. Last year, we raised more than \$40,000, with every dollar going directly to the deputies or their families. There are no administrative fees or expenses associated with this account. I am very proud that these funds are kept separate from all other FDSA accounts so that your contributions go directly and completely to those in need.

Thank you for helping to make that happen, and for getting this year off to a great start. We have already raised \$30,000, including a \$10,000 gift from our friends at Verizon. There is no way we could do this without partnerships with companies like Verizon. This is their second \$10,000 contribution, and I can't

thank them enough for their support.

We also served our members with enhanced memberships with legal services. We represented more than 50 deputies in the last 12 months in shootings, use-of-force issues and internal affairs investigations. In October, we provided an across-the-board price reduction for those sheriffs purchasing the legal benefit for all of their sworn officers.

Again, it is a service we hope is not used, but it has proven invaluable to those facing legal issues.

Finally, we understand the growing need to ensure that our members are receiving the mental health care they need to be safe and productive on the job. That is why we are focusing on deputy mental health issues in 2020.

So far, we have held two regional classes on resilience training to help combat PTSD and are sponsors of a national mental health conference this spring. We have also partnered with Safe Call Now, a 24/7 hotline that deputies can call and talk directly to an experienced first responder who has been highly trained to deal with those in crisis. After the initial call, Safe Call Now provides contact information for mental health professionals at local clinics who accept the deputy's health insurance.

This is a huge priority for us, and I hope you take advantage of upcoming opportunities to learn more.

Thank you for making the FDSA so successful and allowing us to serve deputies across the state. We could not do it without you. ★

FMLA: A PRIMER ON THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT - PART III



**BY WAYNE EVANS,
FSA GENERAL COUNSEL**

In this article, we review FMLA leave for particular circumstances, such as birth, adoption, or foster care of a child. Leave requested for treatment of

substance abuse and military caregiver will also be addressed.

LEAVE FOR PREGNANCY OR BIRTH

A husband and wife who are eligible for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave and are employed by the same employer may be limited to a combined total of 12 weeks of leave during any 12-month period if the leave is taken for the birth of the employee's son or daughter or to care for the child after birth; for placement of a son or daughter or to care for the child after birth; for placement of a son or daughter with the employees for adoption or foster care or to care for the child after placement; or to care for an employee's parent with a serious health condition. This limitation is intended to eliminate any incentive for employers to refuse to hire married couples. It does not apply where

the reason for the leave is the serious health condition of either the husband or wife, or the serious health condition of the child.

Additionally, each employee's remaining FMLA allotment is still available for other covered absences. An unintended consequence of this Department of Labor regulation is that unmarried couples working for the same employer are entitled to more leave for the birth or placement of a child than are married couples.

LEAVE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse may be a serious health condition if the employee has a serious health condition involving inpatient care or continuing medical treatment as defined in 29 C.F.R. §§ 825.113 through 825.115. Leave under the FMLA, however, may be taken for treatment of alcoholism or substance abuse only in accordance with the instructions of a health care provider. The FMLA does not apply to absences caused by drug or alcohol use outside of treatment. In other words, an employee isn't permitted to take FMLA leave simply because he is an alcoholic and cannot make it to work. On the other hand, an employee may take FMLA leave to care for a covered family member who is receiving treatment for substance abuse.

Treatment for substance abuse does not prevent an employer from taking

employment action against an employee. Although the employer may not take action against the employee because the employee has exercised his or her right to take FMLA leave for treatment, if the employer has an established policy, applied in a non-discriminatory manner that has been communicated to all employees, which provides that under certain circumstances an employee may be terminated for substance abuse, the employee may be terminated pursuant to that policy whether or not the employee is presently taking FMLA leave.

It is important to note that this provision increases the importance of consistent application of the Sheriff's Office's substance abuse policy, including the discipline imposed for policy violations. Uneven application of such a policy will increase the Sheriff's Office's risk of liability. Also, retaliating against an employee who takes leave for substance abuse treatment will invite claims under the FMLA or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

LEAVE FOR MILITARY CAREGIVERS

Eligible employees are entitled to FMLA leave for up to 26 weeks during a single 12-month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, child (of any age), parent, or next of kin of the covered service member.

A **covered servicemember** means:

A current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or

A husband and wife who are eligible for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave and are employed by the same employer may be limited to a combined total of 12 weeks of leave during any 12-month period...

Reserves, who has a serious illness incurred in the line of duty for which he or she is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is on the temporary disability retired list for a serious injury or illness; or

A covered veteran who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a serious injury or illness. To be covered, the veteran must have been a member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable at any time during the five-year period prior to the first date the eligible employee takes FMLA leave to care for the covered veteran.

In turn, for purposes of this provision, a **serious injury or illness** means:

In the case of a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, an injury or illness that was incurred in the line of duty on active duty or that existed before the active duty but was aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty, and that renders the member unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank, or rating; and,

In the case of a covered veteran, an injury or illness that was incurred by the member in the line of duty while on active duty and manifested itself before or after the member became a veteran and is:

- i. a continuation of a serious injury or illness that was incurred while the veteran was a member of the Armed Forces and rendered the servicemember unable to perform the duties of the servicemember's office, grade, rank or rating; or
- ii. a physical or mental condition for which the veteran has received a Service-Related Disability Rating of 50% or greater from the U.S. Department of

- Veterans Affairs; or
- iii. a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs the covered veteran's ability to secure or follow a gainful occupation by reason of a disability related to military service or would do so absent treatment; or
- iv. an injury, including a psychological injury, on the basis of which the covered veteran has been enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

A **next of kin of a covered servicemember** means the nearest blood relative, other than the covered servicemember's spouse, parent, son or daughter, in the following order of priority: blood relatives who have been granted legal custody of the covered servicemember by court decree or statutory provisions, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and first cousins, unless the covered servicemember has specifically designated in writing another blood relative as his or her nearest blood relative for purposes of military caregiver leave under the FMLA.

The 12-month period during which leave may be taken begins on the first day the employee takes leave and ends 12 months from that date. An employee may only take 26 weeks of leave during a single 12-month period, but the leave entitlement is on a per-servicemember, per-injury basis. It should be noted that leave based on care for a covered servicemember can be combined with FMLA protected leave — provided that no more than 12 weeks of leave is permitted for the alternative reason (e.g., 10 weeks to care for a child and 16 weeks to care for a servicemember is allowed, but the reverse is not permitted).

As with other types of leave, the regulations permit employers to require an

employee to support his or her leave request with a "sufficient certification." Employers may require that certain necessary information be provided by a certification from one of the following authorized health care providers: (1) a Department of Defense (DOD) health care provider; (2) a VA health care provider; (3) a DOD TRICARE network authorized private health care provider; or (4) a DOD non-network TRICARE authorized private health care provider. The regulations also set forth the specific information an employer may request from an employee (or the authorized health care provider) in order to support the employee's request for leave.

The Department of Labor has developed a form (WH-385) that may be used for medical certification. In all instances, the information on any required certification must relate only to the serious injury or illness for which the current need for leave exists.

In the next article we discuss disciplinary action, including termination, of an employee who requests or who is taking FMLA. As will be seen, an employee may not be disciplined for requesting or using FMLA leave, but an employee is not immune from action being taken for reasons independent of the leave.



Questions regarding this legal issue should be directed to a sheriff's legal adviser or may otherwise be directed to Wayne Evans, general counsel for Florida Sheriffs Association. He may be reached at the Tallahassee office of Allen, Norton & Blue, P.A. at (850) 561-3503 or by email at revans@anblaw.com. Mr. Evans expresses his appreciation to Allen, Norton & Blue, P.A. Associate Taylor Greene, who contributed significantly to this article.



WINTER CONF

Sheriff Chris Nocco and the Pasco Sheriff's Office hosted the 2020 Florida Sheriffs Association Winter Conference at Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel. Sheriffs from around the state, along with their staffs and representatives, met to share best practices, get legal updates and recognize achievement.

The sheriffs heard from experts from the field, partners and elected officials including Daryl R. McCrary, the special agent in charge of the ATF Tampa Field Division; Sen. Rick Scott; and two U.S. attorneys, Maria Chapa Lopez from the middle district of Florida and Lawrence Keefe, from the northern district of Florida.

The sheriffs will meet again at the FSA Sheriffs Summer Conference, hosted by the Lee County Sheriffs Office, July 26-29 at the Hyatt Coconut Point in Bonita Springs.



The Florida Sheriffs Association presents a check to the Florida Sheriff's Explorer Association.



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- 1 The family of Harry Weaver receives Honorary Sheriff Award from FSA President Sheriff Bob Gualtieri and Suwannee County Sheriff Sam St. John.
- 2 Sen. Rick Scott talks to Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd.
- 3 The SaferWatch team
- 4 Debbie Rhody and Allen Durham from United Badges Insurance Services with FSA Executive Director Steve Casey



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CONFERENCE RECAP



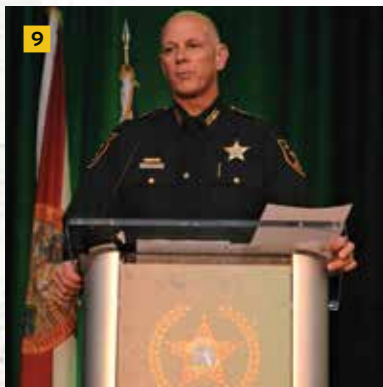
5 Florida Deputy Sheriffs Association Past President Sheriff Gordon Smith receives an award from Executive Director Keith Dean.

6 The FirstNet team

7 The Florida Sheriffs Risk Management Fund team

8 Rancher Destiny shares her story with conference attendees as Charlotte County Sheriff Bill Prummell looks on.

9 FSA President and Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri addresses sheriffs gathered at the winter conference.



Rick Swearingen, commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, hosts a training session on DNA labs and sheriffs.



WINTER CONFERENCE RECAP



CORRECTIONS OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Orange County Master Corrections Officer 2020 Corrections Officer of the Year

Orange County Master Corrections Officer Geovanie Hernandez, the Florida Sheriff's Association Corrections Officer of the Year for 2020, saved two lives in one week.

On June 2, Hernandez was sitting at his home with his son, Jonah, then 4, when he smelled smoke.

"When I opened the door, the smoke kind of came in," Hernandez, a military veteran, said. He evacuated his son and dog from the apartment. A security guard told him someone with medical issues was trapped inside.

"I gave him my son and told him that was the most important thing he was going to hold today," Hernandez said. "And I ran in."

Hernandez pulled the man out to safety, then went back into the fire and used a fire extinguisher to fight the fire until the firefighters arrived. The victim, 63, survived.

Five days later, Hernandez showed his calm heroism again. A student at the firing range was injured during an accidental discharge of a firearm.

"Before he hit the ground, I already had my hands on him," said Hernandez, who has 11 years' experience in law enforcement. The student was airlifted to a hospital with Hernandez by his side, and ultimately survived.

Orange County Corrections Chief Louis Quinones called Hernandez a role model.

"He's definitely a hero in my eyes and in many others," Quinones said.

The Corrections Officer of the Year Award is sponsored by United Badges Insurance Services and presented at the FSA Winter Conference to an officer who has demonstrated exceptional service. During the banquet, Hernandez received a standing ovation from more than 500 law enforcement attendees and supporters.

Allen Durham, president and CEO of the company, said that Hernandez was a "prime example" of what the sheriff's association looks for in an award winner.

Hernandez said he was honored to be recognized, but it wasn't just all him.

"I do nothing alone," he said. "I don't know everything. I pretend I do sometimes, but I don't know everything. You can ask my wife."



DISPATCHERS OF THE YEAR

Suwannee County Dispatchers Wheeler and McCathern Dispatchers of the Year

It's not always the sheriff's personnel you see on the streets or in jails saving lives. Sometimes, it's the people you only hear.

Suwannee County Public Safety Telecommunicators Brittany Wheeler and Taylor McCathern are the Florida Sheriffs Association 2020 Dispatchers of the Year.

On Aug. 14, McCathern took a call from a woman who found a suicide note from her husband, who left in the couple's SUV. She didn't know where he could be, and he wasn't responding to calls or texts.

Wheeler started asking questions.

"You know him," she told the caller. "You are the one person who does know him. You tell me where he's at."

Wheeler and McCathern were able to determine the man may have gone to property the couple owned in the north part of Suwannee County. The problem was that the woman didn't have the address.

Wheeler turned to the county property appraiser's office, but couldn't find it.

"We had to reassure her at that point that we're there for her," McCathern said. "We're not going to let you go through this alone."

The pair then looked at maps, following the woman's directions to the property turn by turn until they found it. The dispatchers directed the deputy on the ground to the area, where he found the man's SUV.

The deputy was able to find the man, who was attempting suicide. He was taken to a mental health facility.

"This event could have had a very different outcome if it had not been for Taylor and Brittany's professional training and their willingness to go the extra mile to help figure out where this man was," Sheriff Sam St. John said. "If they hadn't gone above and beyond, this man wouldn't be here today."

Dionne Hernandez, Suwannee County communications director, called the pair a great example of teamwork.

"Thank you for choosing this profession for the right reasons," Hernandez said.

Both say they're blessed to be a part of the Suwannee County Sheriff's Office family.

"That's what it is here," Wheeler said. "A family."

The Dispatcher of the Year Award is sponsored by L3Harris Technologies.

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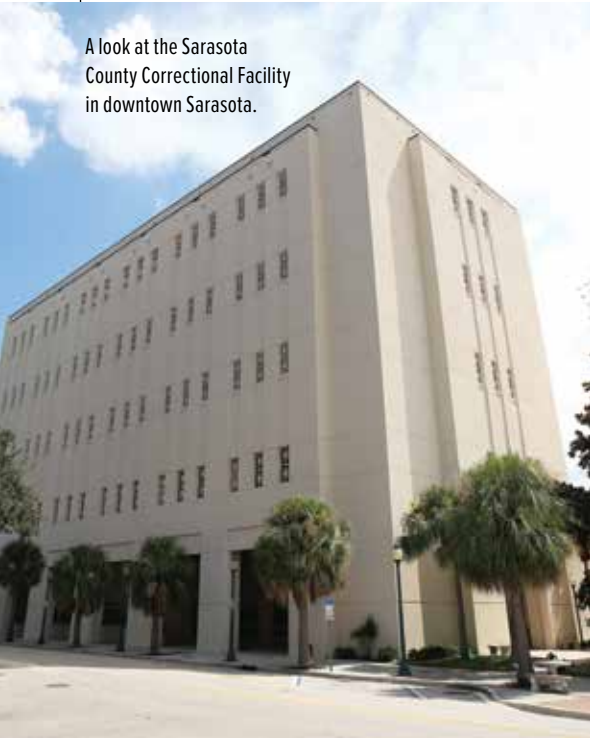
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RESOURCES



SARASOTA SHERIFF PREPARES INMATES FOR RE-ENTRY

A look at the Sarasota County Correctional Facility in downtown Sarasota.



As we move into the New Year, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is moving into its eleventh year under the leadership of Sheriff Tom Knight and celebrating more than a decade of successfully challenging the status quo of traditional law enforcement.

In 2009, Sheriff Knight launched the first addiction recovery pod at the Sarasota County Correctional Facility.

There are more than 50 inmate programs like the recovery pod in the Sarasota County Correctional Facility at no cost to taxpayers. Thanks to strong public partnerships, support from community volunteers and buy-in from personnel and inmates alike, the addiction recovery pod became a model for other jails around the state and throughout

the country.

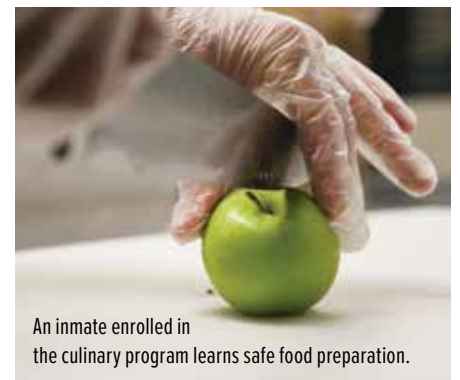
Over the next 10 years, the agency's Corrections Bureaus continued to evolve, eventually incorporating an entire program services team, including treatment specialists and a statistician to help manage and track growth. From faith-based programming to men's parenting, anger management, financial literacy and GED classes, the facility soon became a productive environment for physical and spiritual wellness. As the programs gained momentum, inmates grew more interested and many of them said that coming to the facility is what saved their lives. But with so many programs under one roof, coupled with the challenges of classification and the environmental design of an outdated facility, the programs team found themselves with too many programs and too little time. It was in 2018 when staff decided a new pod was on the horizon.

Personnel began by looking at the most common issues facing inmates upon release, particularly those who left incarceration only to return days or weeks later. These inmates all seemed to face the same barriers including substance abuse, mental health issues, educational challenges, employment opportunities, transportation, state identification, and access to and an understanding of community resources. Special attention was given to identifying similar issues for veteran inmates experiencing recidivism, such as a lack of access to resources, an understanding of the G.I. Bill, Veterans Affairs and mental health programming.

Personnel researched and visited other

facilities across the state and the country, where they learned about medicated-assisted treatment, homeless and veterans' initiatives, ID card programs and more. Several months of planning and fine-tuning coupled with the support and guidance of agency leadership led to the opening in January 2019 of the Sarasota County Correctional Facility's inaugural Re-Entry Pod. With a direct supervision design, the Re-entry Pod houses up to 48 inmates and is staffed 24/7. Within the common area, there are more than a dozen tables and chairs, a commissary vending machine, televisions, classroom, and a sports and recreation area. Inmates take pride in their pod and in their living areas, where the floors are always clean and cells neatly kept. Designated within the Re-Entry Pod are two cells specific to veteran inmates. As of today, eight inmates are part of the Veterans Housing Unit, which is complete with hand-painted artwork of the American flag, combat boots and dog tags. From the ceiling hangs the United States, Florida, the five military and P.O.W. flags.

As part of the Veterans Housing Unit, inmates are evaluated and informed of job



An inmate enrolled in the culinary program learns safe food preparation.

opportunities and their qualification for G.I. Bill benefits. They receive regular support and counseling from volunteers who are members of the military and veteran communities, as well as guidance from Sarasota County Veterans Services.

Other inmates enrolled in the Re-entry Pod attend mandatory courses, including financial literacy, job readiness, life skills, public speaking, AA and NA, parenting and more. Thanks to a unique partnership with the University of South Florida's criminology department, college students visit the pod throughout their semester and present a final project to inmates and corrections personnel on re-entry initiatives and recidivism reduction. The program is intended to help give emerging college graduates the opportunity to study inside a real corrections facility, and hopefully stay and work locally after graduation.

Re-entry Pod inmates can enroll in the Safe Staff Food Handler Certificate Program, which certifies them to work in a food service facility. Graduation from the program equips the inmate with a certificate good for three years from the date of training. If the culinary path does not interest them, inmates can take part in one of several job fairs where the day starts with guidance and insight from local CEOs and rolls into job interviews by employers looking for candidates after incarceration. Inmates build their own résumé, practice interviewing skills, and learn how to make eye contact and shake hands. During the agency's first job fair, 33 career opportunities were offered to 30 inmates.

Before they can apply however, most inmates need identification; a luxury often underappreciated by those of us who have it as it is inaccessible to many who do not. Several times a year, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles brings their mobile unit known as Florida Licensing on Wheels, or FLOW, to the Sarasota County Correctional



Inmates attend AA and NA meetings in the Addiction Recovery Pod.

Facility. Here inmates are given the unique opportunity to obtain a basic ID card or a replacement driver's license. Taking things a step further, personnel also ensure inmates are equipped with a bus pass, when appropriate, through Sarasota County Area Transit. Transportation is one of the most debilitating barriers to reintegration and job placement.

Also on the horizon for the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office are two new positions known as re-entry navigators. These positions are funded through a local community foundation by way of the Criminal Justice Reform Initiative Fund. The re-entry navigator was designed to equip those coming out of incarceration with mental health care and substance abuse treatment, housing, employment and other crucial services that address the root causes of recidivism, with the ultimate goal of no longer ending services for inmates when they walk out the door. Funding was secured in late 2019 and both positions are expected to start in February.

"What my staff has learned over our combined years in law enforcement and corrections, is that we can't arrest our way

out of societal issues," Sheriff Knight said. "Issues like addiction and homelessness have become real challenges for law enforcement so rather than locking people up, shouldn't we be asking ourselves what put them behind bars in the first place and how can we create solutions so they don't show up here again?"

Since inception, more than 30 inmates have successfully completed the Re-entry Pod curriculum, only three of whom have recidivated. While Sheriff Knight reiterates there is no single solution for recidivism, he challenges his staff and other law enforcement agencies to think outside the box.

"Challenge your agencies, your community leaders (both formal and informal), as well as your constituents to stay progressive and start thinking a few steps ahead. We can't solve the world's problems but together in the state of Florida, we can certainly start making an impact within our communities." ★

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE STARTS VETERANS PROGRAM

Sheriff Chad Chronister launched a new initiative known as the Veterans Resurgence Program on Aug. 20 at the Falkenburg Road Jail. The program focuses on providing incarcerated U.S. military veterans with a supportive and constructive environment to bring back their dignity.

"On average, we house more than 3,000 people within our detention facilities in Hillsborough County, and at any given time, more than 60 of these individuals have a military service background," Sheriff Chronister said.

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office will verify each inmate's military status and benefits eligibility. Inmates who are verified veterans that decide to participate in the Veterans Resurgence Program will be educated on pathways to change, including life skills, such as personal money management, finding employment and conflict resolution. Every morning Monday through Friday, the participants will engage in one hour of exercise or meditation. The veterans will also have a mental health and substance abuse risk/needs assessment, as well as group and individual therapy sessions.

Mental health staff from NaphCare and the University of South Florida Master of Social Work program will provide the inmates with a structured eight-week group therapy session on the following areas: managing anger/stress, coping with mood/anxiety issues, transition skills and planning, medical related topics, healing and recovering



from trauma. Each participant will be given a self-inventory assessment at the beginning and end of the eight-week program, as well as a periodic behavioral functioning scale to assess for overall improvement and benefit.

Veterans justice outreach specialists from the VA will assist with benefits for those with an honorable discharge. Community organizations such as the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay will help the veterans find their way back into society.

"We are giving these veterans that ended up in our jails an opportunity to feel proud again. The partnerships we have established will give them the chance to reinvent themselves and get the help they need," Sheriff Chronister said. "This is how we thank them for their service."

On Oct. 15, the first inmates graduated from the program.

"I think some of them are overwhelmed with the fact that they can look back eight weeks and see the progress that they've made," Sheriff Chronister said. "I think a lot of them were humbled, as was I, that someone cares. They want to do the right thing. They just need help getting there, and they now have that helping hand." ★

“We are giving these veterans that ended up in our jails an opportunity to feel proud again. The partnerships we have established will give them the chance to reinvent themselves and get the help they need. This is how we thank them for their service.”

— HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SHERIFF CHAD CHRONISTER



Sheriff Chad Chronister shakes the hand of an inmate from the Veterans Resurgence Program in Hillsborough County. The first inmates graduated from the program Oct. 15.



Inmate art adorns the walls of the housing unit for veterans in Hillsborough County.

IN-HOUSE FOOD, MEDICAL SERVICES IMPACT FAR MORE THAN BOTTOM LINE FOR HIGHLANDS COUNTY JAIL

Two of a jail's most important – and most costly – responsibilities involve keeping the inmates fed and healthy. While many correctional facilities contract for these services, the Highlands County Sheriff's Office does not. And handling those two services in-house has impacts that go far beyond the bottom line.

Full Bellies Mean Fewer Problems

Katrina Thomas oversees food services for the Highlands County Jail. She joined the agency eight years ago, bringing 16 years of restaurant experience, and has used that experience to keep costs low while still providing meals that the inmates – an average of 460 a day – say are much better

than what they have had at other jails.

She also sources as much of the food as possible from local vendors, helping put taxpayer dollars back into the community, getting in-season vegetables from Miller Farms in Lake Placid and citrus from Maxwell Groves in Avon Park.

As a result, inmates get three nutritionally balanced meals (the menu is approved by a nutritionist) for an average of less than \$1.90 a day per inmate.

"We buy in bulk and we use some of the local farms (for) fresh fruits, fresh vegetables throughout the year," Thomas said. "I go through our menus and get with the vendors to see what's on sale and buy in bulk within the expiration dates. It seems to keep the cost down."



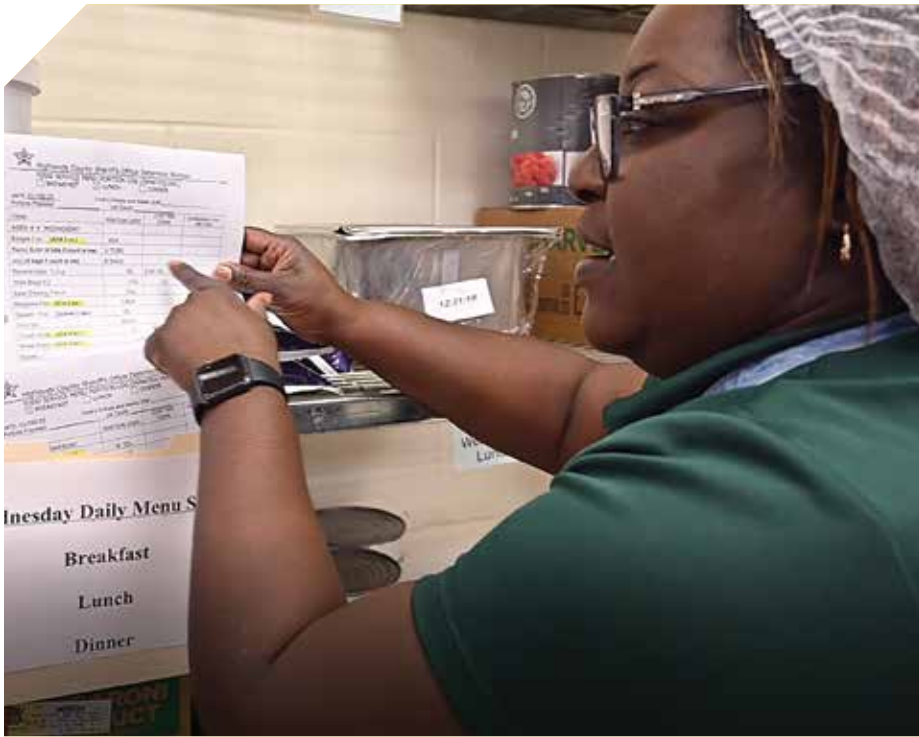
While saving money is important, the fact the jail kitchen puts out a quality product is just as important to the deputies who have to supervise the inmates because full bellies make for less problems.

"The food you serve in the jail is important, not only for meeting the nutritional needs of the inmates, but also for security," said Maj. Tim Lethbridge, commander of the Detention Bureau. "By consistently providing nutritious meals and not leaving the inmates hungry, we avoid other problems. We avoid fights. We avoid security issues (like) disturbances and protests. It's a way to save money, keep our staff safe and keep the inmates we are responsible for safe."

Medical Unit a 'Sentinel' Facility

The Medical Unit of the Highlands County Jail is staffed by 12 nurses – at least two on duty at all times – and is augmented by a physician's assistant four days a week and a medical doctor once a week. In addition to the day-to-day care of the inmates, the





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**— MAJ. TIM LETHBRIDGE,
COMMANDER OF THE HIGHLANDS
COUNTY DETENTION BUREAU**



counties in Florida that did not have any hepatitis A cases. While that is no longer the case, we are still at extremely low numbers for a county our size.”

Highlands County has seen only six reported cases of the disease since the start of 2018, which is significantly fewer than other counties. Nearby Okeechobee County had 23 reported cases in 2018. Flagler County, which is the county closest in population to Highlands, had 14.

Nursing Administrator Lena Lyall credits Nursing Operations Coordinator Crystal Parker with the program’s success. “Crystal is the one who came up with the program,” Lyall said. “We saw the outbreak and called the health department and got the state to provide the vaccine.”

All inmates get a physical within three or four days of being booked into the jail, and Parker strives to get all of them the initial hepatitis A vaccine dose within two weeks of booking in order to immunize as many inmates as possible. “She’s given over 1,000 shots,” Lyall said.

While most of the inmates are not in the jail long enough to get the second dose six months after the first, just the initial dose has shown an 88-95 percent efficacy rate. So far, 50 inmates have gotten the two doses.

“The way this really benefits the community is that one of the primary jobs available to someone with a criminal history ... is in food service,” Major Lethbridge said. “That’s the primary method that hepatitis A is communicated. By getting on top of that and vaccinating that population, I really feel the medical division played a significant role in combatting the hepatitis A outbreak and protecting the entire community.

“Our medical department is, in my opinion, a sentinel medical facility for the whole community. People who regularly come to jail are often not getting any kind of medical treatment anywhere else. The jail is very important for community health by identifying outbreaks and helping prevent outbreaks.” ★

medical staff launched a program last year to vaccinate for hepatitis A in response to a statewide outbreak that began in 2018 and exploded in 2019.

“When (the outbreak) started happening, our medical unit reached out to the Health Department and was able to procure a steady supply of vaccines,” Lethbridge said. “We can’t force anybody to get vaccinated, but (the nurses) did a good job of selling it and the vast majority of inmates at the jail accepted the vaccine. For the longest time, Highlands County was one of the few

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH JOB TRAINING IN JAIL



In law enforcement, it is frustrating to see the same people returning to jail time after time. Too often, a life of crime is a way of life.

The Polk County Sheriff's Office partnered with Heart for Winter Haven, a local nonprofit, to create positive change in the lives of inmates at our South County Jail through Jobs for Life, a faith-based job training and placement program. It's a partnership that is making progress.

Our goal is to provide an opportunity for inmates to succeed once they are released from jail. The program helps inmates improve their self-confidence and gives them a biblical understanding of work. They develop their character and their vocational plan, work on résumés and take part in mock job interviews. It's a springboard for the participants, so that they can obtain a job and then provide for themselves and their families after they leave jail.

Jail can be a turning point — and the Heart for Winter Haven's Jobs for Life program can show personal value in one's life, and give them an avenue for change and assist them with successful re-entry and aftercare once an inmate is released — helping them become a productive and law-abiding citizen. The program doesn't stop at the jail exit door, it continues through follow up and mentorships in the community.

The staff and volunteers at Heart for Winter Haven are there to train, encourage and assist these individuals through the process — from start to finish. The program is a key component of the 124 job readiness classes that were conducted in the Polk County Jail in 2019.

When an inmate completes the program, their success doesn't just stop with a personal win for them. It's also a win for the community. That's one less person committing crimes, it's one less person returning to jail, and it's one more person making a positive contribution to society.

Other educational Programs

Polk County launched its Keys to Staying Out of Jail inmate educational program in 2012. This program's purpose is to provide inmates with practical and academic



Jobs for Life graduate Brandon House poses with Jonathan Wingree and Brad Beatty, both of Heart for Winter Haven.

education focused on improving their quality of life and helping them become productive, crime-free citizens of the community. The two main components of the program are television programming and classroom training. Television programming covers topics such as math, science, reading, writing, social studies and health education. Educational programs cover a wide range of life skills and practical skills training.

“

Jail can be a turning point — and the Heart for Winter Haven's Jobs for Life program can show personal value in one's life, and give them an avenue for change and assist them with successful re-entry and aftercare once an inmate is released...

”

HERE'S A LIST OF POLK COUNTY'S SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) classes and certifications

- A total of 1,003 inmates received CPR training in 2019.
- A total of 4,033 inmates received CPR training since 2012.

GED (General Educational Development)

- A total of 296 GED classes conducted in 2019.
- A total of 817 GED classes conducted since 2017.

Job Readiness Training

- A total of 124 job readiness classes conducted in 2019.
- A total of 480 job readiness classes conducted since 2012.

Family Integrity Training (FIT)

- A total of 172 FIT sessions conducted in 2019.
- A total of 36 FIT comprehensive courses completed since April 2016.

Faith-Based Program

- A total of 109 inmates graduated the faith-based program in 2019.
- A total of 1,422 inmates graduated the faith-based program since 2006.
- A total of 7,287 inmates have been ministered to through faith-based dorms since 2006.

Baptisms

- A total of 254 inmates were baptized in 2019.
- A total of 3,151 inmates have been baptized since 2006.

Jail Volunteer Activity

- 2019 ministry and education classes: 3,318.
- 2019 jail volunteer hours: 9,824.

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INMATE WALKS MILES TO ATTEND WELDING GRADUATION; 8 RECEIVE AWS CERTIFICATES



six from Walton County — spent the last six weeks learning the trade thanks to a partnership between Walton County Sheriff's Office and Northwest Florida State College.

Tyler Gess, Steven Hurst, Alex Johnson, Lance Johnson, Lorenzo Macias, Edward Robinson, Timothy Sanders, and Gary Triche were taught various types of welding during the six-week course including flux core, stick and tig welding.

For the first time since the program's birth, all eight men passed the American Welding Society certification test.

"We are proud of their accomplishment," said Sheriff Michael Adkinson. "They've earned it. Now, it's their choice to put it to work."

Northwest Florida State College Director of Professional and Workforce Training announced the men will be able to apply their certificate towards 400 contact hours required for the flux core welding course if they choose to attend the college in Niceville.

"We are proud of their accomplishment. They've earned it. Now, it's their choice to put it to work."

— WALTON COUNTY SHERIFF MICHAEL ADKINSON

It's nearly six miles from the Walton County Courthouse to the Walton County Jail. To drive it takes just minutes. But, to walk it? Ask Steven Hurst.

Hurst is part of the seventh class of inmates to graduate from the welding program while incarcerated at the Walton County Jail.

On Dec. 11, the staff held a ceremony to recognize their completion of the program. Hurst, who was released Dec. 10, walked from a hearing at the courthouse to the jail to attend.

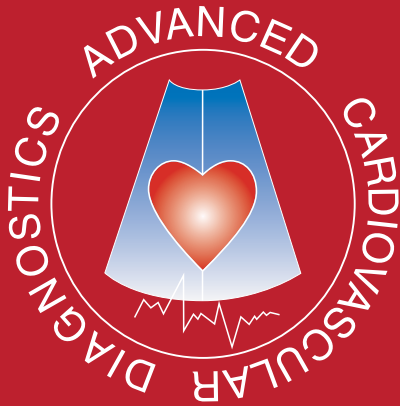
This time, wearing a visitor badge rather than stripes.

"I appreciate the opportunity to be here," Hurst said.

Including Hurst, eight men — two from Escambia County and

After the ceremony, students were given the opportunity to interview with the Emerald Transformer's Hiring Specialist.

"Our mission is to reduce recidivism through recovery," Sheriff Adkinson said. "Offering these opportunities is a big part of our commitment to that goal." ★



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