2018 Annual Report
SHERIFF KEN J. ASCARA

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Message from Sheriff Ken J. Mascara

Friends and Neighbors!
Inside the pages of this 2018 annual report, you will learn about the many outstanding initiatives that the men and women of the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office have accomplished. They inspire me each and every day. Between their determination to protect the place we call home to their dedication to build lasting and positive relationships with children, youth, seniors and others in our community, these heroes love what they do and it shows.

2018 was a unique year for many reasons. The tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland changed how law enforcement agencies and school districts in Florida approach safety and security. Here at home, we have enjoyed a longstanding partnership between our agency, the school district and the Board of County Commissioners to provide law enforcement officers in our public schools. This was strengthened after Parkland. Legislation passed this year has increased our efforts, but not complicated them, and the result is a safer school community for students, teachers, staff and visitors.

Also in 2018, our agency saw a jump in domestic-related crimes. We had nine murders in 2018 and seven of them were from domestic relationships. Our agency continues to work hard to provide information about programs and services to help those experiencing domestic abuse and even have a member of our command staff on the board of directors for SafeSpace, the local domestic violence shelter.

Throughout 2018, our agency continued to engage with the community through Pop-Up Park Parties, summer camps, citizen’s academy classes, active shooter trainings, Teen Driver Challenge courses and other events. Our Citizens on Patrol (COP) program continues to grow, as does the number of Sheriff’s Office Neighborhood Watch groups throughout the county. All of these help develop a better understanding of what the Sheriff’s Office does each and every day. We ended the year with the ever popular Shop-with-a-Cop events that paired more than 60 children with a deputy and a $100 gift card to Wal-Mart. This Christmas season, we also delivered holiday cheer to several deserving families and children with a deputy and a $100 gift card to Wal-Mart. This Christmas event has changed the way Florida, and the nation, view the safety of our schools.

The School Resource Deputy Program in St. Lucie County dates back to 1984 when a Grand Jury was convened by Judge Philip Nourse to address crime and safety in St. Lucie County Schools. The Grand Jury’s findings included the bold statement that “St. Lucie County schools simply will not tolerate drugs or other criminal activities on campus” and that “regular policing of school campuses by law enforcement” should be implemented.

As a result of these findings, a Committee on School Safety was created with representation by school officials, community leaders, law enforcement and members from the Grand Jury. In 1985, then-Sheriff R.C. “Bobby” Knowles invited Leon County Sheriff’s Office to present their newly created School Resource Officer program to the Committee.

The Committee overwhelmingly concluded that a program of this type would “answer all findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury”. The program called for a uniformed officer, employed by the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office, be placed at each middle and high school with three “pillars” of responsibility: law enforcement, educator, counselor. In April of 1986, the St. Lucie County School Resource Deputy (SRD) Program was unveiled at Central High School, Westwood High School, Lincoln Park High School, Dan McCarty Middle School and Northport Middle School. Funding was provided by the county-funded Sheriff’s Office budget and initially cost $250,000 annually. Then-superintendent of schools George Hill said he was so excited about the partnership that he was going to “finance 50% of the program” through the school district.

Over time, the SRD program grew as the population in the county grew and the number of public schools expanded. In 2009, the SRD Program was expanded to include community schools.

On the morning of February 14, 2017, students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida said goodbye to their families and went to school. Little did they know that some of them would never return home. In the hours that followed, Nikolas Cruz, a former student, would take the lives of 17 students and staff and injure 17 others. The aftermath of this tragic event has changed the way Florida, and the nation, view the safety of our schools.

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School Resource Deputies develop relationships with students to aid in securing campuses and to share information.

In the first half of the 2018-19 school year, the first year the new mandates have been in place, the Sheriff’s Office tracked the following activity from deputies:

- **Baker Acts:** 100
- **Bomb Threat:** 2
- **Code Red Trainings/Drills:** 53
- **Campus Security Checks:** 6,554
- **Felony Arrests:** 49
- **Misdemeanor Arrests:** 79
- **Misdemeanor Referral to School Discipline:** 125
- **Civil Citation OR Diversion:** 52
- **Fights:** 325
- **Mobile Crisis Team Callout:** 44
- **Investigations:** 540
- **Parent Conferences:** 732
- **Classroom Presentations:** 295
- **Student Initiated Contacts:** 1,487
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Program was at its highest with 43 deputies and were in all levels of public school, including elementary, and funding was still a 50/50 split between the Sheriff’s budget and the School District budget.

The recession of 2010 greatly impacted the SRD program, reducing staffing levels to 23, eliminating deputies from elementary schools. Also eliminated was all funding from the School District. Fortunately, the Board of County Commissioners believed so strongly in the program that they stepped to the plate and provided full funding for the scaled-down program. The Port St. Lucie Police Department also stepped in and offered to provide three officers, one at each of the Port St. Lucie-based high schools. Since 2010, the Board of County Commissioners has invested more than $17 million to ensure the program continues.

In 2015, as the economy was beginning to level back out, personnel were added back to the SRD program, but never returned to the elementary school level. Funding from the School District returned at a nominal $400,000 per year.

In the hours after the tragic shooting in Parkland, Sheriff Ken Mascara immediately called together agency leaders and set into motion a plan to significantly enhance the level of service to our public schools and ensure they remain a safe place for students, teachers, staff and visitors. On February 15, the day after the shooting, law enforcement personnel from across the agency were placed at ALL schools throughout the county. Funding from the School District returned at a nominal $400,000 per year.

Engaging our community is a strategic priority for the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office. Over the past several years Sheriff Ken Mascara has encouraged deputies at all levels to engage in activities that build bridges and create lasting, positive relationships with the members of our community. This has included a renewed approach to everything from crime prevention efforts to relationships with kids in schools to how patrol deputies interact with neighborhood and businesses. Traditionally, the agency has maintained a strong presence in our community through the Crime Prevention Unit and our Citizen Observation Patrol (COP) and Neighborhood Watch programs.

In 2018, the COP program included 17 units with 232 members who volunteered 18,455 hours to keep their neighborhoods secure. These members complete a 40-hour training course and perform activities such as checking houses that are vacant due to vacations or other reasons. The Neighborhood Watch Program includes 27 groups and 18 homeowners associations throughout the county, made up of—

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Act included mandates for staffing all publicly-funded schools with a law enforcement officer and other initiatives to enhance the level of security in schools. The Sheriff’s Office included the following from deputies:

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In his budget to the Board of County Commissioners for the 2018-19 fiscal year, the Sheriff included a supplemental request that outlined the costs to comply with the law, estimated at almost $7 million. The state provided one-seventh of funding needed and the school district increased their $400,000 contribution to a total of $800,000. The Board of County Commissioners agreed to provide a total of $4.5 million, leaving the agency to reduce services in other areas to make up the difference.

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ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

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of residents who meet monthly, learn about safety tips and keep an eye on each other’s homes.

The Crime Prevention Unit also coordinated 42 Active Shooter Response classes for 1,868 participants at businesses, churches and other organizations to share practical response solutions should a shooting incident take place.

New in 2018 is an expanded service to the community for those coping with the effects of Alzheimer’s, dementia or Autism. Project L.O.S.T. (Locating Our Survivors Timely) provides a locator bracelet to these individuals that uses a radio frequency to locate them should they go missing or be lost. The program partners with the Alzheimer’s Community Care organization, SafetyNet and the Project Lifesaver International organization to make these devices and locator equipment available. Since April of 2018 when Project L.O.S.T. launched, 98 participants have been “banded” and five times clients have been lost and located using the equipment.

The agency’s Citizen’s Academy has been refreshed and is offered twice each year (April and October) to members of the community who want to learn more about the Sheriff’s Office. The 10-week program exposes the participants to every function of the agency and boasts 98 participants this year (April and October) to members of the community who want to learn more about the Sheriff’s Office. The 10-week program exposes the participants to every function of the agency and boasts 98 participants this year (April and October). The 10-week program exposes the participants to every function of the agency and boasts 98 participants this year (April and October).

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While patrolling the streets, investigating crimes and arresting bad guys will always be the primary function of the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office, engaging our community through fun and innovative programs and events helps build and create a stronger, safer, more resilient community.

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9 camps were offered with 238 participants in attendance. 2 Shop-with-a-Cop events allowed 64 children to go on a $100 Wal-Mart shopping spree with a deputy. In addition, 37 siblings were able to shop in our mobile Christmas store thanks to the donation of toys and other items by local non-profit groups. 43 other children who were banded were offered new bikes that were donated to the agency and twice during Christmas Operation Goodnight Lights took place at Lawnwood Regional Medical Center’s pediatric ward where Santa made a surprise appearance and presented gifts to patients who were spending Christmas in the hospital.

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The level of engagement in these organizations provides direct benefit to our employees and our own agency and is another testament of how we serve our community.
Wise and her unborn baby, Josiah, were killed by Shelley Terrace. They were killed by their homes on Ash Avenue and Legg and 70-year-old Gary Boice were killed at the hand of someone they knew, loved or trusted. More alarming were found murdered. More alarming crimes a community could face. Add one of the coldest and more heinous numbers of homicides connected to domestic relationships. Over the course of the calendar year, nine individuals were found murdered. More alarming than that is the fact that seven of them were killed at the hand of someone they knew, loved or trusted.

On February 28, deputies found the bodies of 56-year-old Gabriele Reusch Legg and 70-year-old Gary Boice in their homes on Ash Avenue and Shelley Terrace. They were killed by Reusch-Legg’s nephew, Melvin “Chip” Anderson who later crashed his car. They were killed two days later. In 2016, the most recent year of collected data, 105,000 crimes of domestic violence were reported to Florida law enforcement resulting in 105,000 arrests. In 2018, that number increased to 648.

In St. Lucie County in 2017, the Sheriff’s Office responded to 605 calls for service that had a nexus to domestic violence. In 2018, that number increased to 648.

Resources are available through SafePlace, a local shelter and service provider. Victims or relatives can call them through their 24-hour hotline at 800-500-1119. In addition, 2-1-1 provides services for crisis intervention, suicide prevention, elder and child abuse, and much more.

"Often times, the ones we love most just might be the ones that end up killing us." Sheriff Ken Mascara

105,000 CRIMES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WERE REPORTED TO FLORIDA LAW ENFORCEMENT RESULTING IN 63,000 ARRESTS.

1 IN 3 WOMEN AND 1 IN 4 MEN HAVE EXPERIENCED SOME FORM OF VIOLENCE BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ACCOUNTS FOR 15% OF ALL VIOLENT CRIME.

72% OF ALL MURDER-SUICIDES INVOLVED AN INTIMATE PARTNER.

All statistics are from 2016, the most recent year of collected data.
probation and await the outcome of complete his remaining years of was sent back to state prison to had been raped by Reese. Reese forward and stated that she too result of that listing, a woman came with his curfew, TCPalm published was released in 2014 on supervised, his 20-year prison sentence, Reese Stuart in 1997. After serving 17 of Reese, 48, sexual predator asked for the public's help in an The victim was identified as 67-year- they died on Saturday, September 9. made him unconscious. Lying next to the individual was laying on the ground Survivors of Port St. Lucie entered their rental home at 606 Ash Avenue to check the progress of tenants who were vacating the property and noticed a foul smell and something wrapped in carpet inside the garage. The landlord called 9-1-1, and responding deputies found a dead body. Through the investigation of the first two incidents, detectives were Anderson Reese

FEBRUARY 13 The day after a horrific shooting incident at Majory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Sheriff Ken Mascara reallocated personnel from throughout the agency to position a deputy in every public school in St. Lucie County.

FEBRUARY 28 Three dead bodies were found within a mile of each other. Law enforcement and emergency medical personal responded to a single car crash near the intersection of Oleander Avenue and Beach Avenue. A white BMW was found crashed into a drainage swale and the driver of the car was transported by EMS to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased. Around the same time, a landlord entered their rental home at 606 Ash Avenue to check the progress of tenants who were vacating the property and noticed a foul smell and something wrapped in carpet inside the garage. The landlord called 9-1-1, and responding deputies found a dead body. Through the investigation of the first two incidents, detectives were

April

April 23 The Sheriff’s Office partnered with Project Lifesaver International to provide resources to keep Alzheimer’s patients and children on the Autism Spectrum safe launching Project L.O.S.T. to provide a variety of resources to family members coping with cognitive disorders.

May 18 As a follow-up to the January investigation, Big Mi-Steak, the Sheriff’s Office and numerous partners arrested 13 individuals for dealing in heroin, fentanyl, cocaine and other illegal narcotics. Information from Big Mi-Steak led investigators to additional individuals in the supply chain, continuing to push these deadly drugs. Operation 2nd Misteak focused on moving through the hierarchy of the organization identified in Big Mi-Steak to identify co-conspirators, the sources of supply of illegal narcotics and how proceeds from the sale of the illegal narcotics move through the organization. Brothers William Strachan, a violent, habitual, career offender, and Leo Douglas, in addition to 11 other individuals were arrested. Throughout the course of the investigation, a Walther 9mm handgun, Glock handgun, Model 1911 handgun, Palmetto Arms AR-15, 12 gauge shotgun, pistol-style Drako AK-47, Highpoint, 45 cal. handgun, and miscellaneous ammunition, all from convicted felons, were seized. Drugs found during the investigation included ½ kilo of cocaine, 138 grams of powder cocaine, 194 grams of heroin, 740 grams of fentanyl, 34 capsules of heroin, six capsules of a heroin/fentanyl/cocaine mixture, two capsules of a heroin/methamphetamine mixture, eight hydromorphone pills, 12 grams of crack cocaine, 54 grams of marijuana, and various drug paraphernalia.

May

Reusch Legg and Boice led to a home at 6816 Shelley Terrace and after knocking on the door and not receiving an answer, inspected the inside of the home through a window and found a male inside dead. The driver of the car was identified as 61-year-old Melvin “Chip” Anderson who died from natural causes. 56-year-old Gabriele Reusch Legg, Anderson’s aunt by marriage, was the body in the home at 606 Ash Avenue. 70-year-old Gary Boice, Reusch Legg’s girlfriend was the man found dead at 6816 Shelley Terrace. The investigation led detectives to believe that Anderson killed Legg and then Boice.

March 21 On the morning of September 8, 2017, with Hurricane Irma bearing down on the county, deputies were called to River Park Marina. A car was partially submerged in the river and an individual was laying on the ground unconscious. Lying next to the person was a hammer covered in blood. That individual was transported to a local hospital where they died on Saturday, September 9. The victim was identified as 67-year-old Kathie Whatley of Port St. Lucie who was last seen with her 40-year-old son Lance Whatley, who was known to have chronic mental health issues. On Wednesday, September 13, Port St. Lucie Police were called to Rivergate Park for a body in the water. Tissue and DNA analysis identified the body to be Lance Whatley. Through the investigation, Kathie Whatley was determined to have died from blunt force trauma to the head and Lance Whatley was concluded to have died from suicide by drowning.

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OCTOBER

4 Michael Benjamin Hocker, 50, of Port St. Lucie was arrested and charged with grand theft of a firearm, giving false information to a pawnbroker and dealing in stolen property. Hocker was a detention deputy with the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office working at the St. Lucie County Jail. Hocker submitted his resignation with two weeks’ notice on September 28, 2018 with a final separation date of October 15. In submitting his agency-owned equipment, it was determined that Hocker had pawned his agency-provided firearm, claiming it was his own. With full cooperation by the pawn shop and the subsequent customers who purchased the gun, the gun was recovered and returned to the Sheriff’s Office. An arrest warrant was issued for Michael Hocker and he was arrested in Indian River County on October 1, 2018 and booked into the Indian River County Jail. His employment with the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office was terminated.

A team of 10 deputies traveled to Bay County, FL to assist local agencies in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. The team took calls for service and help maintain order, as well as helped several residents in need while they were there.

NOVEMBER

A car fleeing a traffic stop opened fire on a sheriff’s deputy and then fled through a local neighborhood before crashing. At approximately 2:42 p.m., a sheriff’s deputy attempted to conduct a traffic stop near the intersection of Virginia Avenue and 19th Street when an early 2000s model green Honda Civic with three males inside, began to flee and opened fire. The deputy immediately called out on the radio that he was taking on fire and gave a great description of the vehicle, leading other responding units, including Sheriff Ken Mascara, to converge on the area, pursue the fleeing vehicle and attempt to stop it. Throughout the three minute pursuit, six agency vehicles were struck by bullets from the fleeing suspects. The pursuit ended when the vehicle crashed into a tree near the intersection at Edwards Road and Sunrise Boulevard. No law enforcement officers were seriously injured and one detective was transported to a local hospital for minor injuries. Eduardo Ramirez, Jose Nava and a third juvenile suspect who are documented gang members, were taken into custody and charged with various crimes including attempted murder of a law enforcement officer, aggravated battery, fleeing and eluding.

DECEMBER

2 deputies and detectives investigated a drive-by shooting that left 21-year-old John’nethia Robinson dead and injured one other. Multiple 9-1-1 calls came reported a woman was laying unresponsive in front of 3000 Tropic Blvd. The investigation into her death is still ongoing.

NOVEMBER 17 Narcotics detectives were made aware that a known cocaine and heroin trafficker was entering St. Lucie County carrying a large amount of drugs. Detectives set up an operation in an attempt to purchase drugs from him and take him into custody. When the transaction was complete and the take down order was given, an unmarked agency vehicle pulled in behind the drug dealer’s car. The drug dealer then backed into the agency vehicle ramming it and drove forward almost running over several detectives who fired their weapons striking the suspect. When the car came to a stop, the detectives immediately pulled the man from the car and began administering lifesaving aid. 27-year-old Rio Antwuan Thomas died on scene from his injuries.

DECEMBER 23 Deputies were called to a home at 3 Grand Camino Court in the Spanish Lakes Country Club community for reports of gunfire and screaming. On scene, detectives found two individuals deceased from gunshot wounds and a third individual wounded from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The third victim/suspect was transported to a local hospital where he died of his injuries two days later. The deceased individuals were 84-year-old Rudolph Rehm and his 58-year-old son, Renee Holland. The third victim/suspect was identified as 53-year-old Mark Holland, the wife of Renee and son-in-law of Rudolph. It is believed that Mark Holland shot Rudolph Rehm and Renee Holland and then attempted to take his own life.

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Office of Chief Deputy

CHIEF DEPUTY GARRY R. WILSON

With over 40 years in law enforcement, Chief Deputy Garry Wilson is the second in command and is responsible for implementing Sheriff Ken J. Mascara's vision for the agency. He oversees the Departments of Detention and Court Services, Law Enforcement, and Professional Services and Technology. In addition, he directly supervises the work of the General Counsel, Internal Affairs Unit, Public Information Officer, fleet maintenance and facilities management as well as the Indian River Regional Crime Laboratory.

Department of Professional Services and Technology

WALLACE “TOBY” LONG, DIRECTOR

Mr. Long oversees all financial responsibilities of the Sheriff’s Office, including the preparation and administration of the budget, grant preparation and administration and purchasing. He also supervises the Human Resources and Records unit, along with the information technology office.

Sandra Jackson, Business Services Division
John Hammond, Information Services Division Manager
Kim Briglia, HR Manager
Stephanie Cole, Records Custodian/Manager
Lieutenant James DeFonzo, Patrol Support Section (Aviation, Marine, Reserve, K-9, and STAR Team)
Lieutenant Scott Wells, District Patrol Supervisor
Lieutenant Troy Church, District Patrol Supervisor
Lieutenant Andy McIntosh, District Patrol Supervisor
Lieutenant Steve Sigmon, District Patrol Supervisor
Lieutenant Jamie Wills, School Resource Section
Lieutenant John Parow, Professional Standards Section
Lieutenant Frank Pellegrini, Special Investigations Section
Lieutenant Mike Sheeiar, General Investigations Section

Department of Law Enforcement

MAJOR DOUGLAS V. HARDIE, DIRECTOR OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Major Hardie is responsible for all law enforcement functions of the Sheriff’s Office, including patrol operations, detectives, bomb and explosives disposal, crisis negotiations, special weapons and tactics, crime scene, school resource, crime prevention, training and agency accreditation.

CAPTAIN ADAM GOODNER, PATROL OPERATIONS DIVISION COMMANDER

Captain Goodner is in charge of the Sheriff’s Office’s first responders: the uniform patrol deputies on duty throughout the county every day and night of the year. He also supervises aviation and marine deputies, canine teams, the Traffic Unit, reserve deputies and the Underwater Search and Recovery Team.

CAPTAIN BRIAN HESTER, PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIVISION COMMANDER

Captain Hester ensures the agency maintains the highest standards in regards to training, recruiting and peer-led accreditation as well as active engagement of our community through targeted services and programs to strengthen positive relationships and partnerships.

CAPTAIN JERRY ROTHMAN, CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION COMMANDER

Captain Rothman supervises the detectives of the Sheriff’s Office, who investigate crimes against persons, property crimes, agricultural crimes and vehicle-related crimes. He also supervises the Special Investigations Unit investigating cases of narcotics, prostitution and other vice crimes. His division also includes crime scene analysis and other technical services.
Department of Detention & Court Services

MAJOR F. PATRICK TIGHE, DIRECTOR (RETIRED)

Major Tighe supervises the St. Lucie County Jail. Staff members are responsible for inmate care, custody and control. This includes objective classification to determine housing assignments. Jail staff supervise the private contractors who handle food preparation, medical and mental health services. Detention deputies are in charge of detainee work details and transportation of detainees to and from court appearances and the state correctional system, as ordered by members of the judiciary.

Captain Cicio oversees the daily operation of the St. Lucie County Courthouse in downtown Fort Pierce and the Courthouse Annex in St. Lucie West. His division includes court security, civil processing and execution and warrants processing.

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Captain Lawhorn oversees the daily operations and administration of the 284,000 square foot St. Lucie County Jail.