

Quarterly Report of the

HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

INTEGRITY

QUALITY SERVICE

PROFESSIONALISM

Sheriff Susan Benton



VISION

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.

MISSION

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

GOALS

Goal 1:

Create safer neighborhoods by reducing criminal activity and conditions that foster crime and fear within the community.

Goal 2:

Enhance the safety of Highlands County roadways through enforcement and education.

Goal 3:

Assure accountability by effective and efficient use of personnel, equipment, and technology.

Goal 4:

Provide a professional work environment that attracts and retains a diverse group of quality applicants, rewards employee excellence, and promotes leadership through education and training.

Goal 5:

Assure effective Judicial and Detention processes and services.

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HIGHLANDS SHERIFF'S OFFICE RANKS IN THE TOP 10 IN MARIJUANA ERADICATION EFFORTS

The United States Drug Enforcement Administration and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) has released it's 2007 Indoor Grow Report. The report contains statistics on the Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program which is a voluntary program offered to local law enforcement agencies through FDLE. 45 counties participated during 2007, including 40 sheriff's offices and 15 municipal law enforcement agencies. The report reveals that there is a stark movement towards indoor

grow with reportedly 944 sites resulting in the eradication of 74,698 plants.

This represents twice the number of plants eradicated in 2006.

The 2007 activity also resulted in the arrests of 971 cultivators, and the seizure of 188 firearms, which clearly show this type of crime is not only becoming more sophisticated, but more dangerous as well. The report states that "current intelligence information indicates that marijuana cultivators continue to move their operations indoors to avoid de-

tection and to increase the quality of the marijuana being produced.

The statistics show Highlands County being 6th in detection and dismantling of grow sites, 4th in arrests of cultivators, and 8th in number of plants eradicated, only behind large population counties like Duval, Lee, Miami Dade, Palm Beach, and Polk Counties. Highlands received \$7,250 in refunds from program allocations and the total value of seized items to date is \$289,000 some of which are pending cases.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS SOLVES NUMEROUS MAJOR CASES THIS PAST QUARTER

The first quarter of the calendar year proved successful for the Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU). This unit is comprised of sworn law enforcement detectives and support civilian staff. The unit handles persons and property crimes, crime scene, evidence and crime analysis. Listed are some of the

highlights of CIU activity during the past quarter. Homicide of Samuel Tiller: Three suspects arrested. Homicide of Hugh Marks: Two suspects arrested. Assisted Hillsborough County SO with the investigation of the homicide of Charles Beck, they arrested two suspects and the victim was recovered

in Highlands County. Two major child pornography cases with two suspects arrested, and a total of 235 felony charges between them. Ten car burglary suspects were arrested and each one was charged with multiple counts of burglary. Congratulations CIU Unit staff.

E-911 Mapping Near Completion

In January 28, 2008, the 911 GIS street layering project was transferred from the Board to the Sheriff's Office. At that time there were over 12,000 street segments that had to be verified. As of April 15, 2008 staff has been able to complete 98%, with about 250 segments left to verify. We expect completion by the end of the week. Once completed, we will begin work on a quality control process to provide public safety personnel across the county with accurate mapping to ensure timely response to emergencies.

On the 911 operational side, Highlands County is now Phase II compliant which gives us the capability to receive a call back number, and the location information (latitude and longitude) of the cell phone caller. We have received a state grant to upgrade our equipment to map these calls.



Congratulations: Major Mark Schrader recently graduated of the FBI National Academy, 232nd Session.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE IMPLEMENTS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM & EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

A major milestone in our Strategic Plan was the recent implementation of the joint system that contains modules for both performance evaluations and early intervention of potential preventable employee issues. The performance system is completely objective and eliminates the potential for common raters errors since it thoroughly and accurately evaluates employee performance and core competencies for all positions on an on-going basis. This allows for the recognition of effective performance and the correction of weaknesses in performance through timely feedback and coaching. The system was customized based on job assignments and each rating area is derived from job task analysis that was critically analyzed and weighted for each position. Although this was very time consuming in the beginning, this process

minimizes meaningless evaluations and concentrates on performance rather than personality. It allows for customization of goals for each employee along with personal and career development. The system is set up to be completely paperless, but readily accessible by both the supervisors and the employees. *(Objective 3.4.3 To implement an equitable and measurable agency-wide performance review system.)*

The Administrative Investigations Management Internal Affairs/Employee Early Warning System (AIM) is a tool for Internal Affairs and Bureau Commanders to monitor professional standards. It accurately tracks and reports on a wide range of activities and incidents including Use of Force, Vehicle

Pursuits, Accidents, Awards, Commendations, Complaints against Deputies, and various other types of incidents. The program interfaces with SmartCop so that reports, such as use of force or other incidents can be pulled by integration of software, avoiding duplication of data input. Alerts automatically are generated by the system to the Supervisors once user defined thresholds have been reached. The system contains a reporting mechanism that allows solutions to be documented. *(Objective 4.2.2 To review and implement a process for early identification of and intervention into problem behavior by agency employees.)*

At the end of the day, it is all about good organizational processes and management.

ELECTRONIC CITATIONS BRINGS EFFECIENCIES

The latest technological break through hosts a lot of time saving features.

Deputies can now check out new citation books electronically, where in the past it required a trip to the office. They can swipe the magnetic strip of the Drivers License to pull information from the master name index reducing

the need to re-enter the same information, and can check to see if tickets have been issued to violators previously without calling dispatch. They can transmit citations electronically rather than passing them to a supervisor to hand deliver to the office. This also

eliminates the need for Central records to manually re-enter citations into the SmartCop system. Electronic citations help reduce errors and makes them more legible to citizens. In the future these citations can be electronically uploaded to the Clerk and the State.

QUARTERLY INFORMATION—ADMINISTRATION & COURT SERVICES

New Member Hires:		Court Related Services:	
Civilians	6	Cases In Court	7,751
Sworn	7	Inmates Taken to Court	1,263
Applications Received this Qtr.	107	Arrests by Bailiffs	240
Applications Processed	32	Persons thru Security Station	40,213
Payroll Checks Processed	1052	Pre-Trial Release Services:	
Payable Checks Processed	845	First Appearance Attendance	737
P-Card Purchases	810	Pre-Trial Release	85
Citizens Fingerprinted	476	Inmates Referred for Treatment	30
Information Services Requests	905	Cost Effectiveness Savings	\$ 68,197

QUARTERLY INFORMATION—LAW ENFORCEMENT

Administrative Calls	39,706	Items into Evidence	2654
911 Calls	9,119	Judicial/Civil Process Services:	
Computer Aided Dispatch	30,608	Received/Processed	1968
HCSO	18,490	Served	1956
SPD	5,514	Active	12
LPPD	1,838	Crime Scene Lab Cases	65
FIRE	1,376	Criminal Investigation Unit Cases	171
EMS	3,390	Investigations Open	58
Offense Reports	2,223	Special Investigations Unit Cases	124
Traffic Citations Issued	1,418	SIU Narcotic Arrests	83
K-9 Searches	38	SVU Cases Received from DCF	425
Warrant Numbers:		SVU Cases Open	116
Received/Processed	837	Business Security Surveys	6
Served	770	Neighborhood Watch Presentations	47
Active	4,334	Crime Victims Served	141
Number of Arrests By Patrol	623	Victim Advocate Services	493
Number of DUIs	12		

QUARTERLY INFORMATION—DETENTION

Inmates Booked into Jail	2,100	Inmate Farm Eggs Harvested	6,468
Inmates Released from Jail	1,840	Alcohol Breath Tests	32
Instructional Program Hours	2,695	Average Daily Population	472
Inmate Transport Miles	42,130	Net Commissary Earnings	\$7,371
Transports to State Prison	130	Medical Fees Charged	\$311,747
ICE Picked Up	60	Medical Fees Collected	\$17,580
Detainee's Placed	55	Subsistence Fees Charged	\$70,056
CMP Participants	169	Subsistence Fees Collected	\$23,039
Dollars Saved in Labor	\$80,773	Inmate Per-Diem Charged	\$16,842
Dollars Collected in Fees	\$7,435	Inmate Per-Diem Collected	\$10,616
Inmate Meals Served	128,239	Labor Hours by Trustees S/O	25,992
Average Cost per Day	\$1.84	Labor Hours by Trustees Other	4,191
Inmate Farm Produce (lbs)	2,860	Dollars Saved in Labor	\$204,943

Public Safety Highlight

April is the National Child Abuse Prevention Month

HISTORY

In 1974, the importance of increasing the public's awareness of the need to ensure the safety and welfare of children led to the passage of the first Federal child protection legislation, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Following in the early 1980s, Congress decided to make a further commitment to identifying and implementing solutions to child abuse. "They asked the President to issue a proclamation calling upon Government agencies and the public to observe the week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities." The following year, April was proclaimed the National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Then in 1989, the Blue Ribbon Campaign to Prevent Child Abuse had its early beginnings with a Virginia grandmother's tribute to her grandson who died as a result of abuse. She tied a blue ribbon to the antenna of her car as a way to remember him and to alert her community to the tragedy of child abuse. In 2003, as part of the 20th anniversary of the original Presidential Proclamation designating April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, OCAN recast the National Child Abuse Prevention Initiative as a year-long effort. In 2004, there was emerging consensus among national child abuse prevention organizations and related Federal agencies that building public will for child abuse prevention required engaging the public in efforts to strengthen and support families and enhance parenting skills. Today, the Child Abuse Prevention Initiative is an opportunity for communities across the country to keep children safe, provide the support families need to stay together, and raise children and youth to be happy, secure, and stable adults.

For the complete article visit:

[www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/
preventionmonth/history.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/history.cfm)

SHERIFF'S OFFICE LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Sheriff Susan Benton announced the launch of the newly created Highlands County Sheriff's Office website in conjunction with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's release of the Sexual Offender/Predator E-mail alert system. Sheriff Benton stated "I want to get as much information in the hands of the public as possible." The new site gives access to real time booking and inmate information that includes charges and mug shots of those arrested and/or incarcerated in Highlands County. Request for information and records can easily be submitted on line along with request for traffic crash reports. There is also a wealth of information about our agency and its members on the website. As the community directed us to do; we are providing the opportunity to see and understand the programs and services of the Sheriff's Office. We are accountable to our citizens, and the community driven strategic plan, operating budget and financial records will be easily accessible by the public at all times. We will update the site frequently with the latest news and events, fraud alerts, and roadway safety campaigns. Please enjoy your visit to the Highlands County Sheriff's Office website. We enthusiastically partnered with FDLE on release of the Sexual Offender/Predator e-mail alert service and it can be easily accessed right from our front page along with the search and tracking of other offenders and predators throughout Florida. Your feedback is appreciated.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE
HIGHLANDS COUNTY, FLORIDA
Integrity — Quality Service — Professionalism

Friday, March 28, 2008 Administration | Detention | Law Enforcement

Welcome to the Highlands County Sheriff's Office. Our site is built in a way to assist you in becoming more familiar with the duties and responsibilities of our agency, the many dedicated professionals who work to serve and protect you each day, and to access needed information.

We as an agency at the direction of our citizens, have developed a shared vision of hope and began a journey in 2005 to move from good to extraordinary; this website is a listed objective in the Strategic Plan that you helped create. Our vision of a safer Highlands County, where officers and law enforcement are joined together, the rights of all persons are respected, and community values are reflected is demonstrated in the delivery of law enforcement and detention services. We respect our community resources and endeavor to use them wisely, while being held accountable to accomplish what you have requested that we do within fiscal constraints.

In part, our working together requires constant communication and availability. As we launch our new website, we ask you to offer any feedback and suggestions on information that would be valuable to you. We will update the site frequently with the latest news and events, fraud alerts, and roadway safety campaigns. Please enjoy your visit to the Highlands County Sheriff's Office website.

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

Missing Children Clearinghouse
Click here to learn how to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation and help find missing children.

Search for Sexual Predators
This tool provides a search of the database of sexual offenders and predators registered in the State of Florida.

Search Past & Present Inmates
Search and view information and photos of arrestees in Highlands County Jail.

Important Contact Numbers

Sheriff Susan Benton	402-7213	Law Enforcement Bureau	402-7206
County Administrator Lisa Bailey	402-7211	Detention Information	402-7201
Legal Counsel, Mike Durham	402-7374	Judicial Process	402-7227
		Crime Stoppers	(888) 226-8477

HEARTLAND CRIME STOPPERS **1-800-226-TIPS (8477)**
HOTLINE
POLK - HIGHLANDS - HARDEE
WEBTIPS
SUBMIT A TIP ONLINE

Visit our site at www.highlandssheriff.org



HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Susan Benton, Sheriff

434 FERNLEAF AVENUE
SEBRING, FL 33870
OFFICE: (863) 402-7200

For Crime Trend information visit- http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/Crime_Trends/

WHAT'S NEW IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD??

Lake Bonnet Village Establishes Neighborhood Watch

The residents of Lake Bonnet Village with the encouragement of Board Member Sharon Martin, have chosen to organize a Neighborhood Watch under the Highlands County Sheriff's Office. The first meeting was held on December 20, 2007 with approximately 40 people in attendance.



Crime Prevention Specialist Nell Hays addressed the group outlining the requirements and responsibilities of Neighborhood Watch. Avon Park Police Officer Kevin Megno was also in attendance observing the presentation. He added his experience with Neighborhood Watch and told the audience that he was impressed with the enthusiasm shown by residents to this endeavor. Nell tasked the group to find a Chairperson and Assistant Chair to begin constructing a telephone tree before the second meeting was held. On March 13, 2008 the Lake Bonnet Village residents had completed their "homework" and were ready to continue. At the second meeting, residents were introduced to Neighborhood Watch Chairperson Paul Rettig. Twenty five homes were represented at this meeting where Nell Hays again emphasized the importance of the telephone tree or some form of communication within the park. She distributed and reviewed the Participant's Handbook and encouraged attendees to read through this information. There was a question and answer period following the presentation where general safety issues were discussed.

On March 27, 2008 the final meeting of

the Lake Bonnet Neighborhood Watch was held at the clubhouse. By this time, numerous residents had already gone north for the summer however, fifteen residences were represented, some of which were not at the previous meeting. Nell complimented the attendees on their dedication to the Neighborhood Watch initiative and gave a presentation on identifying and reporting a suspicious person, vehicle and activity. Upon completion of the training session, Nell presented the group with their new Neighborhood Watch sign, pictured at left. We congratulate the residents of Lake Bonnet Village on their accomplishment and wish them success in their Neighborhood Watch initiative.



New Neighborhood Watch Group—Robin Circle

Starting the New Year out right, the Robin Circle Association's Board of Directors asked Highlands County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Specialist Nell Hays to speak to them on January 11th regarding what would be required to form a Neighborhood Watch group. Following this first presentation the board voted to go forward with this endeavor and Nell addressed the membership as a whole. Twenty-five residences were represented at the general meeting during which the con-

cept and requirements of Neighborhood Watch were explained. After the meeting, residents began the search for a chairperson and worked on their telephone tree.

On January 31, 2008 Nell Hays gave the third presentation to residents of Robin Circle after which there was a review of the telephone tree. Association President Kenny Beard thanked the residents for their participation in forming the Neighborhood Watch and Mary Bailey reviewed the telephone tree. The program was then turned over to Chairperson Dick Purk who went through scenarios that would warrant Neighborhood Watch action. Nell Hays distributed information regarding how to identify and report suspicious activities, persons and vehicles. At the conclusion of the meeting it was determined that two Neighborhood Watch signs would be needed – one would be provided by the Sheriff's Office and one would be purchased by the Robin Circle Association. CPS Hays delivered the signs and they were installed in February. It was decided that Kenny Beard, Jimmy Banks and Dick Purk would share Chairperson duties depending on travel schedules of all. Dick Purk will be handling the duties during the summer and Mr. Beard and Mr. Banks will relieve him in the fall when they return to the area.

Congratulations to the residents of Robin Circle (also known as Brenner's Mobile Home Park) on their new Neighborhood Watch!

Protect Your Highlands County Home While You're Away



◆ As many seasonal residents prepare to return to their northern homes, here are a few tips to consider for protecting your investment in Highlands County:

- Give your home a lived in look while you are away. Instead of turning the power off completely, simply unplug the appliances you will not be using such as the refrigerator and freezer. Select a couple of lights in different rooms and connect them to timers. Setting timers to different days and times allows for lights to turn on in different rooms which gives the impression that someone is present.
- Ask a trusted neighbor to keep an eye on your home. Giving them a key would allow them to replace light bulbs in the fixtures mentioned above. If storm damage occurs, you can be contacted and arrange for repairs before the situation deteriorates further. If a burglary should occur, having someone available to report the damage as soon as possible increases the chance of catching the criminals. Have a neighbor put his trash out for pickup at your home from time to time. This will give the impression that someone is living in the house.
- Parking a car in your driveway is also a good way to give the impression that someone is home.
- Please keep your lawn service active while you are away. A well kept lawn is a sign that the homeowner cares about his property, and is watching what is going on. It's worth the investment to prevent a crime from taking place.

Don't forget to stop your mail and paper deliveries. Ask that trusted neighbor to remove any fliers that accumulate in your driveway or on your door while you're away.

We hope you have a safe trip to your northern destination and look forward to your return in the fall!

*How to Protect
Your Home.*



Home Improvement Scams Resurface

For those of us who remain in Highlands County during the summer months, it is a great time to get those pesky home improvement projects done. It can be tempting to do business with the lowest priced service provider, however, please be sure you're getting what you pay for. Be especially wary of someone who has finished another job and just happens to have some material left over. In many cases this is just a scam and the material is substandard or even destructive. Also be suspicious of people going door to door offering to sell products or services, and they need to come into your home to deliver the sales pitch or inspect something. Often this is simply a ruse to gain entry to your home and steal items, or case your residence for a criminal act later. Please do not let anyone into your home that you have not invited. And remember the three elements to identify a scam – and not all three have to be present for it to be a scam:

1. If it's too good to be true, it usually IS too good to be true!
2. If there's an element of secrecy to the deal – there's a reason ! Ask a friend before committing.
3. If there's an element of urgency – don't act fast! Take your time and figure things out.

If there's an element of urgency – don't act fast! Take your time and figure things out.

Before hiring a contractor it is a good idea to contact the Highlands County Building Department to see if the firm you have chosen has a license in this county. Also it's prudent to determine if a building permit is required for the project you are undertaking. Working with licensed contractors may cost a little more up front but in the long run you will be better off. Have a busy summer!