

# 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.

### Goal 1:

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

### Goal 2:

Enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety of Highlands County roadways through education and enforcement.

### 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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## RAPID ID FOR DNA CONFIRMATION

Highlands County Sheriff's Office is working with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement preparing for the installation of the Rapid ID system. Since mid-2010, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement has been working with Sheriff's Officers throughout the state to plan for and build the infrastructure necessary to implement Chapter 2009-190, Laws of Florida. This legislation expanded current conviction based authorization to collect DNA to include DNA collection from arrestees. Although the Legislature did not fund the initiative in the 2010/11 budget, using grant funds, Rapid ID scanners, printers, and software have been purchased on behalf of local agencies. These units are currently being installed here at the Highlands County Courthouse and within the Highlands County Jail. The first to begin using the new equipment will be courthouse staff. These collections will be conviction based. Currently deputies in the courts are using the swab method and submitting DNA on each and every conviction as outlined in the law. With this new system, Rapid ID, once fingerprints are taken the deputy will know timely if

the defendant already has a DNA sample on file. DNA collection is a costly and time-consuming process. Until now there has been no efficient method for an agency to check if an individual has existing DNA records. Unnecessary time and money are used to collect and submit DNA samples even when there is already DNA on file at FDLE's DNA Lab. With RAPID-ID, you can confirm the presence of DNA records for an individual. RAPID-ID will allow you to scan the fingerprints and search to see if the DNA is already on file. If there is DNA on file, then no DNA will need to be taken and no forms submitted. If there is a positive identification of the individual, but no DNA on file, then you can download all of the demographic data to eliminate data entry. A 2D barcode can then be printed with the embedded data to attach to the DNA packet.

RAPID-ID eliminates the need for handwritten forms and duplicated submissions of an individual's DNA. With RAPID-ID, a duplicate DNA sample should become a thing of the past. Once the courts

are up and running on the new system then we will move to the jail. Until now, FDLE has not been able to accept the DNA samples on arrestees as defined in law for various reasons. This new technology will significantly increase the processing capacity of the DNA database. It is this increased processing capacity that will position the DNA database to receive arrest-based submissions without creating a backlog of samples. Once the new jail system is in place then persons arrested for certain crimes will have their DNA also submitted to the FDLE's DNA Lab. The funding for these systems was provided by a grant through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for all Sheriff's Offices and the second unit within the jail was funded through our local forfeiture fund. These are monies identified and collected from offenders who profit from their crimes.



### HCSO Member Deputy of the Year

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office is proud to announce one of its own being named Deputy of the Year by the VFW Post 4300. Detective Mike Ahrens of the Special Investigations Unit was recently bestowed with this prestigious designation on March 7th, 2011. Detective Ahrens began his career at the Sheriff's Office in 2003 after relocating from the Miami area. Detective Ahrens has been a member of the Special Response Team since 2006, and has been in his current assignment within the Special Investigations Unit for the past 3 years. Along with his many career accolades acquired during his tenure at the Sheriff's Office, Detective Ahrens received his Associate's degree in General Studies from Columbia College in 2008. The VFW Post 4300 honored Detective Ahrens for his continued efforts towards making Highlands County a safer place for all. The Sheriff's Office is proud to have a detective like Ahrens who is committed to furthering the mission of the agency in protecting life, property, and individual rights while maintaining peace and order. The Sheriff's Office is proud of this accomplishment by Detective Ahrens and congratulates him on this prestigious honor.



## Renovation Project Update



The pictures tell the story. You can now pass each other in the hallway. We are beginning to see the difference with the renovations approved by the Board of County Commissioners in January, 2010. On the first floor of the Sheriff's Office there were renovations that now allow for handicapped access through the hallway and into the restrooms.

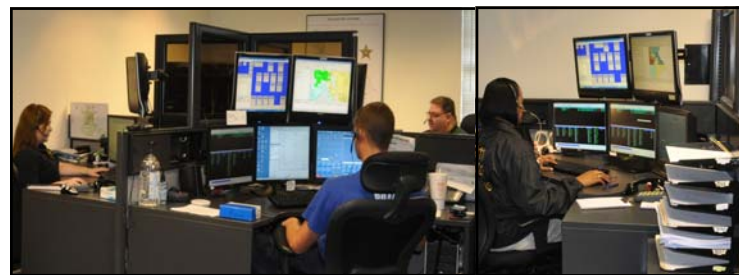
New electrical systems are beginning to be set into place to support the power needs of the facility. Old A/C systems are being upgraded from the 1950 boiler systems. We appreciate the patience of our members with the power outages and traffic flow realignments. Special thanks to the front desk and records members who worked out of the mobile command post in the parking lot for months, your display of our Core Values: *Integrity, Quality Service, and Professionalism* never faltered during this stressful time.

There is lots of work left to be accomplished and we are grateful to the Board for the

additional funding to remodel the Consolidated Dispatch Center.

A brainstorm ensued once we saw what the renovation plans called for in electrical and air conditioning changes on the second floor. We immediately identified a way to increase the size of the existing center that would allow for growth now and in the future. The idea moved to a plan and the BCC approved and allocated the funds. The cost of this upgrade to the dispatch center is significantly less than what would have been needed for this same area in a new building. In the midst of the current renovation project the dispatch center has moved to our back up site at the County's

Emergency Operations Center. Members worked diligently to perform extended tests on equipment and connectivity. The issues identified have been resolved says Heather Carr, Communications Director, "this has been a positive challenge, we've been able to identify and head off potential problems before they would occur during an emergency." This testing of both the equipment and connectivity will assure reliability and will improve the transition to back-up operations in the future. Carr states "the dispatchers and call takers have been extremely creative and flexible in finding ways to work the calls; even going so far as using lap top computers to temporarily double for dispatch stations since the temporary center only have half the number of stations that will be available in the new center.



Temporary Dispatch Center at EOC



Demolition Begins and New A/C Delivered

# Highlands County Sheriff's Office **CRIME PREVENTION**

Insert for Volume 7 , Issue 1



## New Neighborhood Watch Groups

Neighborhood Watch has taken off like crazy this quarter! Once again I'm happy to report that we have two more new Neighborhood Watch groups in Highlands County. Town 'N Country Mobile Home Park off Cooper Road in Sebring completed the three meeting process and became an official Neighborhood Watch Community on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations to Chairman Tom Ragle and his Block Captains Dick Kapp, Jim Lewis and Jerry Niedzielski! They meet regularly during the "season" at the Town and Country Clubhouse on the first Monday of the month.

The second group that has completed the Neighborhood Watch process is Adelaide Shores on US 27 just north of the Avon Park city limits. Adelaide Shores is a mobile home and recreational vehicle community with approximately 400 lots. Donna Capone has taken the role of Chairperson for this community and she is assisted by Co-Chairs Gail LeBlanc, Bonnie Hicks, Judy Blair and Willie Lewis. They meet regularly at Monday Morning Coffee at the clubhouse within the complex.

In addition to the neighborhoods that have completed the process, Lake Gardens and Paradise mobile home communities in the Lake Placid area are within the three meeting requirement and hope to have active Neighborhood Watches in place by next fall. In the Avon Park area both River Greens and Casa De Lago have requested informational meetings to be held. This is very encouraging! To have residents requesting Neighborhood Watch means they are interested in keeping their communities safe by simply watching out for one another. Keep up the good work! Established Neighborhood Watch Communities who had their required annual meeting this quarter include Lakeside Village, Fiesta Villas, Kissimmee River Fishing Resort, Frances II Mobile Home Community, Oakridge Mobile, Whispering Pines, Hickory Ridge, Highlands Park Estates, Tomoka Heights, Leisure Lakes, the Estates of Sebring Park, Hickory Hills and Reflections on Silver Lake. It was wonderful to make contact with all the residents of these communities and you're doing a WONDERFUL job!! Thank you so much for everything you do!

## Community Service Center in Lakeshore Mall Closes

In an effort to consolidate services and cut expenses, the Highlands County Sheriff's Office Community Service Center formerly located in the Lakeshore Mall has closed. Crime Prevention Specialist Nell Hays has taken an office in the Sheriff's Office main building in downtown Sebring behind the Highlands County Courthouse. Nell has also taken on the role of Public Information Officer for the Sheriff's Office. In this role Nell will be responsible for media relations for the Sheriff's Office as well as working with the Neighborhood Watch groups and doing crime prevention presentations for civic groups. Nell will keep her positions on the Suncoast Crime Prevention and the Florida Crime Prevention Association Boards of Directors as well as interacting with the Seniors And Law Enforcement (S.A.L.T.) Council. We congratulate Nell on this opportunity and wish her the best in her new position! If you would like to contact Nell, please call 863-402-7369.



## Door to Door Salespeople

As in previous months, the door-to-door salespeople continue to prey on Highlands County residents. The number of victims is decreasing due to the vigilance of our Neighborhood Watch groups and a concentrated effort on the parts of the Crime Prevention Unit, Road Patrol and Criminal Investigations. Several people have been identified and some have been charged. The challenge is that when you invite these salespeople into your home, purchase a product or service and subsequently find out you have been scammed, the major-



ity of the cases are civil in nature. Unfortunately you have the right to make a poor decision! The best thing to do is to not do business with door-to-door salespeople unless you have verified their product or service through the Better Business Bureau or if you have already established a good relationship with them. Please remember the three elements of a scam: If it's too good to be true, there's an element of secrecy and there's an element of urgency.....IT'S A SCAM!! If you have any questions on this type of activity you may call the Crime Prevention Unit (Nell Hays) at 863-402-7369 or call Central Dispatch at 863-402-7200 and request law enforcement response.

## Report Suspicious Activity

Our traffic is diminishing, lines at the restaurants are shorter and the stores are not as busy. Hmmmm. The Winter Visitors must be returning to the north! This creates more opportunities for property crimes in our residential areas so please be on the lookout for any unusual activities in your neighborhood. We encourage everyone to report suspicious persons, vehicles or activities to Central Dispatch at 863-402-7200. Your local law enforcement agency will respond and check out the situation. If you see something and your mind says "Isn't that odd?", it's time to make that call!! Thanks!



## National Night Out

The National Association of Town Watch (NATW) is presenting the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual National Night Out crime prevention event on Tuesday, August 2, 2011. Last year we had two communities who participated and we had a great time! If you would like to have an event in your area, please contact Nell Hays at 863-402-7369 for details of our local plans. For more information on the National Night Out concept, please visit the website at [www.natw.org](http://www.natw.org).



*At left, Lieutenant Barcinas addresses the residents of the Dover Road Neighborhood Watch at National Night Out 2010 as Sheriff Benton, Major Paepflow, Deputy Proctor and other law enforcement representatives wait for their turn!*

## QUARTERLY INFORMATION—ADMINISTRATION & COURT

New Member Hires:	Court Related Services:	
Civilians	11 Cases In Court	7,856
Sworn	1 Inmates Taken to Court	1,133
Applications Received this Qtr.	78 Arrests by Bailiffs	145
Applications Processed	16 Persons thru Security Station	37,594
Payroll Transactions Processed	2058 <b>Pre-Trial Release Services:</b>	
Payable Checks Processed	580 First Appearance Attendance	560
P-Card Purchases	509 Pre-Trial Release Cases	68
Citizens Fingerprinted	435 Inmates Referred for Treatment	37
Information Services Requests	590	

## QUARTERLY INFORMATION—LAW ENFORCEMENT

Administrative Calls	46,083	Number of DUI's	8
911 Calls	10,191	Items into Evidence	2,651
Computer Aided Dispatch	36,304	Evidence Items Disposed	2,818
<b>HCSO</b>	18,034	<b>Judicial/Civil Process Services:</b>	
<b>SPD</b>	4,731	Received/Processed	2,188
<b>LPPD</b>	1,734	Served	2,085
<b>APPD</b>	6,187	Active	103
<b>FIRE</b>	1,783	Crime Scene Lab Cases	113
<b>EMS</b>	3,835	Criminal Investigation Unit Cases	272
Offense Reports	2,255	Investigations Open (Total)	162
Traffic Citations Issued	1,131	Special Investigations Unit Cases	97
K-9 Searches	207	SIU Narcotic Arrests	67
<b>Warrant Numbers:</b>		SVU Cases Received from DCF	419
Received/Processed	768	SVU Cases Open	25
Served	734	Business Security Surveys	0
Active	3,717	Neighborhood Watch Presentations	34
Number of Arrests By Patrol	795	Crime Victims Served	150
		Victim Advocate Services	662

## QUARTERLY INFORMATION—DETENTION

Inmates Booked into Jail	1,598	Alcohol Breath Tests	30
Inmates Released from Jail	1,403	Average Daily Population	397
Instructional Program Hours	1,831	Staff Meals Purchased	\$7,824
Inmate Transport Miles	29,290	Net Commissary Earnings	\$6,449
Transports to State Prison	59	Medical Fees Charged	\$141,074
ICE Picked Up	13	Medical Fees Collected	\$12,691
Detainer's Placed	35	Subsistence Fees Charged	\$54,919
CMP Participants	63	Subsistence Fees Collected	\$17,034
Dollars Saved in Labor	\$45,588	Inmate Per-Diem Charged	\$25,259
Dollars Collected in Fees	\$3,930	Inmate Per-Diem Collected	\$12,778
Inmate Meals Served	104,078	Labor Hours by Inmates S/O	29,305
Avg Food Cost per Day Per Inmate	\$1.64	Labor Hours by Inmates -Other	2,406
Inmate Farm Produce (lbs)	2,206	Dollars Saved in Labor	\$229,904

## Child Abuse Prevention Month

The month of April has been designated child abuse prevention month for 2011, to raise awareness of child abuse and its subsequent prevention. Take25.org discusses several ways to initiate conversation with your children about safety, and most importantly reassure, but not scare them. This means communicating in a positive way that builds confidence. To do so, use our conversation starters and follow these guidelines.

### Be Prepared

Spend some time to review safety information before you communicate it to your children. That way, you'll be better able to talk about the topic in a calm, reassuring manner.

### Consider your child's age

Take into account your child's age and understanding when gearing up for a discussion. Simple visuals and activities can be useful in capturing their interest especially if they are customized for your child.

### Seize opportunities

Instead of waiting for "the right time" to talk to kids, make the most of everyday moments. A relaxed family meal provides the perfect opportunity to get kids to tune into safety messages, especially when favorite foods are on the menu. A car ride to school offers another great chance to talk to kids about safety.

### Be open

Encourage your children to talk openly about their questions and worries. Let them know you care about what happens to them by setting clear rules, but try not to lecture or criticize.

### Have fun

Child safety is a serious subject, but that doesn't mean you can't have an enjoyable time talking about it with your kids. Sing songs, tell stories, play games and interact with your kids in a way that makes them feel safe and loved.

## Training Unit Works To Reduce Overtime

The Training Unit recently completed our semiannual firearms qualifications. The good news is that this was accomplished saving approximately \$35,000 in overtime costs. The current overtime budget is 75% less than it was three years ago. Keeping that in mind and understanding the serious potential for further reductions, the training unit reached into their bag of tricks and creatively came up with a schedule that nearly eliminated any overtime costs for the mandatory firearm qualification.

To accomplish this feat, the training team started their day at 4:00 a.m. and troops from the street and the jail were called out in small numbers from the night shift. After 6:00 a.m. the day shift squads from both patrol and jail would then begin their firing range qualifications in small numbers. By pulling in just a few from each squad throughout the day, we were able to maintain minimum coverage on the street and in the jail. The training team was able to work 204 members through firearms qualifications in four weeks.



Thank you team for your initiative and sacrifice to alter your regular schedules in furtherance of the Sheriff's Office Mission, while keeping the end game in mind; the taxpayer.

*The O-Course will be dedicated on Wednesday, April 20, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. Join us for a demonstration at the Range.*



## **HIGHLANDS COUNTY** **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**Susan Benton, Sheriff**

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Provide your kids protection Take 25 minutes a day with them: <http://www.take25.org>