

OKALOOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

WWW.SHERIFF-OKALOOSA.ORG



Looking back on 2025, we have so much to be thankful for. It was another banner year for Team OCSO. Our Human Resources have us at the lowest levels of vacancies in memory both on the sworn and professional support staff sides of the house. Additionally, our retention rates are better than ever. These two things are directly related to our wage and benefits package we offer that is unmatched in the region. We have looked at ways to be more efficient and improve technology as well as streamline resources. Our radio system with Williams Communications is now functioning throughout the county. And though not without challenges, we implemented a new RMS system with Pro Phoenix. Our IT staff have worked diligently with those in the field, supervision, and Pro Phoenix staff to recognize deficiencies and correct problems as they arise. We are confident in time these growing pains will be worked out, and this product will be seen as a valuable improvement to the administrative tasks required of this career field. I am constantly reminded of the professionalism of the staff by citizens that give you all praise for the great work you do daily to make our county safer. It is not lost on me nor the citizens, your dedication to service before self and your commitment to excellence. As 2025 draws to a close, I am reminded of how time completely flies by. Days become weeks and weeks become years and years become decades. I am reminded that I began my career here over 30 years ago in January 1995. I truly feel blessed to have chosen OCSO and for OCSO to have chosen me. I wouldn't trade this honorable career for anything.

Despite the ups and downs, continual change,
and constant scrutiny,
this calling continues to burn in my heart
and my passion
to serve this great community does not waiver.
As Pastor Sheldon reminds me, we are all given
a defined beginning and end date, and it's the
mark in between those
two points in time that matter.

It's what each of us will leave as our legacy.
Not only to your family, friends and community,
but it's also one of the few things
you can leave yourself.

I encourage each of you to make the most
of this mark and continue to serve
admirably and professionally.

I am so honored and blessed to lead this
to serving you and this community
with pride, dignity, transparency, integrity
and professionalism
for many years to come.

Warm regards,
Sheriff Eric Aden
Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office



2025 ESTIMATED CALLS FOR SERVICE

236,720

North District	60,946
Central District	79,060
East District	77,533
Airport	18,400
Misc. Zones	781

Six percent
increase over 2024.



North District Accomplishments

New Information:

Captain John Merchant Retirement

Lieutenant Heath Hehl graduates from the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute Senior Leadership Program

Corporal Eric Sheldon and Lieutenant Hehl participate in the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics

Awards:

Deputy Russ Kruger received a Certificate of Commendation for his actions in assisting with the apprehension of a burglar, who was armed, and resisting arrest.

Deputy Ayajah Hillsman-Sprague was presented with a District Level Commendation for going above and beyond the call of duty and for showing extreme compassion with an elderly female during a recent call for service.

Corporal Todd Sears / Deputy David Daniels - Life Saving Award December 2025

Corporal Todd Sears - Letter of Commendation November 2025

Sergeant Kristen Genrich - Completion FBI LEEDA Trilogy

Sergeant Kristen Genrich - Completion IPTM Crisis Negotiations Level 1 & 2

Deputy Gracey Reeder - Florida Law Enforcement Traffic Safety Challenge (DUI Enforcement)

Sergeant Kristen Genrich - 20 Years of Service

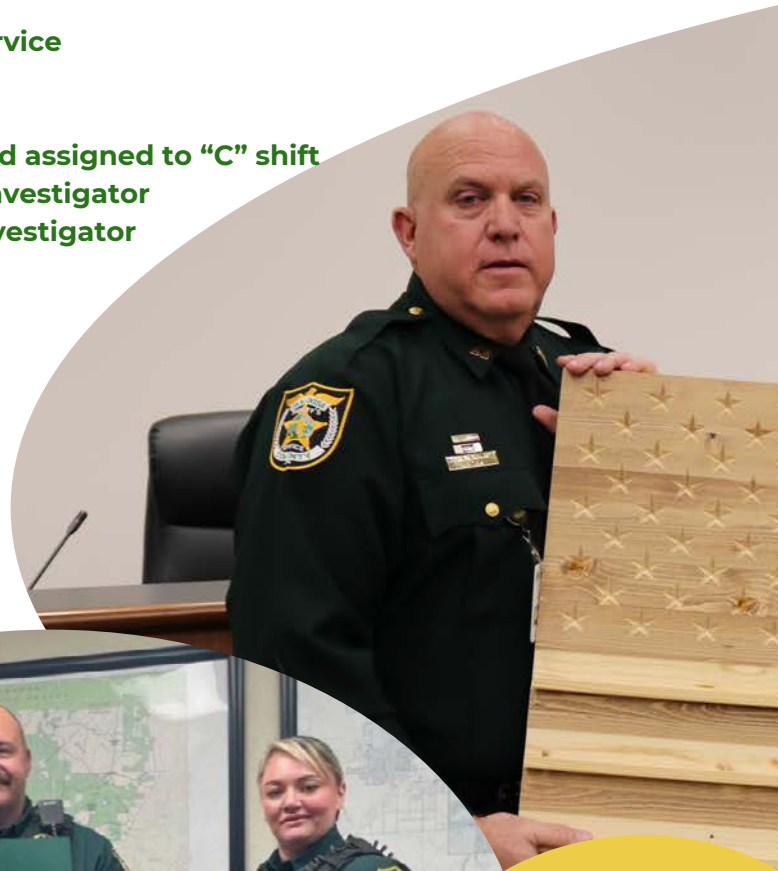
Promotions:

Deputy E. Dixon promoted to Corporal and assigned to "C" shift

Deputy Anthony Gonzales promoted to Investigator

Corporal Taylor Woodard promoted to Investigator

Deputy David Daniels - Selection K9





East District Accomplishments

Commendations/Awards/Achievements:

Sgt. Pierre Batiste OCSO Supervisor of the year
Sgt. Pierre Batiste Florida Leadership Academy Graduate
Sgt. Robert Shelley FBI Leeda Trilogy award recipient
Sgt. Robert Shelley OCSO sworn member of the quarter
Deputy Justin Spence Medal of Merit
Deputy Makenna Ace Moreno Medal of Merit
Deputy Brandon Seebeck Lifesaving award
Deputy Eric Cason Lifesaving award
Deputy Cole Rheinhardt commendation
Deputy Justin Spence commendation
Deputy William Lovell commendation
Deputy Shawn Lindsey commendation
Deputy Connor Detweiler commendation
Deputy Jordan Vazquez Cruz commendation
Deputy Dan Williams commendation
Deputy Weston Moreno commendation
Deputy Justin Spence Career Deputy 1
Deputy Gabrean Grundin 5 years of service



East District Accomplishments

Significant Cases

25-1702

A deputy conducted a traffic stop after identifying the vehicle's registered owner had suspended driving privileges. A positive alert from a K-9 led to a search of the vehicle, which uncovered three ounces of methamphetamine. The owner was subsequently arrested and charged with driving while license suspended and trafficking in methamphetamine.

25-3152

Four suspects linked to an organized retail theft ring were caught in Walton County after targeting several stores in Destin. Following a BOLO alert, deputies stopped the group and discovered a mountain of evidence, leading to 13 arrest warrants for the four suspects.

25-18410

Deputies initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle for a speeding violation. A positive K9 alert provided deputies with probable cause to conduct a vehicle search. The search resulted in the recovery of 12 grams of cocaine and \$9,500 in U.S. currency. After being advised of their rights, the suspect claimed ownership of the contraband and was arrested.

25-36380

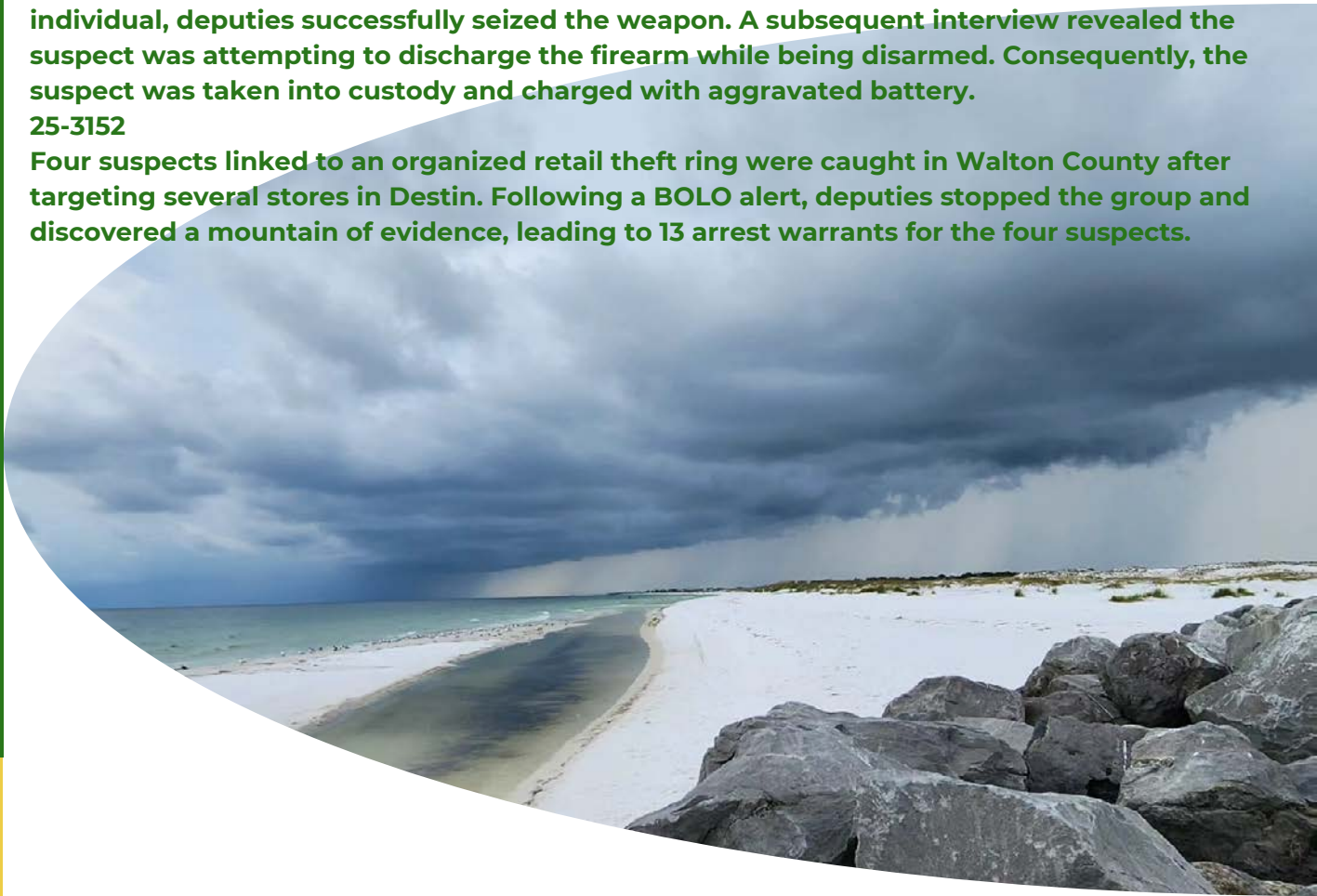
Deputies responded to the Brooks Bridge regarding a person in crisis. Despite the deputy's attempts at verbal negotiation, the individual continued to move toward the edge of the bridge. Recognizing the immediate threat to life, the deputy took decisive action, physically securing the subject and moving them away from the ledge. The individual was safely recovered and provided with the necessary assistance.

25-56231

Deputies intervened in an armed confrontation in the parking lot of Hurricane Lanes after observing a suspect brandish a firearm at a victim. During the struggle to disarm the individual, deputies successfully seized the weapon. A subsequent interview revealed the suspect was attempting to discharge the firearm while being disarmed. Consequently, the suspect was taken into custody and charged with aggravated battery.

25-3152

Four suspects linked to an organized retail theft ring were caught in Walton County after targeting several stores in Destin. Following a BOLO alert, deputies stopped the group and discovered a mountain of evidence, leading to 13 arrest warrants for the four suspects.



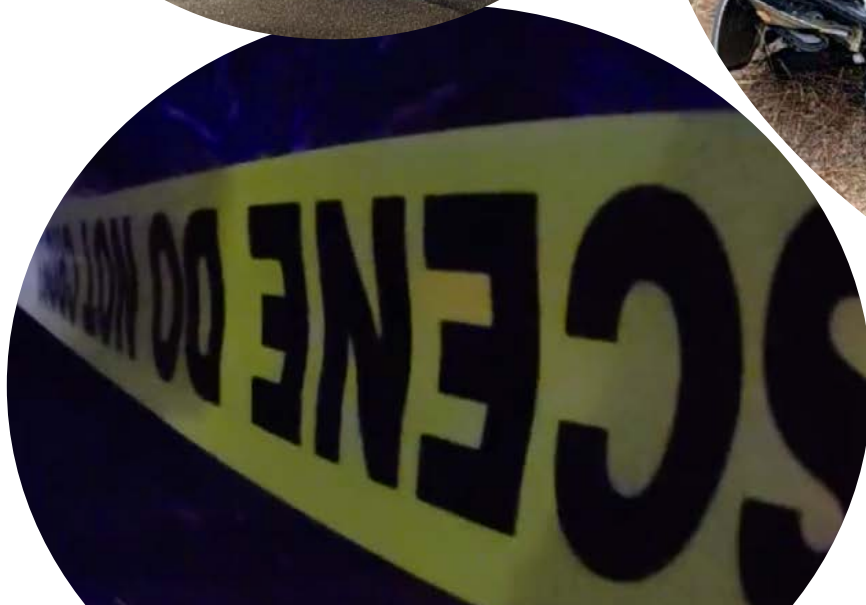
Central District Accomplishments

In 2025, District 2 deputies responded to a total of 79,060 representing an 8% increase from 72,374 calls for service the previous year. These calls ranged from routine assistance to critical emergencies, reflecting our commitment to community safety.

Deputies in District 2 generated 6176 offense reports throughout the year representing a 5% increase over the previous year.

Traffic safety remains a priority in District 2. In 2025, deputies conducted 6,461 traffic stops.

The Sheriff's Office also provides law enforcement services to the City of Mary Esther. This includes two full-time deputies who work in the city's incorporated areas. In 2025, OCSO deputies handled a total of 3,888 service calls/incidents within these city limits.



Central District Accomplishments

Community Resource Deputies (CRDs) The OCSO places a strong emphasis on community-oriented policing. In District 2, CRDs actively engaged with the public and participated in various community events, fostering positive relationships and open communication with residents. In 2025, CRDs:

Community Engagement & Outreach

Participated in or supported 40+ community events throughout Okaloosa County, including:

Law Enforcement Appreciation Day (Kids Discovery & Sam's Club)

Guns & Hoses Pickleball Tournament

Special Olympics Torch Run

National Night Out (Sylvania Heights)

Coffee with a Cop events (multiple locations)

Youth Week Field Day

7th Special Forces Group Community Events & Fall Festival

Mary Esther Veteran's Day Parade

FWB Christmas Parade

Teen Driver Crash Safety Event

Multiple school, church, and nonprofit engagements

Maintained strong partnership and recurring mentorship with Children in Crisis, including weekly updates, mentorship, site cleanups, and community programming.

Supported community food drives, holiday events, trunk-or-treat programs, and military appreciation events.

Assisted with courthouse, judge, and security details as needed.



Central District Accomplishments

Crime Prevention & Public Safety Initiatives

Conducted or supported major traffic safety campaigns:

Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over (multiple deployments)

Click It or Ticket Campaign (enhanced seatbelt enforcement)

Operation Southern Slowdown

Conducted E-Bike Safety Workshop with FDOT.

Conducted preschool safety talks and teen driver crash safety education.

Conducted Shoreline Villas security assessment.

Participated in Apartment Association security/crime prevention meeting.

Conducted night burglary patrols.

Maintained frequent alarm and emergency contact update meetings with local businesses (Sunrise Marine, Tractor Supply).

Traffic Enforcement & Citizen Complaint Response

Conducted hundreds of targeted patrols in response to citizen traffic complaints in high-visibility corridors including:

Hwy 98/Hurlburt Field corridor

6th Ave/2nd Street stop sign

Eglin Pkwy/Sunset Ln

North Beal Extension

School zones (Choctaw/Pryor, Mary Esther Elementary, Florosa, Cavalry Christian)

Maintained consistent enforcement presence in school zones throughout the academic year.

Conducted multiple speed studies (Miracle Strip, 4th Ave Shalimar, Meigs Drive, Page Bacon Rd, Mary Esther Dr/Kohler Dr).

Deployed speed/radar trailer at 20+ rotating locations throughout the year.

Deployed Mobile Flock LPR system (Hollywood Blvd/Okaloosa Rd).

Conducted enhanced seatbelt enforcement (12 stops / 12 warnings during campaign).



Central District Accomplishments

Street Crimes & Narcotics Enforcement

- Maintained consistent proactive patrols in high-complaint areas including:
 - Sylvania Heights
 - Denton/Racetrack corridor
 - Bob White Drive
 - Carmel Apartments
- Conducted sustained targeted patrol operations resulting in:
 - Multiple narcotics arrests monthly, totaling significant enforcement actions across the year.
 - Numerous traffic stops tied to narcotics investigations.
- Assisted with multiple search warrants throughout the year.
- Supported blanket trespass enforcement and trespass after warning (TPW) operations.

Environmental & Quality-of-Life Enforcement

- Conducted ongoing homeless camp monitoring at:
 - N. Beal Extension
 - Luke's Way (NWFSC property)
 - Yacht Club area
 - Power Plant/James Lee
 - 3rd St Shalimar
 - Hurlburt Rd
 - Brooks Ave
 - Cico Bayou Bridge
 - Behind Harley Davidson (high-complaint parcel under coordination)
- Issued multiple Trespass After Warning (TPW) notices.
- Coordinated with BOCC and Code Enforcement regarding problem parcels and dissolved HOA property.
- Conducted:
 - Code Enforcement tows
 - Wrecker inspections
 - Rotation tow audits
 - Driver verifications
- Maintained and expanded Blanket Trespass program (additions and renewals throughout year).
- Conducted regular solicitor enforcement (stops, citations, and arrests as necessary).
- Recruiting & Military Transition Outreach
- Conducted career day presentations and cadet career nights.
- Participated in Hiring Our Heroes event at Eglin AFB.
- Coordinated with 7th Special Forces Group regarding transition/retirement pathways into law enforcement.
- Participated in High School Career Day at Beachside Church.
- Networking & Interagency Collaboration
- Maintained recurring engagement with:
 - FWB Chamber of Commerce (breakfasts, luncheons, networking events)
 - Community business leaders
 - Military leadership at Hurlburt Field
- Coordinated with BOCC, Property Appraiser, Code Enforcement, and FDOT on multi-agency concerns.
- Participated in POST training and ongoing professional development events.

Central District Accomplishments

Overall Impact Summary

Throughout 2025, CRD demonstrated:

- Sustained proactive enforcement in high-complaint corridors
- Consistent narcotics enforcement and warrant service productivity
- Strong school zone safety presence
- Ongoing homeless camp and quality-of-life mitigation efforts
- Robust military and veteran community engagement
- Active participation in countywide safety campaigns
- Strong partnerships with nonprofits, schools, businesses, and military units
- Continuous visibility in the community through events, mentorship, and outreach



Criminal Investigations Division

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS SECTION (CIS)

The Criminal Investigations Section is made up of one Lieutenant, two Sergeants, five Senior Investigators and 14 Investigators. The section is divided into two specialties: Major Crimes/Special Victims Unit, Major Fraud/Property Crimes Unit, and Crime Prevention. CIS currently has two certified Computerized Voice Stress Analysts and two Polygraph Examiners. CIS conducted 84 Polygraph Examinations and 14 CVSAs. CIS conducted approximately 1197 felony criminal investigations. Of the 1197 investigations opened, 1043 cases were closed, for an 87% case closure rate. Investigators made 78 arrests in 2025.

During 2025 Corporal Woodard, Deputy Buri and Deputy Riley were promoted to Investigator.

Accomplishments received in 2025 were: Closed 1973 Homicide of Debra Espy. Sgt David Finke Supervisor of the Year. Our Major Fraud/Property Crimes Unit is implementing a skimmer detector tool to detect deep insert skimmers. Investigator Bininger was nominated to the Florida Law Enforcement Property Recovery Unit, as a regional board member representing the Panhandle Region. Our Major Crimes Unit presented a case brief on the Paris Mathews Homicide and 1973 homicide of Theresa Dusivitch to "The Deck" Podcast. As well as presenting a case brief on the recent solving of the 1994 homicide of Suzanne Kjellenberg by Keith Hunter Jespersen, AKA the "Happy Face Killer" to the Florida Association of Medical Examiners and to the Annual Crimestoppers Conference.



Criminal Investigations Division

CRIME SCENE AND EVIDENCE SECTION

Crime Scene Investigators attended 42 autopsies, responded to 160 crime scene processing callouts, processed numerous high-profile crime scenes, and executed 12 search warrants. Investigators also supported local municipal agencies and Sheriff's Office detectives by completing 38 ballistic analysis requests.

At the end of 2025, the Evidence Unit maintains 131,911 items in storage. During 2025, the unit received 9,055 new evidence items and purged or destroyed 7,302 items in accordance with policy and legal requirements. The unit also processed 2,470 Help Desk requests throughout the year. These requests included evidence checkout and review, evidence analysis and processing, evidence supply requests, record expungement orders, and the release of property to rightful owners.



Criminal Investigations Division

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS SECTION (SIS)

The Special Investigations Section is made up of one Lieutenant, two Sergeants, three Senior Investigators, and thirteen Investigators. The section is divided into four specialties: Multi-Agency Drug Task Force, Fugitive Warrants, Cyber Crimes/Homeland Security, and Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). There are four civilian employees that are employed within the RTCC. In 2025, members of SIS continued joint operations with regional, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to combat illegal drug activity and other felony criminal activity in the region. These joint operations were executed through partnerships with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Marshals Service, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Fort Walton Beach Police Department, Crestview Police Department, Niceville Police Department, Walton County Sheriff's Office, Florida Highway Patrol, and other agencies. These operations focused on the disruption and dismantling of problematic large-scale narcotics trafficking networks affecting the Gulf Coast region. Below are a few examples of specific casework conducted by members of SIS in 2025:

SIS Multi-Agency Drug Task Force Investigators conducted 180 investigations involving drug trafficking organizations, fugitive apprehensions, and covert operations: with a total of 174 arrests. Investigators authored 210 search warrants in casework, with 50 of those search warrants being residential. Investigators recovered 21 firearms from narcotics violators and/or weapons-related offenders. Additionally, the abovementioned investigations led to seven (14) federal indictments for narcotics and weapons related offenses. Total narcotics/contraband/assets seized by investigators in operations = \$1.3 million, based on current estimated weights are as follows: Methamphetamine (24.1 kilograms); Fentanyl (5.9 kilograms); Cocaine (9.3 kilograms).



Criminal Investigations Division

Fugitive Warrants members successfully tracked, targeted, and/or apprehended suspected criminal gang members and/or felony offenders wanted for homicide, aggravated battery, weapons offenses, sex crimes, narcotics trafficking, burglary, probation violations, and more.

The Cyber Crimes Unit/ Homeland Security Unit executed multiple “sting” operations, as well as multiple multi-jurisdictional operations targeting perpetrators and sex offenders who were attempting to exploit children online. In 2025, Investigators conducted a total of 853 forensic extractions or downloads of cellular devices, handheld devices, and/or computers. In addition, Investigators initiated 416 investigations, executed 30 residential search warrants, conducted 214 electronic search warrants, served 12 Risk Protection Orders, and received 573 NCMEC tips: all resulting in 67 arrests. The Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) is currently staffed by four full-time Criminal Analysts that specialize in information/intelligence gathering. In the event of an emergency, analysts in the RTCC can view surveillance cameras, License Plate Readers, and body-worn cameras to aid in providing deputies with real-time information and assist in their investigations. The RTCC is a force multiplier and the unblinking eye that helps the deputy to be side-by-side with the suspect instead of being a step behind. Analysts received and completed 1,093 Help-Desk Tickets.



Criminal Investigations Division

Fugitive Warrants members successfully tracked, targeted, and/or apprehended suspected criminal gang members and/or felony offenders wanted for homicide, aggravated battery, weapons offenses, sex crimes, narcotics trafficking, burglary, probation violations, and more.

The Cyber Crimes Unit/ Homeland Security Unit executed multiple “sting” operations, as well as multiple multi-jurisdictional operations targeting perpetrators and sex offenders who were attempting to exploit children online. In 2025, Investigators conducted a total of 853 forensic extractions or downloads of cellular devices, handheld devices, and/or computers. In addition, Investigators initiated 416 investigations, executed 30 residential search warrants, conducted 214 electronic search warrants, served 12 Risk Protection Orders, and received 573 NCMEC tips: all resulting in 67 arrests.

The Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) is currently staffed by four full-time Criminal Analysts that specialize in information/intelligence gathering. In the event of an emergency, analysts in the RTCC can view surveillance cameras, License Plate Readers, and body-worn cameras to aid in providing deputies with real-time information and assist in their investigations. The RTCC is a force multiplier and the unblinking eye that helps the deputy to be side-by-side with the suspect instead of being a step behind. Analysts received and completed 1,093 Help-Desk Tickets.

SIS Investigator Daniel Echols was awarded “Investigator of the Year” for 2025.



Criminal Investigations Division

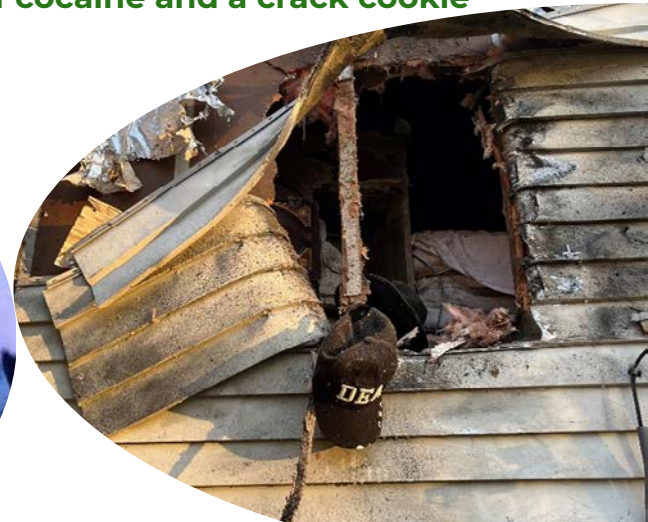
Significant Casework

In February 2025, DTF with the assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Dothan Police Department concluded a long-term investigation. The investigation began in 2023, when a Drug Trafficking Organization, responsible for the transportation of kilogram quantities of methamphetamine and fentanyl from Dothan, Alabama, and Los Angeles, California to Okaloosa County was identified. During the investigation, more than 55 pounds of methamphetamine, 1.5 kilograms of fentanyl, 5 firearms, and \$200,000 of US currency. This investigation resulted in 6 arrests for various narcotics and money laundering charges.

In June 2025, Investigators learned of a suspect traveling to Atlanta, GA to acquire a large amount of cocaine with intent to return to Okaloosa County. Investigators deployed various surveillance methods on the suspect and upon his return to Okaloosa County a traffic stop was conducted on the vehicle. During the traffic stop, the suspect was observed to have a white powder on his nose, which later tested positive for cocaine. A search of the vehicle resulted in the seizure of 765 grams of cocaine.

In July 2025, Investigators uncovered information regarding a male in Fort Walton Beach distributing multiple pounds of methamphetamine throughout Okaloosa County. Information revealed the narcotics were coming in through the mail. In August, surveillance methods were used to witness the delivery and receipt of a package at the suspect's residence. Shortly thereafter, the suspect was observed leaving in a vehicle and a traffic stop was conducted which resulted in his arrest and the seizure of approximately three ounces of methamphetamine. As a result of the traffic stop and observations at the residence, a residential search warrant was secured and executed, which resulted in the seizure of approximately 1.6 kilos of methamphetamine and various other narcotics.

• In September 2025, Investigators developed information on a kilogram level cocaine distributor in Ft. Walton Beach. Following several controlled purchases, a narcotics search warrant was executed at the suspect's residence. The search warrant yielded approximately 610 grams of cocaine and a crack cookie weighing approximately 37 grams.



Criminal Investigations Division



Communications

Consolidated Emergency Communications Center 2025 Division Highlights

Emergency Phone Calls: 113,335

Non-Emergency Phone Calls: 186,796

Total calls for 2025: 300,131

Average calls per day: 822

During 2025, the Communications Center successfully implemented several major operational initiatives aimed at improving system reliability, efficiency, and service delivery.

A significant accomplishment was the transition to a new Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) vendor. This complex system migration required extensive planning, training, and coordination from staff. Personnel demonstrated exceptional adaptability and professionalism throughout the transition, resulting in a successful implementation with minimal disruption to operations.

During the year, the division also successfully navigated a major hardware refresh of the Motorola Vesta 911 call handling system, ensuring the continued reliability of mission-critical emergency services. Through careful planning, close coordination with stakeholders, and phased implementation, the upgrade was completed with no disruption to call-taking operations. This effort strengthened system performance and resilience while maintaining uninterrupted service to the public, underscoring the division's commitment to operational excellence and public safety.

In addition, the Communications Division launched "AVA" through Aurelian, introducing advanced automation into the non-emergency call-taking process. This initiative is expected to enhance call-taking efficiency by reducing non-emergency call volume, eliminating hold times, and enabling call takers to prioritize emergency calls more effectively. The deployment of AVA represents a strategic investment in technology to improve response capability and optimize operational effectiveness.



Communications

Promotions:

Sandra Boyer promoted to Communications Supervisor

Heather Derrick promoted to Assistant Communications Supervisor

Heather Willoughby promoted to Assistant Communication Supervisor

Communications Advanced Certification:

Charlie Shift Communications Supervisor Ryan Jaycocks graduated from the Florida Leadership Academy through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Lieutenant Dennis Fields graduated from the Senior Leadership Program through Florida Department of Law Enforcement

Communications Assistant Manager Audrey Adams attended the inaugural FSA Women's Leadership Academy

Alpha Shift Communications Supervisor Sandy Boyer graduated from Leadership Okaloosa



Communications



FLORIDA SHERIFFS TRAINING INSTITUTE

Women's Leadership Academy Class 1

March 2025, Tallahassee, Florida



Special Operations Division

Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Beach/Marine Unit and Dive Team

BEACH UNIT

Okaloosa County remains the center of Spring Break activity and continually draws large beach crowds throughout the summer season. Deputies manage the increased activity by maintaining a strong presence, enforcing state and local laws, and responding quickly to incidents to ensure public safety. Spring Break historically draws large amounts of visitors to the area and 2025 was no different. During Spring Break, Deputies initiated 664 arrests over the course of 54 days. These arrests were the result of miscellaneous calls for service, underage possession of alcohol, and narcotics.

Marine Unit

The OCSO Marine Unit maintains a strong reputation for effective collaboration with partner agencies including the United States Coast Guard, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and local municipalities. This cooperative, force-multiplier approach has contributed to safer waterways throughout Okaloosa County. In 2025, the OCSO Marine Unit took delivery of an 11M Silverships Ambar that bolstered law enforcement patrol and response capabilities. The 11M has proven to be a needed platform for maritime incidents, patrol, and elevated Dive Team responses. Funding was provided through the Tourist Development Council.

The Marine Unit is staffed by five full-time vessel coxswains. All agency coxswains receive advanced, year-round training in vessel operations during both daytime and nighttime hours. Enforcement of Boating Under the Influence (BUI) laws and boating safety education remain a primary focus. These proactive patrol efforts, combined with consistent enforcement, resulted in another reduction in BUI arrests for 2025.

DIVE TEAM

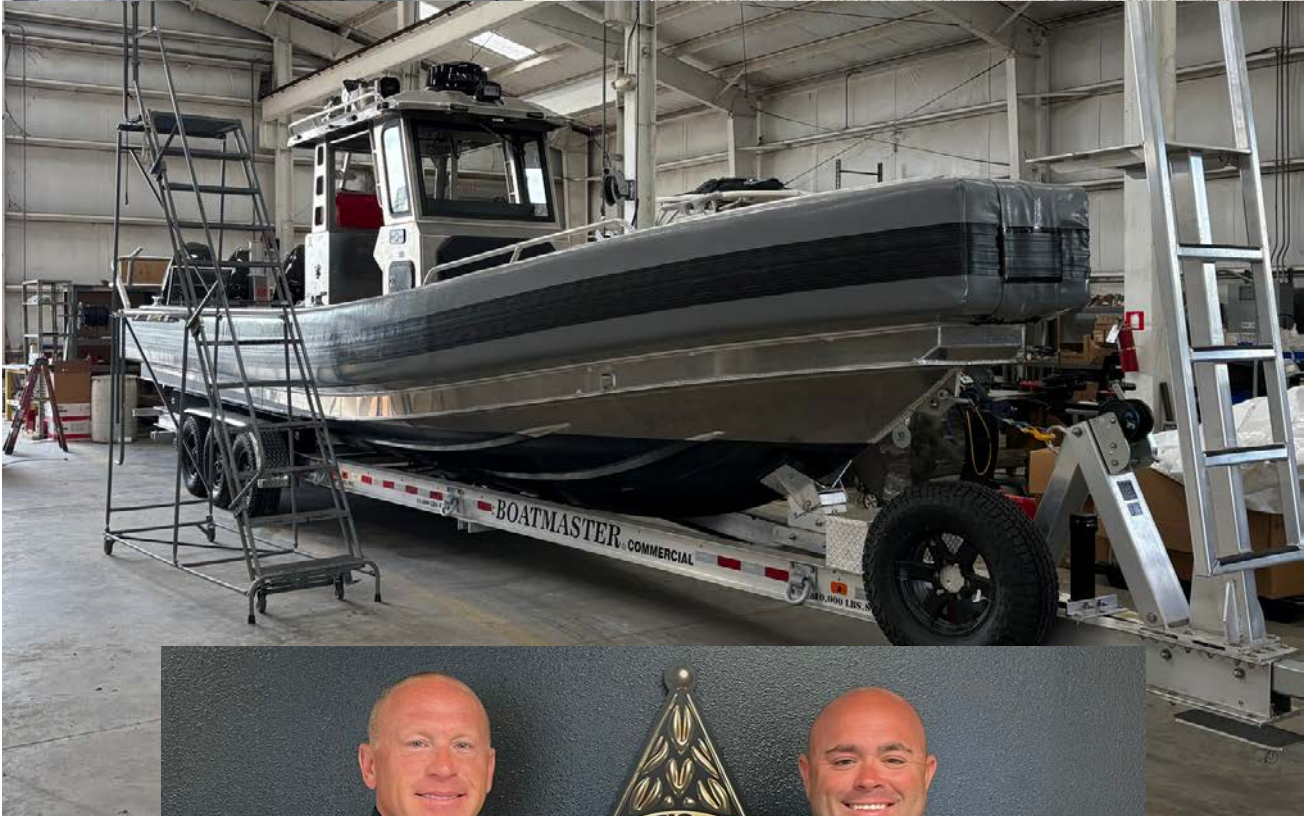
The Dive Team is comprised of 14 active members responsible for the recovery of submerged evidence, property, and missing persons. Members perform specialized dive operations in addition to their regular assignments and complete monthly advanced training to maintain a high level of operational readiness.

Due to Okaloosa County's extensive coastal areas, the Dive Team is routinely deployed to locate and retrieve evidentiary items for the Criminal Investigations Division.

Beyond operational responses, the Dive Team participates in several annual underwater cleanup initiatives in partnership with nonprofit organizations.



Special Operations Division



Youth Services

The Youth Services Division is committed to promoting safety in educational institutions throughout Okaloosa County by implementing the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. This vital initiative is executed by 60 deputies who deliver law enforcement services to 45 public and charter schools, thereby serving a student population that exceeds 30,000 and comprises over 3,000 educators, school personnel, and support staff members. The dedication of these individuals to the welfare of youth is unparalleled, and their diligent efforts have yielded positive outcomes for both the community and the children under their protection. The Youth Services Division comprises a highly competent team that shares a common vision and oversees Florida's foremost School Resource Officer program. While maintaining school security is a fundamental aspect of the SRO program, the program also encompasses broader objectives. SROs utilize the Triad method, prioritizing education, informal counseling, and law enforcement. This multifaceted approach facilitates the integration of SROs into the educational environment, allowing them to provide essential resources to students and faculty.

Deputies from the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) SRO program have engaged in numerous classroom sessions addressing drug awareness, cyber safety, bullying, and related topics. Additionally, they have ensured security at after-school sporting events, coordinated school activities, attended faculty meetings, and assisted with various school-related responsibilities.



Youth Services

School Safety and Involvement

SROs are essential in fostering a safe and secure educational environment for students. They consistently apply their expertise to assist both students and staff members. Prior to the commencement of each academic year, SROs conduct vital training sessions on assailant response, school crisis management, and various other relevant subjects. Additionally, they perform comprehensive safety assessments across all school facilities and communicate their findings to the Office of Safe Schools. In collaboration with the School District, SROs work diligently to address areas that necessitate improvement. The commitment to ensuring school safety is of utmost importance, and the SROs are dedicated to proactively identifying and mitigating potential threats. The guiding principle of the unit, encapsulated in the creed "Here for You, Not Because of You," shapes its operational protocols concerning safety. Ensuring school safety is of utmost importance; the protection of our youth, educators, and school staff is our primary responsibility. As the adage "iron sharpens iron" suggests, our SROs are dedicated to continuously enhancing their skills to improve their past performances. The Youth Services Division has been instrumental in transforming the field of school-based policing by implementing rigorous school protocol responses, supplemented by extensive training in mental health, tactical procedures, and leadership development. Additionally, through a model of small-unit leadership, the SROs have optimized organizational structures and empowered personnel at all levels, from junior ranks to senior positions. This approach has fostered enhanced peer-level leadership, resulting in positive outcomes within our schools and cultivating well-rounded SROs.



Youth Services

Sex Offender/Predator Tracking Unit

The Sex Offender/ Predator Tracking Unit (SOPU) comprises SROs tasked with essential responsibilities that include monitoring, tracking, investigating, and verifying all sex offenders and predators within Okaloosa County. Since the genesis of this critical role in 2013, the SROs have consistently achieved compliance from this demographic.

SOPU currently monitors 420 individuals consisting of:

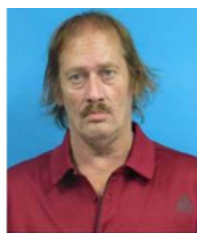
- 374 Offenders
- 41 Predators
- 5 Juvenile Sex Offenders
- 5 Absconders



JABARI D FOUNTAIN
Date of Image : 12/01/2025

Primary Information	
Designation:	Sexual Predator
Name:	JABARI D FOUNTAIN
Status:	Supervised - FL Dept of Corrections
Dept of Corrections #:	P52556
Date of Birth:	12/20/1996
Race:	Black
Sex:	Male
Hair:	Black
Eyes:	Brown
Height:	6'01"
Weight:	165 lbs

JABARI D FOUNTAIN is a sexual predator under Florida law.
Positive identification cannot be established unless a fingerprint comparison is made.
[Click Here to Track this Offender](#)



John Paul Moore Sr
Date of Image : 09/20/2024

Designation:	Sexual Predator
Name:	John Paul Moore Sr
Status:	Released - Subject to Registration
Dept of Corrections#:	752240
Date Of Birth:	01/11/1967
Race:	White
Sex:	Male
Hair:	Brown
Eyes:	Blue
Height:	5'10"
Weight:	230 lbs

John Paul Moore Sr is a sexual predator under Florida law.
Positive identification cannot be established unless a fingerprint comparison is made.

Aliases				
John P Moore Sr, John Paul Moore, John Moore				
Scars, Marks & Tattoos				
Type	Body Location	Count		
Not Available				
Address Information				
Address	Address Source information	Map Link		
420 Woodrow St NE Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547-2434 Okaloosa County	Source: DC Received Date: 09/11/2024 Address Type: Permanent	N/A		
Crime Information - Qualifying Offenses				
Adjudication Date	Crime Description	Court Case Number	Jurisdiction & State	Adjudication
03/06/2020	Sexual Predator, Fail To Register F.S. 775.21(10)(a)	1900165	Okaloosa, FL	Guilty/convict
09/09/2024	Sex Offender Fail Comply Registration; F.s. 943.0435(9)	2302370	Okaloosa, FL	Guilty/convict
09/09/2024	Sex Offender Fail Comply Registration; F.s. 943.0435(9)	2302484	Okaloosa, FL	Guilty/convict
09/09/2024	SX OFNDR.FAIL RPT.NONMOVE; F.S.	2302484	Okaloosa, FL	Guilty/convict

Youth Services

Noteworthy Accomplishments

The SRO program represents a model initiative for school resource officer programs in Florida. The Youth Services Division has garnered recognition both statewide and nationally for its exemplary contributions to school-based policing, innovative methodologies, and adherence to best practices associated with school-based policing. The division incorporates talented individuals from diverse backgrounds, resulting in a rich array of life experiences that equip the team to address a wide range of situations effectively. Members of the Youth Services Division received commendations throughout the agency for the year 2025, including divisional honors and advancements in rank, and recognition from Florida state organizations.

- Alyssa Blanton – 2025 School Resource Officer of the Year
- Deputy Lily Vu -2025 Mama Jo Hunter Award
- Sgt. Randall Joiner - 2025 Drug Free Hero Award
- Deputy Shelby Buri – Promoted to Investigator
- Deputy John Wohlfarth -20 years of service
- Deputy Leah Spooneybarger – Life Saving Award



Youth Services

Explorer Post #245

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Explorer Post # 245 actively seeks civic-minded young individuals within Okaloosa County. Under the guidance of the SROs, the Post aims to cultivate pride and enhance self-esteem among youth participants. The Sheriff's Office Explorer Post # 245 is supported by five SRO advisors who mentor fifteen explorers. The primary objective of this initiative is to educate, guide, and counsel these young individuals, thereby setting them on a pathway to success. In 2024, the Post logged a substantial number of training hours and actively engaged in various community-oriented events, including parades, clothing drives, and other community-fostering events.



Airports Security Unit

Among the countless accomplishments of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, the Airport Security Unit (ASU) continues to stand out as a vital component of our public safety mission. Now entering its tenth year of service, the ASU remains dedicated to protecting the county's three airports: Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS), Bob Sikes Airport (CEW), and Destin Executive Airport (DTS).

Since its creation in 2017, the Airport Security Unit has evolved alongside the rapid growth of air travel in our region. Deputies assigned to the unit responded to thousands of calls for service in 2025, addressing incidents ranging from routine assistance to complex security matters within the unique environment of commercial aviation. Their presence ensures not only a rapid law enforcement response, but also a visible and reassuring layer of protection for passengers, employees, and airport partners.

Operating in a setting that demands constant vigilance, ASU personnel are specially trained to manage the dynamic challenges associated with airport operations. The unit emphasizes proactive threat detection, target-hardening initiatives, and comprehensive threat assessments designed to safeguard critical infrastructure. Through strong collaboration with federal, state, and local agencies, the ASU works to identify and mitigate emerging risks before they impact the traveling public.

This year, Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) reached another significant milestone, welcoming nearly 2.5 million passengers, its highest volume to date. This sustained growth highlights the essential role of the Airport Security Unit in maintaining a secure and efficient travel environment at one of the region's fastest-growing transportation hubs.

The ASU provides continuous, around-the-clock security coverage at all three county-owned airports. Their dedication, professionalism, and adaptability reinforce public trust in the safety of air travel within Okaloosa County. As we reflect on another year of service, we commend the men and women of the Airport Security Unit for their steadfast commitment to excellence and their unwavering focus on protecting our community.



Professional Standards Division

Professional Development Unit

The Office of Professional Standards, Professional Development Unit, manages the Career Development Program. It provides career guidance, recognition of accomplishments, and financial incentives for non-supervisory deputies and communications officers within the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. The program establishes a clearly defined career path for personnel who seek to exceed the minimum requirements of their positions and be recognized for their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to excellence.

The Career Development Program is based on a structured credit system that recognizes achievements in areas such as training, higher education, professional accomplishments, and community involvement. Currently, the program offers three levels of advancement for deputies and four levels of advancement for communications officers.

2025 Career Development Program Accomplishments

- Deputy Matthew Christmas – Advanced to Career Deputy I
- Deputy Justin Spence – Advanced to Career Deputy I
- Deputy Matthew Sumner – Advanced to Career Deputy I
- Deputy Melissa Vause – Advanced to Career Deputy I
- Deputy Christopher Lybrand – Advanced to Career Deputy II
- Deputy Timothy Siren – Advanced to Career Deputy II
- Deputy James Reeves – Advanced to Career Deputy III
- Communications Supervisor Casey Bilbrey – Advanced to Career Communicator I



Professional Standards Division

Training Section

2025 Advanced Leadership Training

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office continued its commitment to professional leadership development by sending personnel to advanced leadership and executive training programs throughout 2025.

FDLE Executive Leadership Seminar

- Captain Matthew Harrison
- Captain Michael Rader

FDLE Senior Leadership Program

- Lieutenant Dennis Fields
- Lieutenant Heath Hehl

Florida Sheriff's Institute – Commanders Academy

- Lieutenant Joseph Gordon
- Lieutenant Travis Topolski

FDLE Florida Leadership Academy

- Sergeant Pierre Batiste
- Communications Supervisor Ryan Jacocks

FBI-LEEDA Supervisor Leadership Institute

- Sergeant Todd Padilla
- Sergeant Robert Shelley
- Sergeant Brannon Small
- Corporal Joseph Hart
- Corporal Chad Biernacki

FBI-LEEDA Command Leadership Institute

- Sergeant Robert Shelley
- Sergeant Brannon Small
- Corporal Joseph Hart
- Corporal Chad Biernacki
- Communications Supervisor Dana King

FBI-LEEDA Executive Leadership Institute

- Captain Michael Rader
- Sergeant Jarrett Bristol
- Sergeant Jason Folley
- Sergeant Brannon Small
- Corporal Joseph Hart
- Corporal Chad Biernacki
- Communications Supervisor Dana King



Professional Standards Division

Training Section

The Training Section consists of an Inspector, an Annual Training Sergeant, a Field Training and Evaluation Program Sergeant, a Use of Force Sergeant, two Range Masters, an Armorer, and a civilian Training Coordinator. The section is primarily housed at the Larry Ashley Public Safety Training Complex in Crestview, Florida. Recognized as a regional training center with access to national-level training assets, the facility includes three firearms ranges, an explosive breaching range, a shoot house, rappel tower, physical abilities course, MILO firearms simulator, and multiple classroom spaces. In 2024, approval was granted for the design and construction of a CJSTC driving pad to enhance vehicle operations training capabilities. In 2025, land clearing began for the driving pad, and construction continues with a projected completion date in 2026.

The training complex routinely hosts local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies conducting annual and specialized training exercises.

The Training Section continued its partnership with Northwest Florida State College's Public Safety Training Center (CJSTC Training Center 21) and remained an American Heart Association Training Site. Through these partnerships, the agency provided training in Basic Life Support (BLS), CPR, Automated External Defibrillator (AED) usage, and Stop the Bleed instruction for agency personnel. Stop the Bleed is a nationally recognized program endorsed by the White House that educates participants on life-saving bleeding control techniques.

Additionally, the Training Section partnered with several nationally recognized training organizations, including the Florida Public Safety Institute, the Institute of Police Technology and Management (IPTM), and vendors such as SIG Sauer and Tactical Energetic Entry Systems. These partnerships enabled the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Public Safety Training Complex to host multiple advanced training courses attended by law enforcement personnel from across the southeastern United States, throughout the nation, and internationally.



Professional Standards Division

Intra-Agency Training

During 2025, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office employees completed 12,436 hours of training outside the agency and 7,323 hours of training conducted internally. Training topics included statutorily required retraining and mandatory instruction in areas such as Human Diversity, Officer Use of Force, Dart-Firing Stun Gun certification, firearms qualification standards, defensive tactics, crowd control, vehicle operations, physical abilities testing, leadership development, crime scene investigation, major crimes investigations, interviewing techniques, and other law enforcement disciplines.

Personnel also completed 7,512 hours of online training through external learning platforms. Internally, the agency's PowerDMS virtual training system accounted for an additional 2,825 hours of online instruction. The use of virtual training significantly reduced tuition, travel, instructor, overtime, and manpower-related costs while increasing training accessibility and operational efficiency. The agency continued its Cadet Program, which employs prospective deputy sheriffs while they attend the law enforcement academy at Northwest Florida State College. The program provides cadets with additional training opportunities at the Larry Ashley Public Safety Training Complex, as well as ride-along experiences with multiple divisions within the Sheriff's Office. A total of 19 cadets were hired during 2025.

The agency also continued providing structured post-academy training through its Field Training and Evaluation Program. This program pairs newly hired deputies with specially trained Field Training Officers for several months of supervised, on-the-job instruction and evaluation. In total, approximately 19 sworn personnel were hired during 2025.



Professional Standards Division

CHAPLAINCY

For the year of 2025, the Chaplaincy completed a variety of tasks outlined in this document. Included are calls for service, as it relates to “Chaplain Assists”, which include medical emergencies, unattended deaths, to include suicides and death notifications.

The Chaplaincy for the year consisted of four Chaplains from January to November, to include Chaplain Sheldon, Chaplain Wendt, Chaplain Rainey, and Chaplain Malheiro. Chaplain Malheiro has had some medical issues which has limited him at times for service. Currently for the end of the 2025 calendar year from November to December, the Chaplaincy unit has brought on two new Chaplains.

Chaplain Steve Walsh and Chaplain David Butler. Chaplain Walsh brings a lot to the Chaplaincy, he is a retired Chief Master Sergeant, serving in the USAF. He continued to serve his country, going back into his military career field, serving another twenty years. Chaplain Walsh serves as a Chaplain with the Department of Corrections as well as with SERVE Ministries, who supports all first responders in the local area and abroad.

Chaplain Butler has been serving as a Pastor for over forty-five years and is a Pastor in Destin. He has been a part of a unique ministry, where for over thirteen years has served the members of congress in Washington DC, with a monthly Bible Study. He also serves as an Honorary Commander for E.A.F.B.



Professional Standards Division

CHAPLAINCY

For the year of 2025, the Chaplaincy completed a variety of tasks outlined in this document. Included are calls for service, as it relates to “Chaplain Assists”, which include medical emergencies, unattended deaths, to include suicides and death notifications.

The Chaplaincy for the year consisted of four Chaplains from January to November, to include Chaplain Sheldon, Chaplain Wendt, Chaplain Rainey, and Chaplain Malheiro. Chaplain Malheiro has had some medical issues which has limited him at times for service. Currently for the end of the 2025 calendar year from November to December, the Chaplaincy unit has brought on two new Chaplains.

Chaplain Steve Walsh and Chaplain David Butler. Chaplain Walsh brings a lot to the Chaplaincy, he is a retired Chief Master Sergeant, serving in the USAF. He continued to serve his country, going back into his military career field, serving another twenty years. Chaplain Walsh serves as a Chaplain with the Department of Corrections as well as with SERVE Ministries, who supports all first responders in the local area and abroad.

Chaplain Butler has been serving as a Pastor for over forty-five years and is a Pastor in Destin. He has been a part of a unique ministry, where for over thirteen years has served the members of congress in Washington DC, with a monthly Bible Study. He also serves as an Honorary Commander for E.A.F.B.



Professional Standards Division

Besides the below listed calls for service, all of the Chaplains attend the awards, promotion and swearing in ceremonies. The Chaplaincy also participates in Employee Orientations throughout the year.

This year, Chaplain Sheldon served on the Hospice Tree Committee, which was a success, in close to four hundred Christmas Trees were distributed to Hospice patients across the Florida Panhandle.

This year our Chaplaincy along with the Walton County Sheriff's Office, Crestview Fire Department and the Crestview Police Department, formed a Chaplains Collaborative, to share ideas and to assist each other with services, as well as with training. This has been instrumental in recruiting ideas, sharing information within the chaplaincies and in networking.

Chaplaincy continues to serve its members, consistently spending time visiting members in each District, as well as schools, community events and social gatherings such as Chamber Meetings in each of the perspective districts. Also serving alongside the Star Charities members, with both the Jay Jones Two-Gun Match, the Hospice Tree Initiative, and this year at the Florida Sheriff's Office Youth Rances Clay Shoot.

As we close out this year, we have another Chaplain who will be coming on board at the beginning of 2026. Eric Coley, who is the Lead Chaplain with the Department of Corrections at Okaloosa Correctional Institution. He has been a Pastor in the local area as well as being a part of a variety of ministries in the local area. The goal for next year, is to have two more Chaplains come aboard, which would place three Chaplains in each of the districts. In 2018 to 2021 this was the model for the Chaplaincy, to better serve our members and to provide better coverage for calls for service, for the on-call Chaplain.

The current Chaplains, who serve here at the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, bring well over two hundred and twenty years of pastoral ministry experience to the Sheriff's Office!

Total Calls for Service:

Fifty-four (54) with over one-hundred fifty hours on these calls for service.

Chaplain Assists/Unattended/Medical: 44

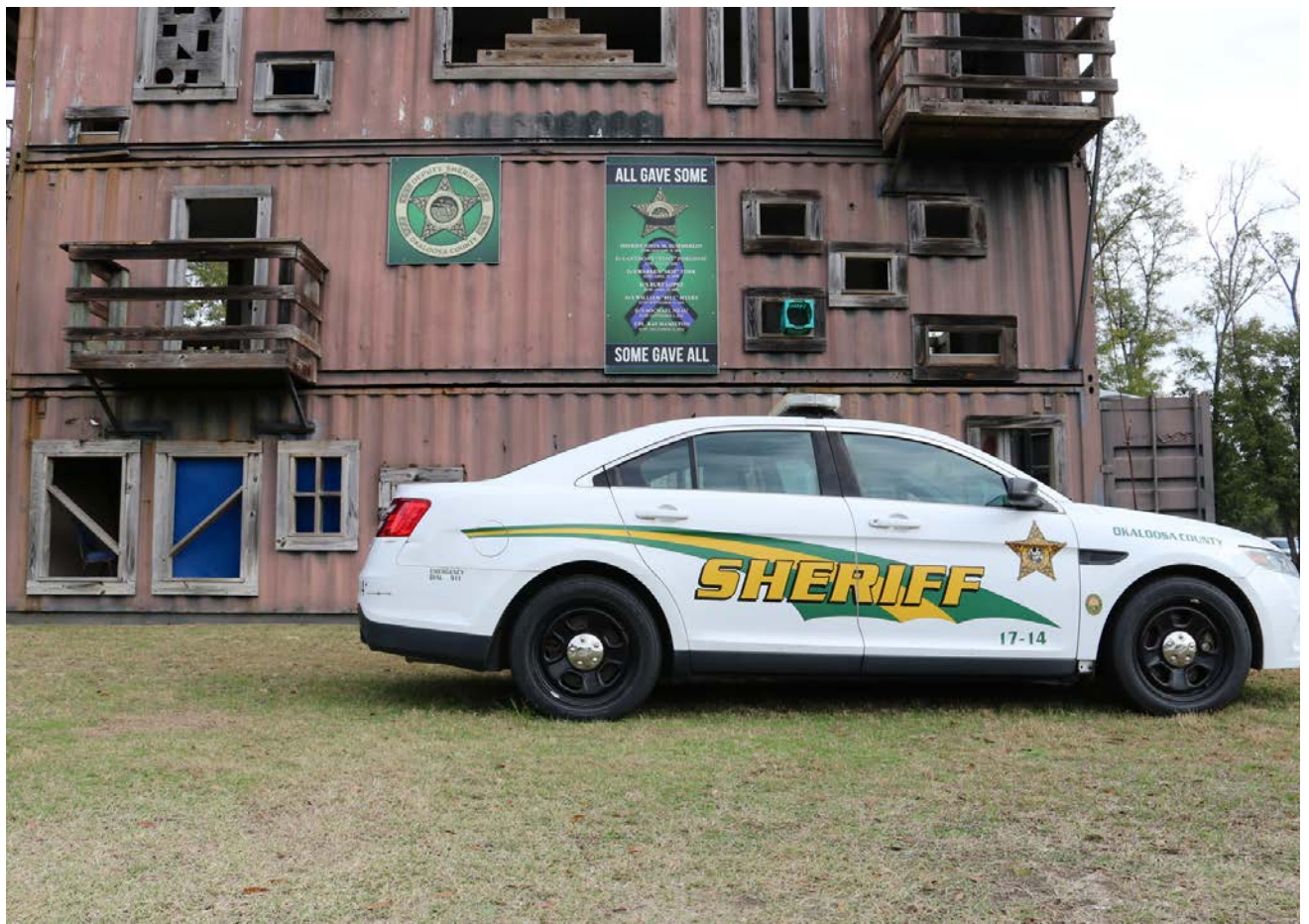
Training/Other: 7

Participated in CISM's 3

Professional Standards Division

ACCREDITATION

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office was officially reaccredited on June 19, 2025, by the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA), reaffirming the agency's continued commitment to professional excellence, accountability, and the highest standards in public safety services. In addition to reaccreditation, the Sheriff's Office was awarded Excelsior status, a distinguished recognition granted to agencies that demonstrate long-term excellence by maintaining accredited status for multiple consecutive cycles. The achievement reflects the dedication of the agency's sworn and civilian personnel to upholding best practices in law enforcement operations, policies, training, and community service



Information Technology & Human Resources

IT

2025 was a productive year for the Information Technology section as we made significant improvements to enhance our cybersecurity posture, worked tirelessly to implement our new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS), ProPhoenix, deployed new software and equipment, and ensured our agency members had the necessary technology resources to deliver public safety services efficiently and safely.

Key Accomplishments:

- Deployed new CAD/RMS software
- Setup workstations to support CAD/RMS training sessions throughout the year
- Resolved many help desk tickets focused on hardware, software and the ProPhoenix implementation

HR

In 2025, the Human Resources section delivered meaningful progress by strengthening recruitment and retention, improving the efficiency and consistency of hiring and onboarding, enhancing benefits enrollment and ongoing benefits administration, and ensuring our workforce had the support and resources needed to provide public safety services effectively and safely.

Key accomplishments:

- Streamlined hiring and onboarding: Reduced bottlenecks by standardizing workflows, improving applicant communications, and tightening coordination with divisions to move candidates through the process more efficiently.
- Strengthened recruitment outreach: Expanded candidate pipelines through targeted posting strategies, community/partner engagement, and improved marketing of agency opportunities.
- Improved retention-focused support: Enhanced employee relations responsiveness, strengthened documentation consistency, and increased supervisor support to reduce avoidable turnover drivers.
- Benefits enrollment and management upgrades: Improved open enrollment execution, resolved benefits issues faster, and strengthened ongoing benefits communication to employees to reduce confusion and missed actions.
- Policy and compliance modernization: Updated HR processes and guidance to better align with evolving legal requirements, internal standards, and operational needs. This reduced risk and improved consistency.



Community Outreach Coordinator

The Community Outreach Coordinator serves as a critical bridge between law enforcement, community members, and service providers by addressing underlying issues that often contribute to recurring calls for service. Working closely with deputies, the coordinator assists individuals facing challenges such as mental health concerns, substance abuse, homelessness, domestic conflicts, and re-entry after incarceration. Deputies may refer individuals to the COC when non-enforcement resources or follow-up support are needed. The coordinator conducts outreach, assesses needs, and connects individuals with appropriate services and partner agencies. While deputies retain full authority over law enforcement operations and on-scene decision-making, the COC enhances their efforts by providing specialized knowledge of community resources and helping identify long-term solutions that may reduce repeat calls for service. In addition to individual case management, the coordinator engages in public education initiatives, supports victims through trauma-informed practices, develops partnerships with community service providers, tracks program outcomes, and recommends strategies to improve service delivery and public safety throughout the community.

Program Impact (July–December 2025)

- 176 referrals provided to community members in need of assistance and support services
- 116 on-scene responses conducted alongside deputies to address complex community needs
- Strengthened partnerships between law enforcement and local service providers to improve outcomes for individuals and families

This collaborative approach helps connect residents with needed resources, supports deputies in addressing complex situations, and fosters stronger relationships between law enforcement and the community.



Fleet and Supply

906 completed work orders for vehicle maintenance and repairs
53 new vehicles commissioned and put in service
52 vehicles decommissioned and sent to auction or donated
81 vehicle accidents or incidents handled
44 new hires outfitted
31 out processing's handled



Finance



Deputy of the Year

Jason Register

Deputy Jason Register demonstrated outstanding productivity and commitment to public safety in 2025, responding to 2,655 calls for service and making 116 arrests, several of which resulted in the seizure of felony narcotics. He also remained active in traffic enforcement, issuing 12 citations and 244 traffic warnings. His casework consistently exceeds expectations, reflecting thorough documentation, sound judgment, and strong competence. Known for his calm, solution-oriented approach, he is widely regarded as a dependable and versatile law enforcement professional.

In one notable investigation, Deputy Register identified and pursued a case involving a suspect whose actions posed a serious threat to a juvenile victim. Through investigative efforts, he helped establish probable cause that led to charges of Lewd and Lascivious Conduct, directly preventing further victimization and demonstrating a strong commitment to child protection and victim advocacy.

In addition, he was recently recognized by a local elected official for outstanding service and is known for treating members of the public with respect, patience, and professionalism in every interaction.

Beyond his duties, Deputy Register remains actively involved in the community, supporting organizations including Rocky Bayou Christian School, Toys for Tots, Children in Crisis, Goodwill, and a local nonprofit dedicated to keeping siblings together while in foster care. His commitment to service reflects the values of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office both on and off duty.

For his consistent performance, strong work ethic, and dedication to excellence he is named the OCSO 2025 Deputy of the Year.



Operations Outstanding Performer

Deputy James Reeves

Deputy Sheriff James Reeves has served the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office since 2004 and is currently assigned to the Marine Unit, where he is known for his strong work ethic, proactive enforcement, and sound judgment. He consistently meets new challenges with professionalism and is a dependable officer trusted with high-priority assignments. Throughout 2025, Deputy Reeves played a critical role in the Marine Unit's success. He self-initiated more than 1,492 security checks, conducted 535 vessel stops, and responded to over 2,629 calls for service. His proactive efforts led to 146 alcohol-related investigations, five Boating Under the Influence investigations, and 228 arrests, reflecting exceptional productivity and a strong commitment to public safety on Okaloosa County's waterways.

Deputy Reeves is widely recognized for his effectiveness and professionalism and regularly receives public compliments for the quality of his work. He is a valued member of both the agency Dive Team and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Team, further extending his operational impact and demonstrating his versatility and willingness to serve wherever needed.

Year after year, Deputy Reeves exceeds expectations and sets the standard for performance within the Operations Bureau. His dedication, productivity, and professionalism make him a model representative of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the 2025 Operations Bureau Outstanding Performer of the Year.



SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR

Sgt. David Finke

Sergeant David Finke supervises the Major Crimes and Special Victims Unit within the Criminal Investigations Section, directly overseeing three Senior Investigators, six Investigators, and one civilian. With more than 28 years of diverse law enforcement experience, he has guided his team through numerous high-profile investigations involving homicide, aggravated child abuse, and sexual battery, demonstrating meticulous case management and a relentless pursuit of justice. Sergeant Finke's leadership blends strategic oversight with hands-on mentorship, fostering a culture of professionalism, ethical integrity, and investigative excellence. In the past year alone, he directed and coordinated 492 verified criminal complaints, resulting in the arrest of 31 violent offenders. As both a seasoned investigator and supervisor, he also directly oversaw the conclusion of the 52-year-old murder investigation of 17-year-old Debra Espy, conducting a comprehensive review of evidence and advancing the case to the prosecution stage prior to its closure following the suspect's death.

Beyond his supervisory duties, Sgt. Finke serves as the agency's lead Designated Immigration Officer and point of contact for ICE/HSI, remaining on call 24/7 for immigration enforcement guidance. He helps develop agency policy, created a Helpdesk reporting system for deputies, and compiles and submits monthly immigration enforcement statistics to FDLE.

What truly distinguishes Sgt. Finke is his unwavering commitment to developing others. He is frequently sought out for mentorship and career guidance, selected to serve on promotion boards, and works to prepare the next generation of investigators.

His leadership, professionalism, and lasting impact on both public safety and personnel development make him our 2025 Supervisor of the Year.



SRO OF THE YEAR

Deputy Alyssa Blanton

With nearly a decade of law enforcement experience, Deputy Alyssa Blanton joined the OCSO in 2020 and has made an extraordinary impact as the School Resource Officer at Wright Elementary School, a campus serving a diverse student population with significant academic, emotional, and language needs. To better serve, she independently learned Spanish, strengthening communication, trust, and relationships within the school's large Spanish-speaking community. She regularly stays after school to assist with projects, student needs, and special events. She tutors and mentors students daily, knows them by name, and understands their individual challenges, creating a supportive and safe school environment. Her compassion extends beyond assigned duties. She quietly assists families during times of hardship and provides critical support during emergencies. In December 2025, she also took initiative to connect a newly enrolled family facing hardship with community resources, so the child did not go without during the holidays. Deputy Blanton proactively enhances campus safety and education by coordinating internet safety programs for students and parents and working with school administrators. She also serves as an OCSO Explorers Advisor and Youth Week Site Coordinator, organizing a 5K fundraiser, earning seven statewide awards, and overseeing one of three Youth Week sites. She exemplifies the very best of what a School Resource Officer should be.



Administrative Performer of Year

Deputy Mark Raiche

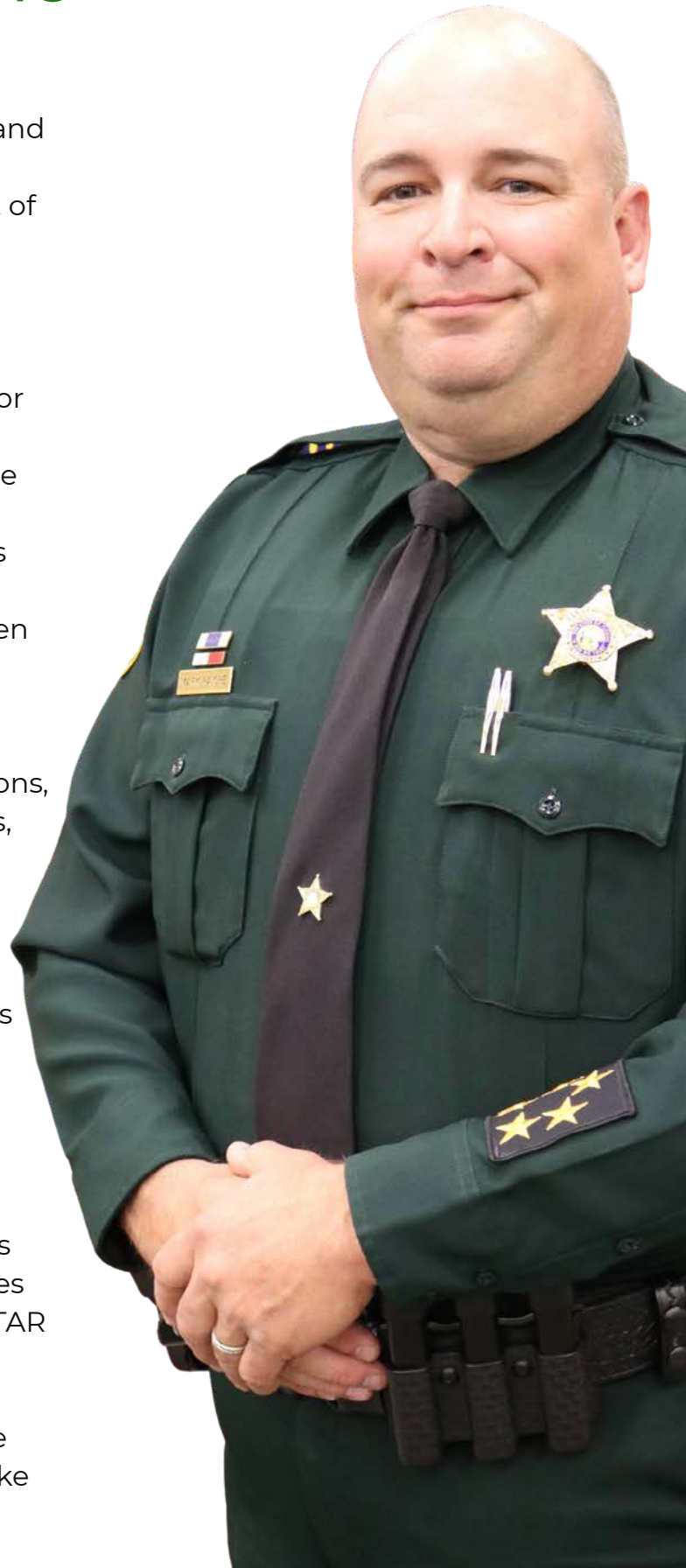
Deputy Mark Raiche is the 2025 Administrative Bureau Outstanding Performer of the Year for his exceptional leadership, seasoned professionalism, and influence that impacts operational readiness, the training culture, and the professional development of deputies at every stage of their careers.

He distinguished himself as Range Master and Instructor, playing a critical role in the successful launch of the agency's new In-Service Training Program, helping guide a significant culture shift for both instructors and deputies. He created a professional, supportive learning environment while maintaining high instructional standards, contributing directly to the program's early success and long-term viability.

Early in the year, he assumed a leadership role when a fellow instructor underwent unexpected surgery. Even after his colleague's return, he continued to provide coverage as needed. His ownership and dedication ensured uninterrupted training operations, allowed teammates to focus on other critical duties, and strengthened partnerships with the multiple agencies utilizing the Training Center.

With more than 30 years of law enforcement experience, Deputy Raiche provides invaluable insight beyond instruction. He routinely contributes to use-of-force reviews, policy discussions, His impact also extends to the future of law enforcement. He instructs agency cadets in areas ranging from speed measurement to policy and procedures, serves as a firearms instructor at Northwest Florida State College, and assists retirees during annual qualifications. He actively participates in fundraising and competitive events, including STAR Charity shoots and SRT competitions.

Deputy Mark Raiche's leadership, experience, and unwavering commitment to his colleagues and the mission of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office make him the 2025 Administrative Bureau Outstanding Performer of the Year.



Administrative Employee of Year

Denise Sledge

We are proud to recognize Denise Sledge as the 2025 Administrative Employee of the Year, honoring more than three decades of exceptional service that directly impacts public safety. Her quiet strength, unwavering integrity, and tireless work ethic form the backbone of the agency's Communications Center operations.

As the agency's Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) Administrator, she ensures the reliability and accuracy of the system where every call for help begins. Her work provides dispatchers and first responders with dependable, real-time information, supporting confident decision-making when seconds matter most.

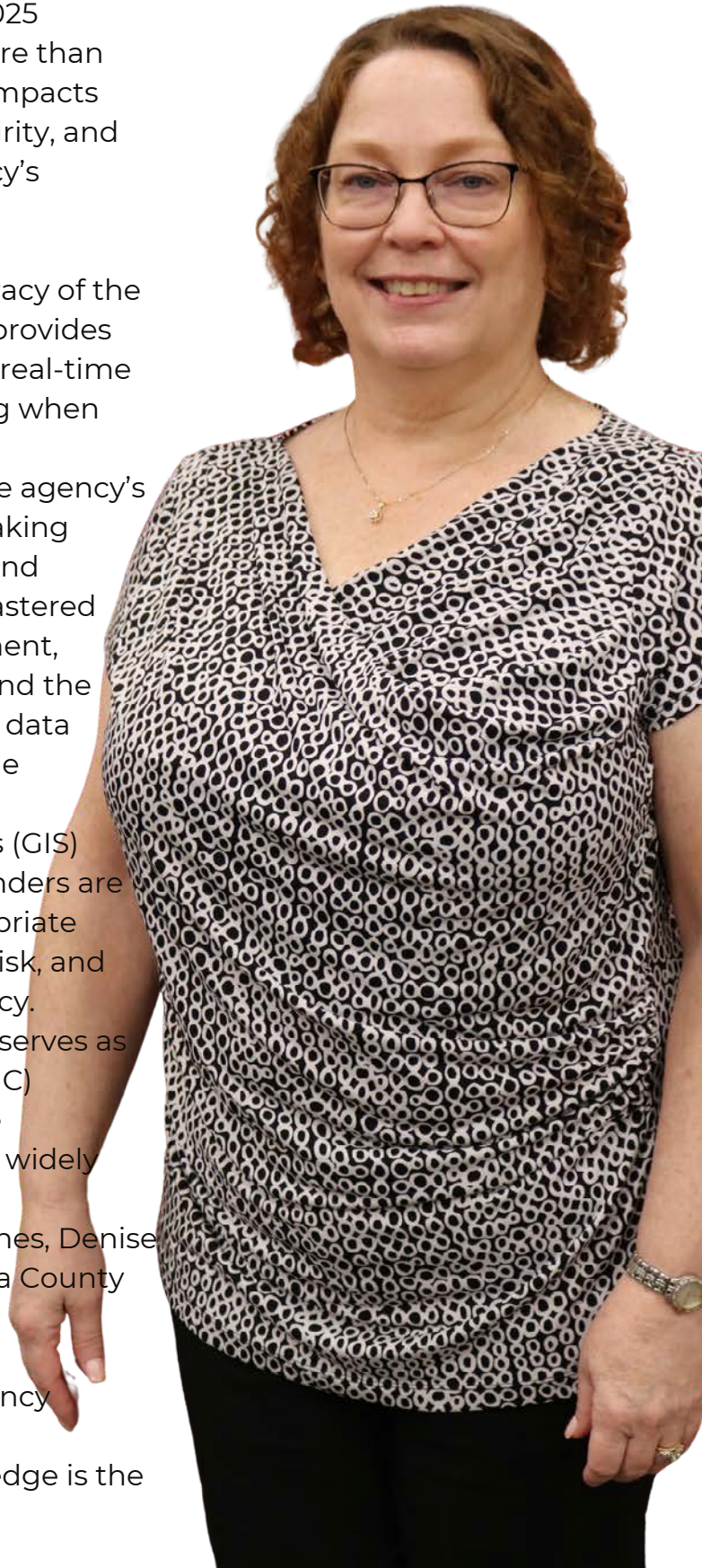
Denise recently led the complex transition from the agency's legacy CAD system to ProPhoenix, a major undertaking requiring extensive planning, technical expertise, and countless hours of testing and refinement. She mastered ProPhoenix through determination and commitment, coordinating closely with ProPhoenix developers and the County GIS Department to ensure system stability, data integrity, and operational continuity throughout the transition.

Her dedication to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) plays a critical role in public safety, ensuring responders are dispatched to the correct locations with the appropriate resources. This improves response times, reduces risk, and strengthens operational efficiency across the agency.

In addition to CAD and GIS responsibilities, Denise serves as the agency's Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) Coordinator, working closely with FDLE to manage certifications and compliance requirements. She is widely recognized as a top performer in the region.

Although much of her work occurs behind the scenes, Denise impacts multiple systems throughout the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, serving as Administrator, FALCON Administrator, nexTEST Administrator, CJIS Online Administrator, FINS Administrator, and DAVID Agency Contact.

She elevates our agency and that's why Denise Sledge is the 2025 Administrative Employee of the Year.



Communications Officer of the Year

Asst. Supervisor Heather Derrick

Since arriving in 2001 Communications Assistant Supervisor Heather Derrick has devoted more than two decades to ensuring the safety of deputies, first responders, and citizens.

She's known for her composure and excellence in one of the most demanding roles in public safety and is widely regarded as a cornerstone of the Communications team. Her ability to remain calm, focused, and decisive during high-stress incidents sets the standard for others to follow.

In addition to her duties as a skilled dispatcher, Heather serves as a Communications Training Officer (CTO) and is an active member of the Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT). Her leadership and operational knowledge make her a trusted resource for supervisors, peers, and trainees alike across the agency.

Heather's passion for training is evident in her individualized approach to mentorship. She takes the time to understand each trainee's learning style and adapts her instruction to foster confidence, accuracy, and professionalism. Through patience and encouragement, she has guided many trainees through demanding assignments, helping them develop composure under pressure.

During a critical incident involving a distressed caller, Heather recognized the seriousness of the situation and assumed control of the call. Through empathy and effective communication, she kept the caller engaged until responding units arrived. Her quick thinking and steady presence exemplify the vital and often lifesaving role these professionals play every day.

Heather Derrick exemplifies the values of service, compassion, and excellence that define the communications profession, and she is our 2025 Communications Officer of the Year.



Volunteer of the Year

Heather Hicks

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office proudly recognizes Mrs. Heather Hicks as the 2025 Outstanding Volunteer of the Year for her extraordinary service and lasting impact on the training and preparedness of agency personnel. Mrs. Hicks has supported the OCSO Training Section since 2016 and became an official agency volunteer in 2021. Since then, she has trained 1,045 personnel in the American Heart Association's Basic Life Support program, significantly strengthening the lifesaving capabilities of the workforce. As Lead Instructor for Basic Life Support and Stop the Bleed, Mrs. Hicks volunteers her time to conduct monthly, four-hour training sessions. Her instruction includes Stop the Bleed, AHA BLS Provider certification (AED, CPR, and First Aid), Individual First Aid Kit familiarization, and NARCAN refresher training—skills that directly enhance the safety of deputies, staff, and the community. In 2025 alone, Mrs. Hicks trained 207 agency members, providing 828 hours of instruction. While balancing her professional career and family responsibilities, she continues to demonstrate unwavering commitment to preparing first responders to act decisively when lives are on the line. Mrs. Hicks' professionalism, reliability, and sustained service have made a lasting impact on the operational readiness of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, making her richly deserving of the 2025 Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award.



Posse Member of the Year

Steve Gambert

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office proudly recognizes Steve Gambert as the 2025 Posse Member of the Year for his dedication, professionalism, and outstanding volunteer service. Steve first joined the Sheriff's Posse in 1992 and, after returning in 2012, has remained a dependable and committed member. In 2025 alone, he volunteered more than 140 hours in support of Posse details and agency operations. He is widely respected for his positive attitude, strong work ethic, and willingness to assist with both scheduled assignments and short-notice details. His flexibility and reliability consistently strengthen agency operations and exemplify the spirit of volunteer service. Steve's dedication reflects the mission and values of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the Sheriff's Posse. His service and professionalism have made a meaningful impact, making him the 2025 Posse Member of the Year.









Okaloosa County Dispatcher, Heather Willoughby, with her Tree of Life mural.



