

Quarterly Report of the HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

INTEGRITY QUALITY SERVICE PROFESSIONALISM

Sheriff Susan Benton



3rd Quarter 2012

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.

Swear-In for Avon Park Police Officers



On October 3, 2012 fifteen former Avon Park Police Officers were sworn in as deputy sheriffs. Residents, coworkers, intergovernmental partners and families gathered to support our new deputies. Sheriff Susan Benton, who swore them in, expressed her admiration. She welcomed "15 of the finest men and women" to the force and thanked Avon Park for its vision, adding; "change is extremely difficult for everyone." She said that she was proud of how well the new deputies are adapting to serving in a new agency and how quickly they moved through the application process. "An agency is only as good as the people's trust in it. There are all kinds of rules and regulations and we must hold ourselves accountable to the public we serve as well as to each other." Sheriff Benton coached the new deputies. Additionally recognized were two new Sergeants, Anthony McGann and Scott Williams and one new Lieutenant, Lauro Diaz. Benton emphasized the unique role of the first line supervisors. They are key to the success of any organization, they implement policy, they are the ones that hold members accountable to adhere to policy, and they are the ones who the troops work with everyday setting the primary example of professionalism. Sheriff contributes the successful transition to the team work demonstrated between Avon Park and the Sheriff's Office. Specifically, Sheriff thanked the Sheriff's Office Human Resource Division. The processing of all of the elements involved with law enforcement hiring is very unique and many elements of the background investigation are required by state law.

Local Masonic Lodges Provide Child ID Program



Mason Jim McQuigg fills out paperwork at a recent Florida Masonic Child ID event

Would you have a current picture of your child readily available for law enforcement if he or she went missing? Unfortunately most parents don't have current photos or video available on a moment's notice. If fingerprints or DNA were needed, the likelihood that any parents would have this is even less. The Florida Masonic Child Identification Program has been founded to provide this service and now, in partnership with the Champion for Children Foundation of Highlands County, local lodges are able to provide this program to Highlands County families. In fact, Highlands County Program Chairman Ross Canright says that 3200 children in Highlands County have already taken advantage of this service.

The Florida Masonic Child Identification Program is provided free of charge to the public. All of the data generated during the program is given to the child's family. No data is retained by the Masonic Lodges. The program kit includes four still photos, a brief video interview, fingerprints, a sample of DNA and two ID cards containing information about the child, a thumbprint and parent contact information.

Sheriff Benton says, "Anything we can do to increase the chances of finding a lost or missing child, we are going to support 100%!" Mr. Canright said that the Masonic Lodges are looking for events during which to offer this free program. Organizations wishing to offer this service simply need to get in touch with their local Masonic Lodge or call Ross Canright at 863-452-0346

Computer Forensic Technician Funding

Our Office has reached a crossroads in the immediate need for a Computer Forensic Technician. In today's high tech world, nearly every investigation involves some type of electronic forensic review whether a cell phone, smart phone, lap top computer or standard computers and the fast breaking investigations are no longer able to keep up without this specialized tool immediately available to detectives. In the past six to eight months we have come up against numerous cases that required detailed initial electronic forensic services. One homicide alone generated the need to examine approximately fifteen cell phones in a very short amount of time. We have typically depended on the Polk County Sheriff's Office, however, over the past several months they were inundated with their own requests and we created an additional burden on the demand. As our Office has grown and we serve nearly 100,000 citizens, it has become apparent that the need

to procure the equipment and hire the personnel necessary to perform these important evidentiary tasks is imminent. With the last few years of extensive budget shortfalls at the local level this has been unattainable, thus, we requested assistance from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to evaluate our need and allocate, if possible, any money that they manage to help our Office initiate this vital investigative service. The request included the cost of a Computer Forensic Technician, the equipment and training for the start up of the program. Our request was well received and the Sheriff's Office received the grant funding. We have hired the member, the training is scheduled and the equipment is on order. This initiative will truly aid in our ability to locate evidence, solve crimes and assist in a solid prosecution of offenders. The training is extensive and certification is essential in order to become a qualified forensic computer examiner expert witness.

Three HCSO Members Attain Certified Public Manager Status



Sheriff Benton, Lt. Kenny Johnson, Lt. Paula Weeks and Lt. Darin Hood

Three more members of the Highlands County Sheriff's Office recently completed the Florida Certified Public Manager curriculum through the Askew School of Public Administration of Florida State University. Lieutenants Darin Hood, Kenny Johnson and Paula Weeks successfully graduated from the program and were presented with their certifications in a ceremony in Bartow. Previous graduates of the program from the Highlands County Sheriff's Office include Sheriff Susan Benton, Business Administrator Lisa Burley, Captain Paul Blackman and Detention Deputy David Sweet. According to the Florida Center for Public Management, "...the Certified Public Manager program is a nationally recognized program for training and developing public managers and supervisors. It is

currently offered in 38 states and by the federal government. Primary goals of the program are to professionalize public management and improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness." In Florida there are over 4000 graduates of the program from over 100 agencies. The program consists of eight Levels, each of which includes classroom instruction, homework assignments and exams. The first part of the program concentrates on leadership management and people skills, the second part focuses on understanding complex organizations and the formation of policies. The program usually takes a two year commitment to complete. The Sheriff's Office has assigned two members to attend the next class starting in Polk County. We find it beneficial to the community we serve to have the most prepared agency to face the future; in so doing, we need to have folks prepared academically with the latest techniques in management and the highest leadership skills available. Recently Florida Governor Rick Scott issued a proclamation recognizing the Certified Public Manager Program as a premier training program for public officials in Florida. Congratulations Kenny, Paula and Darin!

Highlands County Sheriff's Office *CRIME PREVENTION*



Neighborhood Watch



Have you noticed a few of your neighbors coming back to their winter homes already? This is a sure sign that we need to get Neighborhood Watch meetings going again, along with all the other activities that begin to start back up in October and November. In line with these thoughts, please consider when you want to have your community's annual Neighborhood Watch meeting and get it on our schedule as soon as possible. Crime Prevention Specialist Nell Hays makes every effort to attend each of these meetings but her responsibilities are not limited to just

Neighborhood Watch activities. With other speaking engagements, business and residential security surveys, the Alzheimer Bracelet Program and her Public Information Officer role, her calendar fills up quickly! To get your first choice of dates for your annual meeting, please contact Nell at 863-402-7369 as soon as possible. If she is not in the office, please feel free to leave a message. She will get back to you and confirm your date.

Along those same lines, it's been a couple of years since we had a county-wide Neighborhood Watch Summit. In an effort to plan this event for 2013, we would appreciate input from Neighborhood Watch Captains regarding the types of speakers and topics you want more information about. In past years this Summit has taken place in November however this year we will probably look toward March. That will give everyone time to have their annual meetings and if necessary, re-organize their groups. Possibly new Captain training would be a good topic for one of the speakers to address? Keeping Neighborhood Watch Groups active and interested is also a popular presentation. It would be really great if some Neighborhood Watch participants would like to be involved in the planning and execution of this Summit. Anyone interested, or suggestions for speakers and topics, please contact Nell (863-402-7369) and she will coordinate this event.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation, and for your participation in Neighborhood Watch!

Halloween Trick or Treat Night Safety

Trick or Treat Night in all three Highlands County municipalities will be October 27th from approximately 6PM—9PM. Other school or church sponsored events will also be occurring on this night, so please be watchful for children, aka goblins, wandering the streets all day that Saturday. Parents, please be sure to supervise your children as they go about their Trick or Treating venue. Make sure their costumes have reflective tape and that they carry a flashlight so they can be seen. Also please check their treats before allowing them to consume any candy or goodies. If anything looks suspicious, please don't take a chance and remove those items from your children's bags. For more information on Trick or Treat safety, please go to the Highlands County Sheriff's Office website, www.highlandssheriff.org, and click on the Offender Watch square at the bottom of the home page. Once into that site, go to the Safety Tips tab and click there. The next screen to come up will have a box that says Community Awareness Fliers. Click on this and you will find a wide range of valuable informational fliers, one of which is titled Halloween Safety Flier. This flier can be printed out and copied for your use. Let's take that extra few moments and ensure that our children have a wonderful Halloween experience! Thanks!



Felony Lane Gang Targets Purses Left in Vehicles



*Don't let this
happen to you!
Keep your purse
OUT OF VIEW*

The term "Felony Lane Gang" refers to an organized crime ring with ties to South Florida and who is possibly expanding into Georgia and other neighboring states. This gang's specialty is car burglaries especially concentrating on places where females typically leave their purses in vehicles. Gyms, churches, parks and day care centers are common places where ladies will leave their purse in the car either because they don't expect to be gone but for a moment or they feel they are in safe environments. The thieves break into the vehicle and take wallets **and** checkbooks thus they have identification that matches up to the checks they have stolen. Then they use prostitutes and homeless people to don disguises to look like the victim. They proceed to the victim's bank and use the "Felony Lane" at drive through windows to cash checks on the victim's account. The "Felony Lane" is the lane that is furthest from the bank window and usually most difficult for tellers to make positive identification of the person doing banking. With this in mind, the imposters are able to cash checks on the victim's account.

In Highlands County we have seen a rise in car burglaries recently especially at gyms and healthclubs. It is suspected that these burglaries are tied to Felony Lane gang activity. With this in mind, we would like to request that women do not leave purses in the car thus taking the opportunity away from these thieves. Please secure your purse in the trunk at least, but if possible take your purse in with you, even if you only expect to be gone for a moment. We would also like to encourage managers of health clubs, gyms and day care centers to be watchful of any suspicious people in or near your parking areas. Please call us with any suspicious activity around vehicles parked at your businesses and let us send someone to check your area. We would like to drive this illegal activity OUT of Highlands County and we need your help to do it!



Holiday Shopping

Oh yes, those really ARE Christmas decorations you see, right next to the Halloween candy and the Thanksgiving foods. It seems each year our merchants begin the holiday season earlier and earlier. As you go about your holiday preparations, please remember to stay safe along the way. First of all, don't leave valuables and purchases in plain view in your vehicle. Secure packages in the trunk where they're out of view. For an added measure of safety, you may consider moving your car to a different side of the mall as you go through your shopping routine. Just remember where you parked last! It's a good idea to jot down the store nearest your car and maybe even the department within the store where you entered because many times a store will have more than one exit into the parking area. This will keep you from wandering aimlessly through the parking lots looking for your vehicle. Also it's a good idea to have a meeting place for your family or friends to re-convene every hour or so. This way you can keep in touch and be sure everyone is still on task. Exchanging cell phone numbers is also recommended however cell service can be spotty in some large shopping malls so an actual meeting place may be the best idea. For more holiday shopping tips, please go to the Highlands County Sheriff's Office website (www.highlandssheriff.org) and click on the Offender Watch box at the bottom of the home page. Once there, go to Safety Tips, then Community Awareness Fliers and scroll down to Holiday Safety. Best wishes for a safe and blessed Holiday season!



QUARTERLY INFORMATION—ADMINISTRATION & COURT

Blogging 

New Member Hires:		Court Related Services:	
Civilians Full/Part-time	5/1	Cases In Court	8,086
Sworn Full/Part-time Sworn Applications Received	4	Inmates Taken to Court	1,040
Applications Processed	73	Arrests by Bailiffs	96
Payroll Transactions Processed	69	Persons thru Security Station	36,180
Payable Checks Processed	1,981	Judicial/Civil Process Services:	
P-Card Purchases	585	Received/Processed	2,152
Citizens Fingerprinted	592	Served	2,048
Information Services Requests	505	Active	104
	498		

"I don't mean to be mean but I have had enough with homework"- Tween blogger

Do you ever wonder what your children think about? Perhaps you should read their Web logs or "blogs". Blogs are a type of online journal that children use to share their thoughts and feelings; they may be in written or video format. Posting blogs allows children to develop both their technical and creative skills. It also lets them connect to other users with similar interests and write about their experiences, their personal lives, popular culture, and any other topic that crosses their minds.

If done safely, blogging can be a good exercise that encourages critical thinking and creative writing. Unfortunately, children sometimes forget their blogs are not private and share information not intended for outsiders. Then, there are those children who simply do not care if their information is public; the more eyes they attract; the better.

Risky Behavior

Some blogs track the number of visitors and have places for their audiences to comment or rate them. As a result, children may engage in risky behavior—such as posting intimate details—in order to gain popularity on the internet. Other risky behavior includes not using privacy settings or posting inappropriate or illegal content.

The risky behaviors leave children open to being targeted by predators and cyberbullies. For example, a child's peers may take information shared in a blog and use it to humiliate him at school. Likewise, a child sharing inappropriate content in a blog may find themselves suspended from school or losing out on future educational opportunities. They might also find themselves approached by someone who intends them harm.

TIP

Does your child have a blog? Use the blogging rule of thumb! Never post anything in a blog that you would not want to share with everyone you know.

www.netsmartz.org/Blogging

QUARTERLY INFORMATION—LAW ENFORCEMENT

Administrative Calls	49,744	Items into Evidence	2,471
911 Calls	10,928	Evidence Items Disposed	1,840
Computer Aided Dispatch	35,289	Crime Scene Lab Cases	168
HCSO (50%)	18,696	Criminal Investigation Unit Cases	262
SPD (15%)	5,601	Special Investigations Unit Cases	58
LPPD (4%)	1,513	SVU Cases Received from DCF	355
APPD (17%)	4,262	Crime Victims Served	155
FIRE (5%)	1,780	Victim Advocate Services	713
EMS (9%)	3,434	Safe Neighbor Units Arrests	62
Offense Reports	2,410	SIU Narcotic Arrests	32
Traffic Citations Issued	1,236	Number of Arrests By Patrol	534
K-9 Searches	115	DUI Arrests	24
Warrant Numbers:		Business Security Surveys/residential	3/1
Received/Processed	577	Neighborhood Watch Presentations	41
Served	499		
Active	3,454		

QUARTERLY INFORMATION—DETENTION

Inmates Booked into Jail	1,037	Average Daily Population	420
Inmates Released from Jail	974	Staff Meals Purchased	\$1,868.00
Instructional Program Hours	1,819	Net Commissary Earnings	\$8,362.03
Inmate Transport Miles	27,661	Medical Fees Charged	\$121,187.91
Transports to State Prison	56	Medical Fees Collected	\$9,124.67
ICE Picked Up	16	Subsistence Fees Charged	\$61,888.00
Detainer's Placed	21	Subsistence Fees Collected	\$15,946.83
CMP Participants	15	Inmate Per-Diem Charged	\$18,430.00
Dollars Saved in Labor	\$7,363.20	Inmate Per-Diem Collected	\$7,704.44
Dollars Collected in Fees	\$600.00	Labor Hours by Inmates S/O	34,720
Inmate Meals Served	115,578	Labor Hours by Inmates -Other	683
Avg Food Cost per Day Per Inmate	\$1.92	Dollars Saved in Labor	\$271,541.01
Alcohol Breath Tests	48		

Special Elections Deputies Ready

When the polls open on Election Day, every eligible citizen over the age of 18 will be able to cast a vote. It is a right we often take for granted, one that defines our nation as a democracy. "Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting." *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. Supervisor of Elections Joe Campbell and his staff are readying for the big day. There are many things to do to ensure that one of our greatest freedoms can be exercised, **the right to vote!** To date the Sheriff's Office has participated with Joe's Team and have readied 27 Special Deputies for Elections Day. These special deputies are sworn to maintain good order at the polls and are given the authority to summon assistance when necessary to maintain peace and order at the polls and early voting sites. The Sheriff must deputize a deputy sheriff for each polling place and each early voting site and they must be present during the time the polls are open and until the election is completed. We are ready, are you? Please exercise your freedom!

During one of the training sessions, Patsy Fulbright (below), Poll Worker Coordinator for the Supervisor of Elections Office is demonstrating a voting machine. The poll workers and special deputies are briefed in their role and responsibilities regarding elections law and all issues that they may face at the polls while doing their job. **THANK YOU JOE CAMPBELL AND TEAM**



HIGHLANDS COUNTY **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

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**For tips on how to keep our kids safe see the Florida Sheriffs Association Child Safety Page
@ www.flsheriffs.org/child-safety**