Our vision is a safer Highlands County where citizens and law enforcement are joined together; the rights of all persons are respected; and community values are reflected.

The Highlands County Sheriff’s Office is committed to protecting life, property, and individual rights while maintaining peace and order.

Our promise is to deliver ethical and effective services to all of Highlands County in a professional and responsive manner that demonstrates our commitment to honoring the public trust.

Multi-agency sweep nets more than 70 arrests

For more than a year, the Highlands County Sheriff’s Office has worked with local, state and federal partners on a massive operation targeting drug dealers and violent criminals in Highlands County. Dubbed Operation Triple Play, the long-term investigation was under the umbrella of an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) that included the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Federal Bureau of Investigations; the US Attorney’s Office.

Starling earns Certified Public Manager title

Keith Starling, captain of the Criminal Investigations Division of the Highlands County Sheriff’s Office, recently graduated the Florida Certified Public Manager curriculum through the Askew School of Public Administration at Florida State University. Starling joins Sheriff Paul Blackman, Major Darin Hood, Captain Kenny Johnson, Captain John Barcinas and Lieutenant Jack Bailey as holders of the prestigious Certified Public Manager designation among the HCSO staff.

Text to 911 service now live

The Highlands County Sheriff’s Consolidated Central Dispatch Center is pleased to announce that text to 911 is now available in Highlands County. The service works with all carriers, although the phone must have an active data or text plan. “Text to 911 is a valuable service we have been working on getting in place for a while,” Sheriff Paul Blackman said. “It is important for our citizens to have
# Quarterly Statistical Information

## Administration and Court

### New Member Hires
- Civilian: 4
- Sworn: 7
- Part-time civilian: 0
- Part-time sworn: 0
- Applications received: 71
- Applications processed: 44

Payroll transactions processed: 2,563
Payable checks processed: 675
P-card purchases: 982

### Information Services requests
- Total: 961

### Court-Related Services
- Cases in court: 2,795
- Inmates taken to court: 1,007
- Arrests by bailiffs: 3
- Persons through security: 2,203

### Judicial/Civil Process Services
- Received: 855
- Served: 826
- Active: 29

## Law Enforcement

- Administrative calls: 40,152
- 911 calls: 13,964
- Offense reports: 1,663

### Computer Aided Dispatch
- Total: 30,330
  - HCSO (62%): 18,712
  - SPD (17%): 5,194
  - HCFR (16%): 4,827
  - LPPD (5%): 1,591

### Warrants
- Received/Processed: 540
- Served: 388
- Active: 1,640

### Items into evidence
- Total: 3,006

### Evidence items disposed
- Total: 631

### K-9 searches/reviews
- Total: 193

### Arrests by patrol
- Total: 391

### Traffic citations issued
- Total: 581

### DUI arrests
- Total: 14

## Detention

- Inmates booked: 656
- Inmates released: 616
- Average daily jail population: 402
- Alcohol breath tests: 21
- Instructional program hours: 52
- Inmate transport miles: 10,607
- Transports to state prison: 26
- CMP participants: 1

- Dollars saved in labor: $1,232.64
- Dollars collected in fees: $300
- Net commissary earnings: $31,900.70

- Inmate meals served: 111,978
- Avg. food cost per day per inmate: $2.12
- Medical fees charged: $160,820.01
- Medical fees collected: $4,665.70
- Subsistence fees charged: $60,156
- Subsistence fees collected: $17,222.41
- Inmate per-diem charged: $13,200
- Inmate per-diem collected: $6,999.57
- Inmate labor hours at SO: 8,260
- Inmate labor hours other: 1,631
- Labor costs saved (total): $254,326.16

## Administration and Court (continued)

### Criminal Investigation Unit cases
- Total: 101

### Investigations open (total)
- Total: 176

### SOU narcotics arrests
- Total: 55

### Crime Scene lab cases
- Total: 108

### Crime Scene call-outs
- Total: 93

### Cell phones/computers processed
- Total: 77

### SVU cases from DCF
- Total: 290

### SVU cases open
- Total: 69

### Current sex offenders/predators
- Total: 186

### Sex offender/predator arrests
- Total: 50

### COPS Unit offense reports
- Total: 46

### COPS Unit arrests
- Total: 51

### Business/Residential security surveys
- Total: 1

### Crime Prevention presentations
- Total: 24

### SafetyNet contacts
- Total: 20

### Crime victims served
- Total: 143

### Victims’ Advocate Services
- Total: 626

### Animal Services calls
- Total: 1,073

### Animals impounded
- Total: 690
Marlys Johnson  
Ruth Watterson

This quarter we are putting the Spotlight on HCSO Volunteers Mrs. Marlys Johnson and Mrs. Ruth Watterson. These ladies are of the Maranatha Village Congregation and team up to teach the Word of Christ to the female inmates housed the HCSO Detention Bureau, both has been committed for several years in doing so. When asked why she volunteers, Mrs. Johnson stated that back home in another state her brother passed away in the jail alone, because the jail in that particular state didn’t have what Highlands County Detention Bureau in Florida has, as she found out when she became a volunteer here. Her brother had no one there to lend on or to encourage him face to face and she wanted to ensure that those that are housed in HCSO would know that someone cares.

She and others are here if they are willing to receive help and listen she will do God’s work by spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ in this Jail. It is such an honor for Mrs. Marlys to bring that connection of Jesus to the inmate population with passion. God gave her a very personal reason to do His will as long as she has breath.

Mrs. Ruth stated that her desire is to see that the opportunity of lives being changed by delivering the message of Jesus Christ. When she comes into HCSO to share the Word of God, especially with the females, she knows that it is her calling.

Both women are also mentors that follow the female inmates' spiritual development even after they are released from the jail, whether the inmates are back in society or entering into the Florida Department of Corrections.

---

Manager program is a nationally recognized leadership development program for public managers and supervisors. It is currently offered in 38 states and by the federal government.

The primary goals are to professionalize public management and improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Florida has one of the largest, and most successful, CPM Programs in the country, with nearly 5,500 graduates from more than 100 agencies.

The CPM program consists of 32 days of classroom instruction spread over two years, supplemented by homework assignments and exams.

---

Gator Meat – 2-pound bags for $10. Contact Heather Carr at 402-7286

Land For Sale $8,000 – 2 vacant lots (side by side approx ½ acre) in the Leisure Lakes area of Lake Placid. Physical address 1158 Macaw Ave. Contact Heather Carr at 402-7286

2018 Polaris Ace 150. It has approximately 5 hours on it. It comes with a seatbelt and the seat is adjustable as well as the steering wheel. It also has adjustable speed settings. Asking $4,200. Contact Jenny Edwards at 402-7877
### Employment Anniversaries

#### OCTOBER

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### Promotions & Transfers

**NAME** | **DATE** | **MOVE**
---|---|---
Emily Beck | 07/01/20 | Transferred to Detective in the Criminal Investigations Unit
Michael Todd Harris | 07/01/20 | Transferred as Deputy Sheriff to Field Training Deputy
Jacob Riley | 07/15/20 | Transferred as Deputy Sheriff to Field Training Deputy
Garrett Green | 07/15/20 | Transferred to Deputy Sheriff Trainee
Tristan Ragoodial | 07/15/20 | Transferred to Deputy Sheriff Trainee
Christopher Gunter | 08/10/20 | Assigned as the SWAT Team “Team Leader”
Trey Marley | 08/26/20 | Transferred to Deputy Sheriff in the UPD
Benjamin Toney | 09/09/20 | Transferred to Detective-Tactical Anti-Crime Team in the Crime Suppression Unit
Jason Mulligan | 09/23/20 | Transferred to Deputy Sheriff in the UPD
Teresa Crooks | 09/23/20 | Transferred to Central Records Specialist in the Central Records Division

### College Graduations

**NAME** | **DATE** | **DEGREE**
---|---|---
Jennifer Velez | 12/12/19 | Associate of Science in Criminal Justice Technology at South Florida State College
Kim Gunn | 07/26/20 | Master of Science in Criminal Justice at Troy University

### Academy Graduation

**NAME** | **DATE** | **ACADEMY**
---|---|---
Scott Rowe | 06/21/20 | Corrections Academy at SFSC
Crystal Smith | 06/21/20 | Corrections Academy at SFSC
Allie Edmondson | 06/21/20 | Corrections Academy at SFSC
Glenn Bursted | 07/02/20 | Law Enforcement Academy at SFSC
Kathleen Perez | 07/02/20 | Law Enforcement Academy at SFSC
Bryce Smith | 07/02/20 | Law Enforcement Academy at SFSC
Derrall Escobar | 07/02/20 | Law Enforcement Academy at SFSC

### New Hires

**NAME** | **HIRED** | **POSITION**
---|---|---
Cameron Armstead | 07/15/20 | Detention Deputy
Michael E. Dean | 07/15/20 | Deputy Sheriff Trainee
Alejandro Gamez | 07/15/20 | Deputy Sheriff Trainee
Samuel B. Jacobs | 07/15/20 | Deputy Sheriff Trainee
Johnathan Knight | 07/15/20 | Deputy Sheriff Trainee
Robert L. Neale | 08/03/20 | Background Invest./Polygrapher
David B. Stewart | 08/03/20 | School Resource Officer
Hunter C. Ritenour | 08/17/20 | Cook
Bradley A. Smeal | 08/17/20 | Detention Deputy
Karen A. Lentz | 09/14/20 | Registered Nurse
Andrea Peltier | 09/23/20 | Telecommunicator
4th Annual Bass Tournament
Saturday, March 13, 2021
Safe light until 2 p.m.
Istokpoga Park Boat Ramp, Lake Istokpoga

$125 Per Boat Entry Fee.
Includes Big Bass Entry & Lunch

Each boat is allowed only two anglers,
with at least one being an adult.
No Live Bait / 5 fish bag limit

Bass Tournament
Prizes
1st Place: $1500
2nd Place: $750
3rd Place: $600
4th Place: $500
5th Place: $400
6th Place: $300
7th Place: $200
8th Place: $150
Big Bass: $500

Two fishing shirts will be given to
The first 45 boats preregistered

Tournament proceeds send local children
to the Florida Sheriff’s Youth Summer Camp!
1. **Eligibility**
   Only two participants per boat; Two participants are required to be in each boat with at least one being a licensed adult fisherman.

2. **Entry Fee**
   $125 per team, No Refunds – Rain or shine. This includes automatic entry into the Big Bass competition & Lunch.

3. **Registration**
   Boats will be released in flights based off a predesignated number (1-5, 6-10, etc.), which will be determined by the order in which completed entries are received. Participants may pay and/or register at the ramp on the morning of the event. Entries will not be considered completed until the signed entry form has been turned in and the entry fee has been paid. Participants paying the day of the event must pay in exact cash.

4. **Tournament Hours**
   Safe light to 2:00 PM (return times will be given to the flights as they leave, return times will be staggered according to release times). All boats must be in the basin prior to designated return time or they will be disqualified. NO Exceptions! When returning at the end of the tournament, each team is required to check in at the weigh in station whether you have fish to be weighed or not. The Tournament Director shall have the right to delay the start of the tournament. The public is invited to the weigh-in ceremony.

5. **Tackle/Equipment**
   Only artificial lures may be used. No “live bait” or “prepared bait” will be permitted, the exception being pork strips, rinds, ext., only one rod and reel may be used at any time, (spin cast-spinning or bait caster) and may not exceed 8ft in length measured from the end of the butt to the tip of the rod. Others may be in boat ready for use but only one may be used at any giving time. All bass must be caught live and in a conventional sporting manner. Any one guilty of “snagging” or snatching fish on spawning beds will be disqualified from the tournament. When site fishing for bedding bass, all bass must be hooked inside the mouth and verified by the partner in the boat before the hook is removed and the fish is entered your daily catch. The use of grippers in landing/boating bass is prohibited. Trolling (as a method of fishing) is prohibited (may use trolling motor). All bass must be caught in a traditional manner. Penalty for dead fish is .5 pound per fish. There is no weight limit, 12” minimum. Any team with more than five (5) fish brought to weigh in will be disqualified. No culling at the ramp. No team is to possess more than a limit of five (5) Bass at one time.

6. **Boat**
   Each boat will be inspected prior to take off to ensure that it meets US Coast Guard regulations, that it has a running aerated live well, and that running lights are operational. If lights are not operational, the boat will go out last. Each person must follow all Florida Boating/Fishing Laws.

7. **Fishing Areas**
   An angler may not leave his or her boat except in an emergency. All water that is accessible by boat is permitted. No fishing is permitted within 50 yards of any competitor’s boat that has its anchor down and trolling motor up - use good sportsmanship! No fishing inside boat basin or check-in site. No fishing in areas designated off-limits by State or Local agencies.

8. **Catch & Release**
   Every effort must be made to keep Bass alive. All Bass caught in tournament must be open water released in a minimum of 4’ of water, as per State requirements. Each team must return their fish after weigh in, to the lake, no less than a 100 yard outside of weigh in basin. NO EXCEPTIONS!

9. **Golden Rule**
   All fish measured on a golden rule with mouth closed and tail fanned. 5 fish weigh in limit, 12” minimum.

10. **Scoring, Tiebreakers and Awards**
    Winners will be determined by pounds and hundredths of an ounce. 
    In the event of a tie for first place only, the following will be used in this order to break the tie: 1) Largest number of legal fish weighed in 2) Largest number of legal live fish weighed in. 3) Heaviest single bass weighed in

11. **Laws**
    All Federal, State, and Local laws and ordinances must be followed by all participants. Absolutely no alcohol or illegal drugs are permitted on any boat participating in the tournament. Any violations will result in immediate disqualification.

---

Daytime contact phone ________________________________________________________
Name__________________________________________________________
Address__________________________
Signature__________________________

Circle 2 shirt sizes (Sizes are adult men’s)
Name__________________________________________________________
Address__________________________
Signature__________________________
S M L XL XXL XXXL
S M L XL XXL XXXL

The signature above release all sponsors, The Highlands County Sheriff’s Office, County of Highlands, and all officials, organization and/or any other individuals regarding this event from any and all liabilities, damages, claims, or demands caused by my participation in the event. I further agree to abide by the rules of this tournament without exception.

---

Official Use Only Below this line.
Date Received: ___________________________ Date Paid: ___________________________ Date Completed: ___________________________
Form of Payment: ___________________________ Assigned Team Number: ___________________________
The start of the 2020-21 school year has been very unique and difficult for our returning students, as well as for our school resource deputies (SRD), safe school deputies (SSD), and college resource deputy (CRD). Back in March of 2020, when COVID-19 first impacted Highlands County, the School Resource Unit (SRU) became very versatile in their duties and assignments. We have had SRDs temporarily assigned to patrol shifts (day and night), specialized units, and attend training to benefit them in their duties. SSDs were also reassigned to specialized units to support the mission of the Sheriff's Office.

The temporary assignments changed often and sometimes within a short amount of time. The SRU deputies performed all of these duties without one complaint or negative comment to their supervisors. The deputies had, and continued to have, very positive attitudes while working these assignments. Several of the SRU deputies even took leadership roles to assist some of the less-experienced deputies they were working with. Multiple supervisors reached out to say how impressed they were with the work ethic of the SRU deputies. The SRU deputies exemplified strong leadership, teamwork, and effectiveness during this time.

In September, Deputy Steve New and Deputy Trainee Bryce Smith turned in latent prints that were identified to bad guys. Keep up the excellent work!

-- Sgt. Jeff Fennell

Congratulations to D/S Proctor for completing Advanced Sniper School in Lakeland hosted by Florida SWAT Association. It was a long week with early mornings, late nights, early callouts and tough and stressful scenarios. D/S Proctor represented Highlands County Sheriff's Office SWAT with pride and honor, completing the Carlos Hathcock Sniper Qualification Course on the final day in 1:36 with zero misses, earning Top Shot of the class. Great job D/S Proctor.

-- Sgt. Austin Garza

Multiple supervisors reached out to say how impressed they were with the work ethic of the SRU deputies. The SRU deputies exemplified strong leadership, teamwork, and effectiveness during this time.

Additionally, since returning to their campuses, they have continued to display our core values of honor, strength, and valor in their daily tour of duties. From speaking with several school leaders, our SRDs, SSDs, and CRD have been a huge asset with students returning to a non-traditional school year. This has led to one of the smoothest school starts for the school resource unit in years.

It would be unfair to not recognize Sgt. Chris Bates and Sgt. Dusty McGee who have joined the SRU within less than a year. During this short time, both supervisors have excelled rapidly and provided highly effective leadership and guidance for a unit comprised of veteran deputies. Sgt. Bates and Sgt. McGee have been instrumental in assisting with the day-to-day operations within school safety, as well as, planning events months in advance. The actions and character of these two sergeants have helped guide their unit. Thank you all of the School Resource Unit for the continued hard work and dedication to your craft, the schools, students, and citizens you all serve every day!

-- Lt. Chris Gunter

In September, Deputy Trainee Bryce Smith turned in latent prints that were identified to bad guys. Keep up the excellent work!}

-- Lt. Mike Brod

Thank you to Faq Mike Morse for helping me to get everyone in dispatch changed over to American Heart Association CPR.

-- Shane Smith

I would like to personally thank members from UPD, CIU, K9, Detention, Warrants, Analysis, PIO and Dispatch for assisting the SOD with a large-scale warrant round-up of several felony drug offenders on September 30. It was a testament of our continued agency wide teamwork.

-- Lt. Mike Brod

Thank you to Deb Owens for helping me with creating Excel sheets and things for training Dispatch on the new Call Types and Run Cards.

-- Shane Smith

Thank You to Dispatch for being patient and having an open mind with the change to the new run cards for Fire/EMS Dispatching

-- Shane Smith

Congratulations to Lt. Chris Gunter, Recipient of the Leadership Highlands 2020 Morris Adams Award, which was presented by Melissa Blackman, a former winner herself. The award honors Morris Adams, the founder of Leadership Highlands, and recognizes an outstanding class member with the character attributes of integrity, ethical conduct, respect for others and the love of Leadership Highlands.
options when they need to ask for help.”

Text to 911 is intended primarily for use in three emergency scenarios:

- For an individual who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, or has a speech disability;
- For someone who is in a situation where it is not safe to place a voice call to 911 (domestic abuse, abduction, active shooter, etc.);
- A medical emergency that renders that person incapable of speech.

“The first option should still be to call 911 in an emergency, but being able to text when you can’t call has the potential to be a true life-saver,” Sheriff Blackman said.

To use the service, enter 911 in to “To:” field of your text message, type your message and press send. A dispatcher will respond to the message as quickly as possible. If the service is down for any reason, you will get a message to that effect. Please make sure your first message has your location and the nature of the emergency as well as what kind of help you need. Keep messages short and concise and do not use abbreviations or emojis. The service also does not support sending videos or photos at this time. You also can’t group message 911.

It is important to remember that you must use your phone’s built-in texting platform, and not a third-party app.
Thank you to Juan Perez of Bang Energy for dropping off some drinks for deputies Sept. 16.

Thank you to Krissy Culbreth, owner of Jersey Mike’s in Sebring, for donating gift certificates to all of our members on Sept. 10.

Thank you to everyone in Tanglewood who put together all these bags of goodies for our Law Enforcement Bureau.

Thank you to the Hope Foundation for cooking us lunch Sept. 2 as part of their Feed A Cop Project.

We want to give a huge thank you to everyone at First Presbyterian Church Lake Placid. The congregation raised over $5,000 to purchase gift certificates to local restaurants for all sworn LEOs in Highlands County.

(Left to right from top) On July 8 Glenn Burnsed, Derrall Escobar, Kathy Perez and Bryce Smith were sworn in as patrol deputies and Cameron Armstead was sworn in July 15 as a detention deputy.

Sheriff Paul Blackman presented the Humanitarian Champion Award to Christine Hatfield of Inn On the Lakes Sept. 2 at the TDC Winners Circle Tourism Awards. Sheriff Blackman nominated Inn On The Lakes for their willingness to give families a secure and safe space to gather after the SunTrust shooting on Jan. 23, 2019.
The Highlands County Sheriff’s Office Special Victims Unit, in conjunction with the United States Marshal Service and Florida Department of Corrections Probation & Parole Services, conducted Operation Disconnect in August. The operation targeted registered sexual offenders and predators that have online accounts they have not reported to the sheriff’s office as required. The operation also picked up some subjects with active warrants in Special Victims Unit cases. There were 36 people arrested, with the total number of charges in the hundreds.

Sheriff Blackman was presented the Hometown Hero award at the annual Champion For Children Gala Sept. 24. “Every night, Sheriff Paul Blackman prays for the safety of our community and the men and women that are serving and protecting our community. He also prays that his employees will learn to give back (invest) to our community, helping others, and expecting nothing in return. Now this is both touching and inspirational,” Kevin Roberts (left) said as part of the award presentation, which was joined by Carissa Marine.