

November 15, 2013

Joint Release: OCSO Takes Part in Florida Sheriffs Task Force “Operation Safe Families”

Tallahassee, Fla. (November 15, 2013) – Today, the Florida Sheriffs Task Force (FSTF) announced the results of Operation Safe Families, the latest operation aimed at protecting youth and families in Florida. The four-week long operation targeted individuals with outstanding warrants for domestic violence and writs of bodily attachments for non-support, which are used to bring in individuals who have failed to pay child support. The operation, conducted from October 13 through November 9, resulted in 5,544 arrests.

In Okaloosa County, Sheriff Larry Ashley reported 53 probable cause arrests for domestic violence during that time period as well as six warrants served for domestic violence and 21 writs for failure to pay child support.

“Domestic violence takes a massive toll on individuals, families, and communities,” said Sheriff Ashley. “In law enforcement we see both the short-term damage and the long term impacts and we know that combating this problem takes constant vigilance, education, and a multi-faceted approach to help and support the victims. These aren’t just numbers and statistics. These are our neighbors who are suffering and it’s our obligation to intervene.”

“Domestic violence impacts the lives of countless families and innocent children. Besides the immediate physical pain and emotional trauma often caused by domestic violence, I am gravely concerned about this cyclical behavior that harms the growth and development of the next generation—our children,” said FSTF Chair and Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualteri. “While the formal task force known as Operation Safe Families has ended, citizens should rest assured knowing that no matter what day it is, the Sheriffs of Florida will continue working to combat domestic violence.”

The start of Operation Safe Families coincided with the *National Family Violence Apprehension Detail* initiative, a one-day national effort to serve outstanding family-violence warrants coordinated by the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office in Oregon. Operation Safe Families targeted those who endangered the lives of their children and families here in Florida.

Statewide, the operation produced tremendous results, including:

- 2,587 arrests for domestic violence
- 772 writs of bodily attachment for non-support served
- 89 children taken into protective custody

In the 2012 Uniform Crime Report, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) noted that 108,046 domestic violence offenses were reported to law enforcement agencies and 202

individuals died as a result of domestic violence. This represents approximately 20 percent of all homicides in Florida. Operation Safe Families aimed to track down individuals that have endangered the lives of their children and families and bring them to justice.

“When the safety of Florida’s citizens is threatened, our Sheriffs have developed the resources to act swiftly and strategically to address the issue at hand,” said Florida Sheriffs Association President and Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd. “FSA is proud of Sheriff Gualteri and the great work by the Florida Sheriffs Task Force.”

The Florida Sheriffs Task Force pools resources from the 67 Sheriffs’ Offices to address specific areas of concern. The Florida Sheriffs Task Force also is the point of contact for statewide initiatives, including helping to staff the State Emergency Operations Center and coordinating law enforcement responses to storm-ravaged communities during hurricanes and other disasters.

#

The Florida Sheriffs Association is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation made up of Florida’s Sheriffs, approximately 3,500 business leaders and 70,000 citizens throughout the state. Founded in 1893, FSA has quietly served the citizens of Florida by supporting the needs of the state’s law-enforcement community. Through the Florida Sheriffs Association, Sheriffs are given a forum to address lawmakers to push for positive changes in Florida’s public safety arena. FSA also provides Sheriffs’ Offices much-needed programs such as affordable training, special task forces and legislative and legal services. Dedicated to the prevention of juvenile delinquency and the development of lawful, productive citizens, FSA has established and continues to support the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches, which manages facilities and programs throughout the state to help restore hope, fulfill dreams, and prepare boys and girls for the future. The Florida Sheriffs Association has grown to be one of the largest and most successful state law enforcement associations in the nation. For more information on the Florida Sheriffs Association, visit www.flsheriffs.org.

For more information from FSA:

Nanette Schimpf, APR, CPRC

850-224-0174 work

850-528-2639 cell

nanettes@moorecommgroup.com

For more information from Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office

Michele Nicholson

Public Information Officer

850-651-7420

mnicholson@sheriff-okaloosa.org