

2024

OKALOOSA COUNTY

SHERIFF'S

OFFICE

Annual Report



#TeamOCSO

Service is in our DNA

A Message from Sheriff Eric Aden



As 2024 closes out the last year of my first term, I look back on so many accomplishments this administration has made. From our Cadet Program, Community Resource Deputies, increased Canines, enhanced personnel in ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children), and increasing our Marine and Beach units; we have seen a positive impact on our overall public safety and the services we provide this great county.

Though we weathered some significant challenges over this past year, I could not be more proud of the poise, professionalism and commitment to this great calling our agency showed. A wise man told me this past year that it is not the challenges one faces that defines them, it is how they respond during those difficult times. Our reputation, communication, transparency, and relationship in the community allowed us to get through these difficult challenges. It's a testament to the level of professionalism we are so blessed to have. Additionally, the support we have and continue to receive from our citizens sets us apart from many other places. It makes this area the greatest place to serve in law enforcement in the entire country. This unwavering support is our most important asset and certainly contributes to our success.

Over this past year we have solved homicides and sexual batteries that occurred as far back as 40 years ago. One such homicide was by infamous serial killer Keith Jespersion, also known as the "Happy Face Killer", as our investigators and Medical Examiner's Office finally were able to identify his Okaloosa County victim.



We have surpassed our own expectations when it comes to recruitment and retention. Our retention numbers have improved each year to the best in more than a decade. Our vacancy numbers have plummeted as well. We maintain greater vacancy factors than that of our peers. We have made great strides in compensation and benefits. Our Human Resource Team has been an integral part of these successes. Our Cadet program has given us a continued stable of reinforcements to back fill vacancies. For all of these reasons and more, we will be able to potentially grow our north end patrol resources in the coming year or years commensurate with the population growth. This will be the first time we have been able to add patrol resources since I took office.

Our Command Staff stays committed to offering the best possible work atmosphere for our staff. This not only consists of pay and benefits but so many other things such as training, equipment, financial education and investment opportunities, future growth of OCSO, succession planning, mental health, morale, policy improvements, and well-deserved quality time off. We use things like Employee Council to try and learn the needs of all areas within our agency.

Conversely, we try and keep communication lines open through EC as well as emails and the quarterly Sheriff's Corner. We are committed to serving not only our citizens but all of the employees of the OCSO that we call family.

I am honored to serve as your sheriff.

Eric Aden



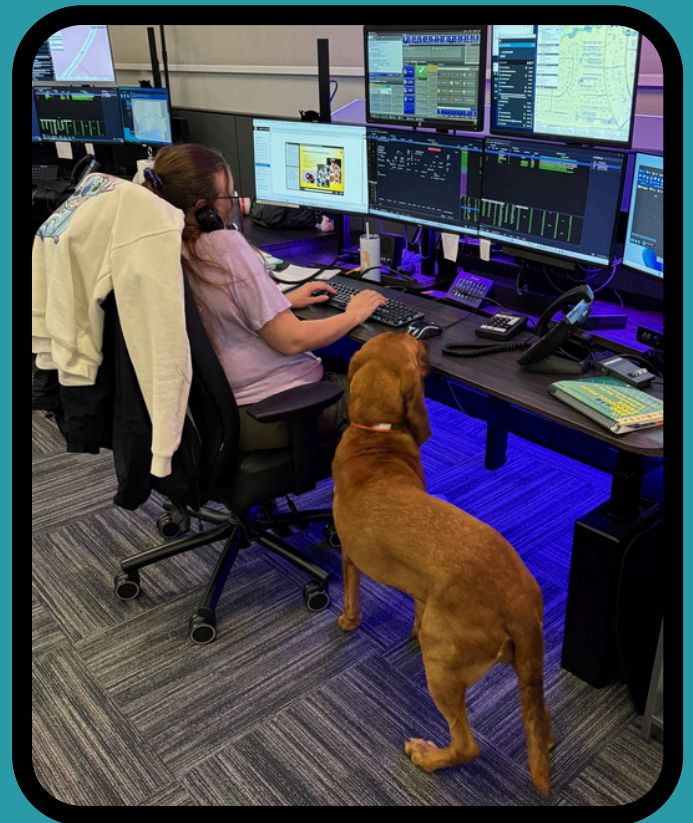
CALLS FOR SERVICE

Communications Handled 299,056 Calls in 2024

app. 251,746 = OCSO

MOST COMMON CALLS

<i>Security Check</i>	<i>53,432</i>
<i>Traffic Stop</i>	<i>29,030</i>
<i>Citizen Contact</i>	<i>15,349</i>
<i>Watch Order</i>	<i>10,309</i>
<i>911 Verification</i>	<i>10,304</i>



Additional Calls for Service Examples

<i>K9 Assist</i>	<i>2,966</i>
<i>Offender Verifications</i>	<i>29,030</i>
<i>Suspicious Activity</i>	<i>1,098</i>
<i>Suspicious Person</i>	<i>920</i>
<i>Pedestrian Violations</i>	<i>275</i>
<i>911 Verification</i>	<i>10,304</i>





NORTH DISTRICT



The North District encompasses approximately 450 square miles in northern Okaloosa County. Its boundaries go from Duke Field, north to the Alabama State Line. It stretches from the Santa Rosa County line on the west to the Walton County line on the east.

North District includes multiple small communities, as well as the larger ones of Baker, Holt, Milligan, and the cities of Laurel Hill and Crestview. There are approximately 33,000 residents in the North District and it is expected to surpass the other districts in population in the next several years. There are numerous developments underway to include infrastructure improvements, roadways, bypasses and several housing and business complexes. This growth is certainly going to increase calls for service and the need for more public services. Deputies assigned to the North District enjoy the best of both worlds as far as rural and suburban areas, and the ability to be both proactive and reactive when working to deter crime.

NORTH DISTRICT STATS FOR 2024

Calls for Service 74,128 (32% increase)

Traffic Stops 8,807

Warrants Services 2,701

DUI Arrests 26

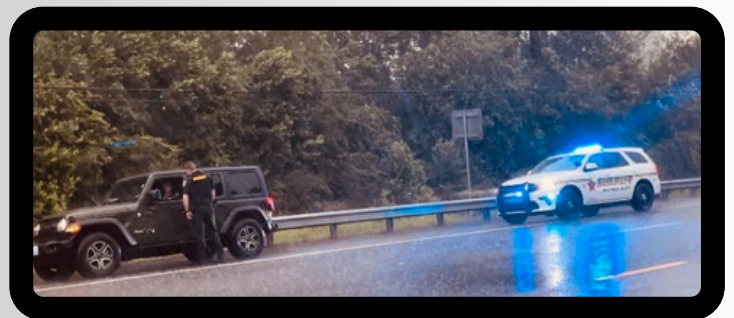
Burglary 148

Theft/Larceny 334

Narcotics Arrest 116

Watch Orders/Security Checks 14,198

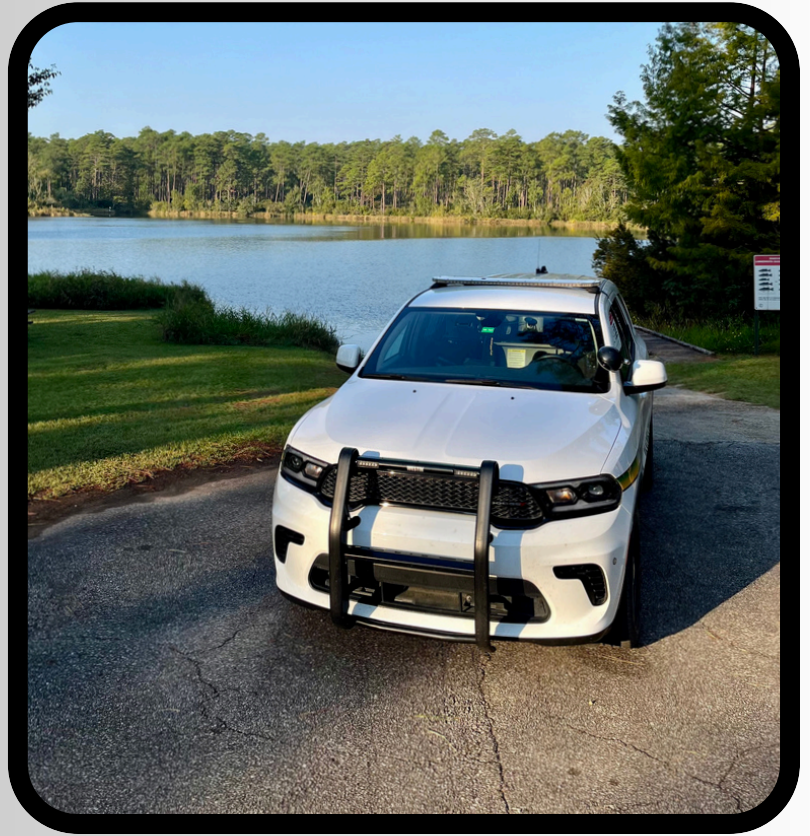
Citizen Contacts 4,927



Promotions and Awards
Matt Langer- Investigator

Life Saving Award
Sgt. Colin Savoie
Deputy Matt Langer
Deputy Anthony Gonzales
Deputy Erin Rousch

Commendations
Lt. Rapheal Brown
Lt. Tony Kelly
Sgt. Matt Self x2
Cpl. Chaz Donovan
Deputy Wes Moreno
Deputy Harald Dewit
Deputy Amanda Beliel
Deputy Chris Fordham
Deputy Lyle Daniels

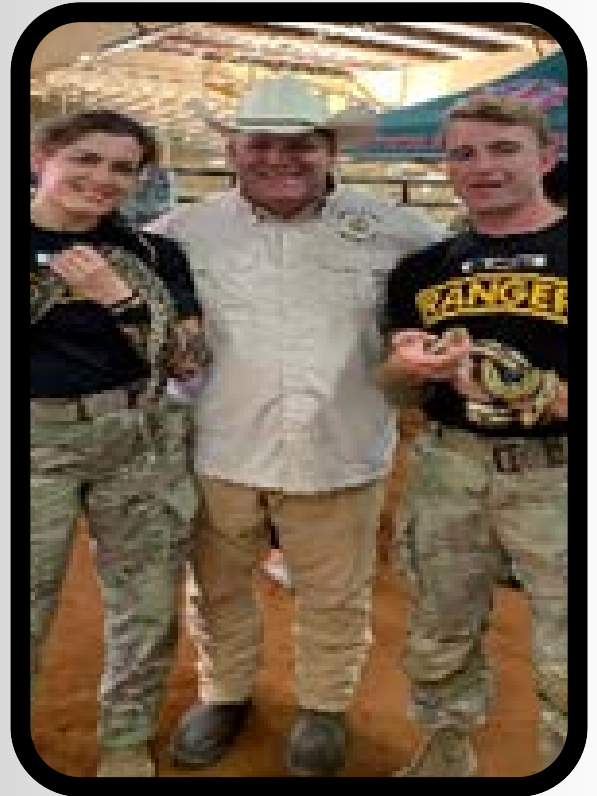


North District Community Resource Deputies (CRD)

The CRD Deputies have been engaging the community, increasing our presence, and making an impact. The CRD's, to include "K9 Beau", attend numerous community events and are bridging the gap between the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the public.



Community Resource Deputy Chris Fordham organized and planned an event that highlighted the North District's farm and agricultural community while paying respect and tribute to the military community. Approximately 3,000 people attended the event that was held at the Baker Arena and had displays from the 7th Special Forces, the Ranger Training Battalion from Camp Rudder, Florida Fish and Wildlife, the Forestry Division and numerous farm and agricultural booths; including a petting zoo.





The CRD's also participate in the Post Overdose Support Team (POST). They assist members of Okaloosa E.M.S and Bridgeway with responding to individuals who have recently suffered an overdose from narcotics use. While on scene with these individuals they provide information on counseling and rehabilitation to prevent future overdoses and the resources available to live a sober life. There has been a noticeable decrease in overdoses and overdose deaths in the district. This can be directly attributed to this program.



Lt. Brown and Sgt. Savoie preset Deputy Baniel with a District Level Commendation for her attention to detail and dedication. She responded to a call for service at a local alcohol establishment where a patron had been removed and left behind their credit card. Deputy Baniel retrieved the card and made sure it was logged into evidence with a detailed offense report as found property to assist if the owner wished to retrieve the item. This information resulted in the discovery that the credit card had been reported as stolen and led to the arrest of the criminal.







Captain Merchant and Sergeant Savoie present Deputy Lyle Daniels with a District Commendation for his actions that resulted in the apprehension of a dangerous criminal. On 05/15/2024, a stabbing victim was transported to the Fort Walton Beach Medical Center. The victim only knew the suspect by his nickname and a general description. Deputy Daniels began researching the nickname, utilizing investigative leads, and his knowledge of the area to identify the suspect. Daniels used this information to track down and arrest the suspect within 15 minutes of the incident being reported. He conducted a thorough interview with the suspect which resulted in the locating and recovery of the weapon and other vital evidence. His actions resulted in a dangerous criminal being taken off the streets.





Deputy Harald Dewit "demonstrated extraordinary professionalism, bravery, and technical expertise during a highly volatile incident involving a man armed with a shotgun who was threatening to take his own life. For his actions he received a District Commendation from his supervision, Sgt. Brandon Walters, Capt. John Merchant and Cpl. Taylor Woodard. As part of the UAS Unit Deputy Dewit played a crucial role in ensuring the safety of first responders and contributed significantly to the peaceful resolution of the situation.



North District Deputies responded to the residence on Barbarree Drive in reference to a warrant service. Michael Pechacek was wanted for making written threats to kill or do bodily injury, and use of a two way communication device to commit a felony. Pechacek barricaded himself inside with children present. The standoff was resolved peacefully after an approximately eight hour stand-off.





OCSO Alpha North deputies and Munson Fire searched over a mile down the Blackwater River and located an individual whose canoe overturned and sank, leaving him stranded in a remote area. He was located uninjured and taken to safety.



Sgt. Savoie and Deputy Langer responded to a request for assistance from the Crestview Police Department in reference to a stabbing that occurred at Patton St. in Crestview. The victim had been stabbed by a suspect and had fled the scene to escape the suspect and was seen bleeding heavily. Sgt. Savoie and Deputy Langer arrived on scene and began a search of the surrounding properties and alleyways. After approximately ten minutes of searching, the victim was located collapsed in a slightly wooded portion of an alleyway approximately 200 yards from the initial incident location. Sgt. Savoie and Deputy Langer found the victim bleeding heavily from an estimated 6-inch-long stab wound under his right arm near his armpit. Both deputies performed lifesaving first aid. EMS Medical Commander Heather Overstreet that was present at the scene, stated without the actions taken by Sgt. Savoie and Deputy Langer, the victim would have died from his injuries at the scene.





On January 7th, K9 Deputy Sheriff Anthony Gonzales and Deputy Erin Roush responded to a distress call involving a victim who had suffered a severe laceration from a knife attack. Deputy Gonzales and Roush acted with selfless dedication as they cleared the area of any potential threats posed by the still-at-large knife-wielding suspect, to ensure the safety of all persons present. Deputies Gonzales and Roush then assisted the victim, who was bleeding heavily due to a severe arm laceration. Without hesitation, Deputy Gonzales applied a tourniquet to the victim's arm with the assistance of Deputy Roush, showcasing not only their knowledge of life-saving techniques but also their ability to remain calm under pressure. The timely and precise application of the tourniquet stopped the bleeding and provided the victim with a fighting chance. Once the victim was successfully transported by Emergency Medical Services, Deputy Gonzales immediately began organizing units to conduct a K9 track of the suspect while Deputy Roush assisted with establishing a perimeter. Deputy Sheriff Gonzales and Roush's actions exemplify the highest standards of professionalism and showcase the life-saving measures taught to our members.





A Crestview area man with numerous felony warrants who has fled from law enforcement multiple times in recent weeks was apprehended outside of a home on Griffith Cemetery Road in Baker after being unable to outrun an Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office K9.

Deputies learned 39-year old James Woodard Allen of Sundance Way in Crestview was at the location working on a vehicle. Upon sight of uniformed deputies, Allen ran into the woods. A perimeter was set up and Allen hid in the tree line inside the perimeter. An OCSO K9 began a track and Allen was spotted. He fled but was challenged by the K9 and taken into custody. He was served warrants on twelve separate charges and received an additional count of resisting arrest. The outstanding warrants included: failure to appear for domestic violence battery with strangulation, possession of cocaine, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon without intent to kill - domestic violence related (two counts), burglary with assault and battery, battery, fleeing and eluding (two counts), multiple counts of resisting an officer without violence, failure to register a motor vehicle, driving with a suspended license (subsequent offense), and violating a pre-trial release condition.





During the summer of 2024, both Alabama and Florida have seen deaths of K-9's in the line of duty, due to heat. As a result, Al and Tricia Fagan, in partnership with Kristin Spears, owner and co-founder of Blue Barn Cooling Co., presented eleven K-9 cooling kits to help protect our OCSO K-9s.



Crestview Police Department's Chief McKosker provided Bravo North with "swag" from the police department in appreciation for the shift assisting with calls for service.



The Shoal River Middle School National Junior Honor Society presented a gift basket to the deputies in the North District in honor of First Responder Appreciation Day.



Life Point Church provided snacks for EMS and deputies of the North District.

Command staff served Thanksgiving dinners at several local establishments for residents of the North District.



The North District strives to build and maintain relationships with our community partners and our fellow 1st responders. Whether it's the military, local businesses, EMS/FD or Crestview Police Department, we are all in this together to make our community a safe and secure environment to enjoy our daily lives.





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. The CIS conducted approximately 1,724 felony criminal investigations. Of the 1,724 investigations opened, 1,470 cases were closed, for an 85% case closure rate. Investigators made 104 arrests in 2024.

During 2024 Deputies Gleneck, Staley, and Callen were promoted to Investigator. Investigators Schlager and K. Genrich were promoted to Sergeant.

Accomplishments received in 2024 were:

Nathaniel Bowen and Richard Cooper - Gained the title of Certified Economic Crimes Forensic Examiner and Certified Financial Crimes Investigator
Sgt. Jessica Trimboli graduated FDLE FLA Class #58, FBI Leeda Trilogy award recipient, Master of Public Administration
Tia Frembgen: CNT Accommodation Award- June 27, 2024- Pechacek barricaded for 6 hours.
Certification: CVSA Examiner -Computerized Voice Stress Analyzer (CVSA).
Alan Vafides completed 500 polygraph examinations
Wesley Barnhill - Master of Public Administration

Public Awareness:

Interviewed for the February 2024 "The Deck" Podcasts on missing person Andrea Durham and homicide victim Debra Espy
February/March of 2024 – Interview for "The Pursuit" with John Walsh that aired June of 2024 regarding the Earnest Riggs homicide (Henderson and Pitman)
August of 2024 – Interview with Bloodline Detectives for documentary regarding the Happy Face Killer (Keith Jesperson)
September of 2024 – Case Presentation to the FSA Cold Case Commission on the Menzies homicide (Henderson and Pitman)
November of 2024 – Southeastern Homicide Investigators Association (SEHIA) Conference, San Antonio, Texas – Presented the Happy Face Killer (Keith Jesperson) case to hundreds of Homicide Investigators (Henderson and Pitman)





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.

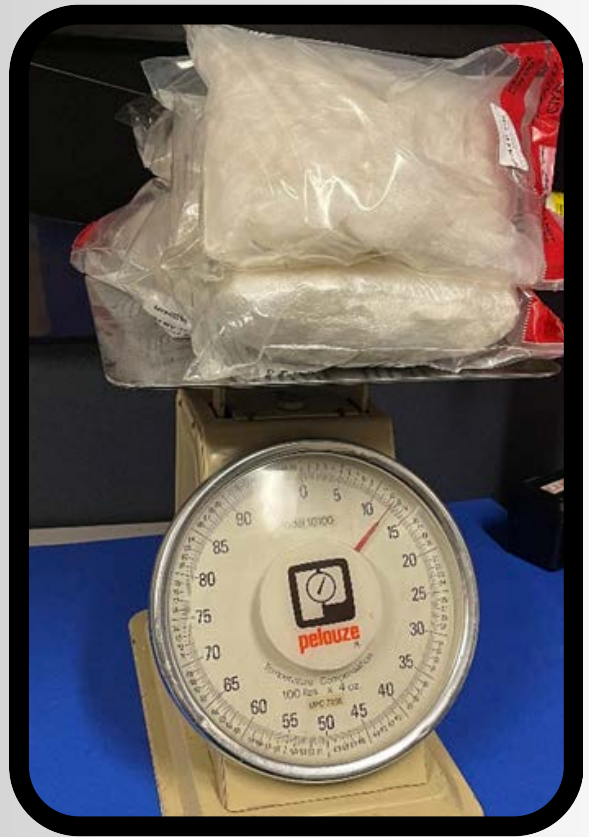
In 2024, members of SIS continued joint operations with regional, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to combat illegal drug activity and other felony criminal activity in the region. These joint operations were executed through partnerships with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. 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, Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, 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 2024:

- SIS Multi-Agency Drug Task Force Investigators conducted 152 investigations involving drug trafficking organizations, fugitive apprehensions, and covert operations; with a total of 241 arrests. Investigators authored 193 search warrants in casework, with 41 of those search warrants being residential. Investigators recovered 30 firearms from narcotics violators and/or weapons-related offenders. Additionally, the above-mentioned investigations led to seven (7) federal indictments for narcotics and weapons related offenses.

Total narcotics/contraband/assets seized by investigators in operations= \$880,000.00, based on current estimated weights are as follows: Methamphetamine (25.5 kilograms); Fentanyl (9.5 kilograms); Cocaine (0.5 kilograms).





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 2024, Investigators conducted a total of 642 forensic extractions or downloads of cellular devices, handheld devices, and/or computers. In addition, Investigators initiated 500 investigations, executed 20 residential search warrants, conducted 253 electronic search warrants, served 17 Risk Protection Orders, and received 368 NCMEC tips; all resulting in 43 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.



·In 2024, members of SIS obtained the following accolades and/or promotions:

Investigator Todd Padilla was awarded “Investigator of the Year”

Investigator Todd Padilla was promoted to Sergeant

Ten members of SIS were awarded “Certificates of Commendation”

Two members of the Real Time Crime Center were awarded

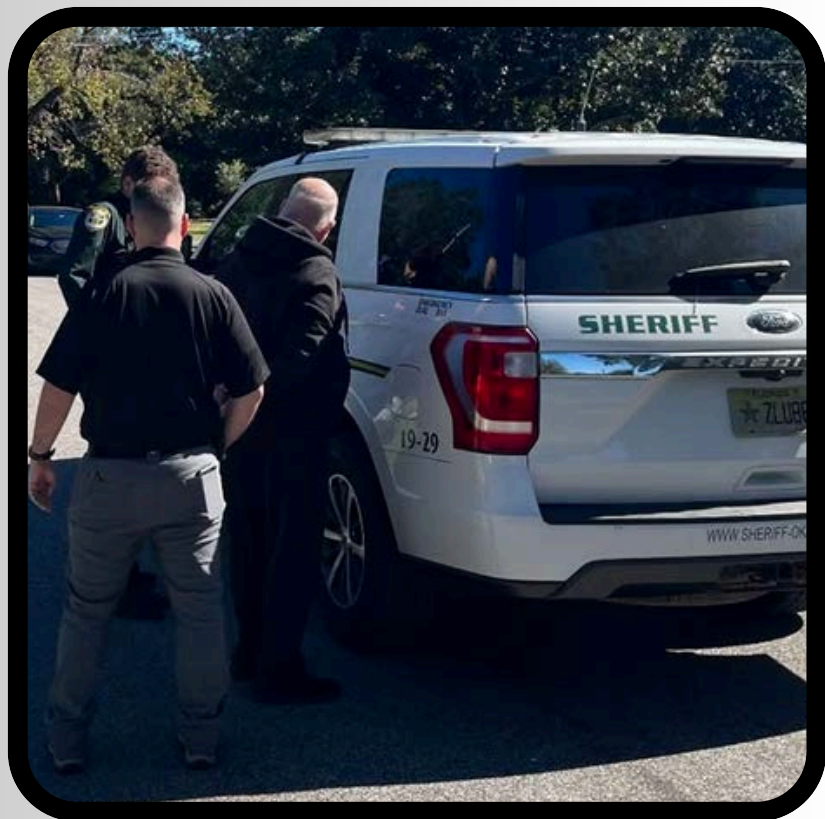
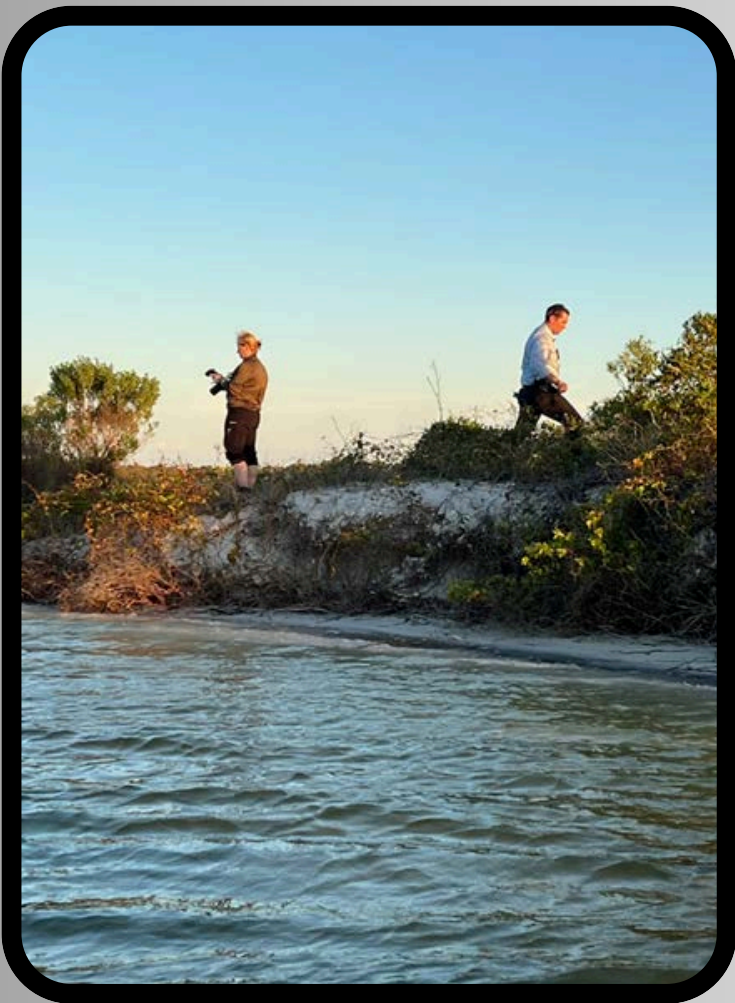
“Outstanding Performance” letters

· **Significant casework:**

In October 2024, members of the Multi-Agency Drug Taskforce, with the assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), concluded a long-term investigation, resulting in the dismantling of a Drug Trafficking Organization, operating within Okaloosa County. The investigation began in 2019, when a Drug Trafficking Organization, responsible for the transportation of kilogram quantities of cocaine, fentanyl, and methamphetamine from Houston, Texas, to Okaloosa County was identified. During the investigation, more than seven (7) kilograms of cocaine, one and one half (1.5) kilograms of fentanyl, five (5) kilograms of synthetic narcotics, and 280 grams of heroin were seized. Along with the narcotics seizures, approximately one-million dollars in assets were confiscated, resulting in 17 arrests and/or indictments for an array of criminal charges.

In December 2024, members of the Multi-Agency Drug Taskforce, with the assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), concluded a long-term investigation, resulting in the dismantling of a Drug Trafficking Organization, operating within Okaloosa County. The investigation began in 2022, when a Drug Trafficking Organization, responsible for the transportation of kilogram quantities of fentanyl and cocaine to Okaloosa County was identified. During the investigation, more than five kilograms of fentanyl and five and one half (5.5) kilograms of cocaine were seized. Along with the narcotics seizures, approximately \$129,000.00 in assets were confiscated, resulting in six arrests and/or indictments for an array of criminal charges.





CENTRAL DISTRICT

Central District, also known as District 2, encompasses the southwest portion of Okaloosa County. It is densely populated with four municipalities, including Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, the Town of Shalimar, and the Town of Cinco Bayou. The district boundaries start on the west side at the county line with Santa Rosa County and continue east along the Hwy 98 corridor to Brooks Bridge. Moving north from Hwy 98, the district includes portions of Hwy 85 and Hwy 189 all the way to just south of the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport and up a portion of SR 123. It includes areas surrounding Hurlburt Air Force Base, home to the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command and the 1st Special Operations Wing, as well as portions surrounding Eglin Air Force Base and the U.S. Air Force Armament Museum.

The district boundaries run along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and include inlets of Choctawhatchee Bay, Cinco Bayou, and more. It also includes the Sheriff's Office Headquarters building in Shalimar, as well as two substations used for daily operations. The district has 50 full-time law enforcement positions, supported by an essential group of civilian employees. 2024 saw varied degrees of staffing but ended strong with 90% of the positions filled as there were only five sworn vacancies.

In 2024, District 2 deputies responded to a total of 72,374 calls for service. These calls ranged from routine assistance to critical emergencies, reflecting our commitment to community safety.

Deputies in District 2 generated 5,888 offense reports throughout the year. These reports led to 2,529 arrests, demonstrating our proactive approach to law enforcement and crime prevention.



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 2024, OCSO deputies handled a total of 5,695 service calls/incidents within these city limits. This included 83 traffic crashes and 134 arrests. Further, deputies handled 1,374 watch orders and security checks throughout the city at various businesses and private properties.



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 2024, CRDs:
Answered 4,188 calls for service
Assisted patrol with calls for service
Addressed 158 traffic complaints
Conducted 345 traffic stops
Made 159 citizen contacts
Responded to 20 parking complaints
Completed 22 wrecker inspections
Conducted 20 POST Team visits
Investigated 19 narcotic violations
Handled 26 trespassing/vagrancy complaints
Addressed 23 environmental complaints
Assisted agencies (Code Enforcement, OCSO, etc.) 98 times
Served 21 warrants
Conducted 256 security checks/watch orders/extra patrols
Attended 39 community events



Notable Community Events:

Chick-Fil-A Community Day – 2/24/24

Wildwood Garden Festival – 3/23/24

Sylvania Heights Youth Super Day – 4/6/24

Hop With a Cop at Surge – 4/9/24

Gregg Chapel Community Day – 5/11/24

Community Food Drive at the Fairgrounds – 5/18/24

Perfection Ministries Back to School Bash – 7/13/24

Boys & Girls Clubs Back to School Bash – 8/2/24

Big Brothers Big Sisters Big Scoop Event – 9/14/24

Okinawa Festival at FWBHS – 9/15/24

Dog Daze Community Event – 10/5/24

Faith & Blue Open House at PSTC – 10/12/24

Greek Festival in Mary Esther – 10/20/24

Multiple Trunk or Treat Events

Multiple Daycare & Preschool Presentations

Assisted Crime Prevention with Several Neighborhood Watch Programs



The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office remains committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of District 2 residents. Through dedicated service, proactive law enforcement, and strong community partnerships, we continue to enhance the quality of life in the greater Fort Walton Beach area. We look forward to another year of collaboration and progress in keeping our community safe.



EAST DISTRICT

EAST DISTRICT STATISTICS OF INTEREST

District 3 Calls for Service 70,833

Offense Reports 5,128
Traffic Stops 14,741
Arrests/NTA 1,976
Traffic Crash Responses 3,054
Warrant Service/Attempts 618
Narcotics Offenses 549
Burglaries 358
Homicides 1
Watch orders 21,254

COMMENDATIONS

Micah Miller District Level Commendation
Sergeant Pierre Batiste District Level Commendation
Sergeant Jessica Trimboli District Level Commendation
Corporal Lance Williams District Level Commendation
Kyle Warf District Level Commendation
Chistopher Callen District Level Commendation
Matthew Langer District Level Commendation
Jerald Rheinhardt District Level Commendation
William Sewart District Level Commendation
Tavin Frederick District Level Commendation
Timothy Hennis Life Saving Award
Trent Zellars Life Saving Award
Sergeant Jarret Bristol 10 Years with Agency
Justin Spence 5 Years with Agency
Clyde Thompson 5 Years with Agency
Daniel Pappas 5 Years with Agency



PROMOTIONS/ACHIEVEMENTS

*Kristen Genrich promoted to Sergeant
Michael Watts promoted to Investigator
Trent Zellars promoted to Corporal
John Lieb promoted to Corporal
Gabe Grundin achieved FTO Assignment
William Sewart achieved FTO Assignment
Ethan Clark achieved FTO Assignment
Sergeant Jessica Trimboli earned Masters Degree
Tim Homer Career Deputy II
Sergeant Jessica Trimboli FLA Graduate*



EAST DISTRICT SIGNIFICANT OCCURANCES

OCSO24OFF011780 Trespassing at Target that resulted in the seizure of thousands of dollars' worth of Apple products. The seizure is connected to an ongoing retail crime ring involving Chinese nationals. So far, Target has already documented over \$300 million in stolen goods through the scheme.

OCSO24OFF005248 Child neglect. Mother left her 3-year-old, unclothed, child at the Destin Commons for over an hour to go shopping. The child was non-verbal.

After a lengthy investigation with the Destin Commons security staff, the mother was identified and ultimately arrested.

OCSO24OFF008894 Truist Bank Robbery. Investigative work performed by Patrol led to the identification and arrest of the suspect.

OCSO24OFF011658 Retail theft, fraud, at Walmart. Beach/Marine Units in the area at the time of the offense were able to detain the suspects which led to the recovery of \$55,000 in property and an arrest warrant being issued.

OCSO24OFF008001 Homicide. Suspect shot victim in the parking lot of the Sea Glass Apartment in a road rage incident. Suspect arrested.







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

BEACH UNIT

<i>Calls for Service</i>	6,080
<i>Arrests</i>	971
<i>Spring Break Arrests</i>	670
<i>Distressed Swimmers</i>	42



Okaloosa County continues to be a “Hot Spot” for Spring Break activities. Members of the Beach Unit were tasked with managing the busy Okaloosa County beaches and ensuring safety for locals, tourists, and spring breakers. The 2024 Spring Break operation started the last week of February 2024 and ended early during the first week of April 2024. The operation ceased earlier than previous years due to schools having spring break earlier in the year and activity slowing down in April. When OCSO enacted the operation and daily patrols, they addressed underage possession of alcohol, narcotics, and miscellaneous calls for service. Over the course of the 37 days of the Spring Break operation, the members of the Beach Unit initiated 670 total arrests. Throughout the 100 days of summer, the Beach Unit continues its patrols of Okaloosa County beaches. The Beach Units continue their law enforcement duties, but also play a vital role in the safety of beach visitors. Beach Units have an excellent working relationship with Okaloosa Island and Destin Beach lifeguards and work together to keep beach visitors safe.



Marine Unit

<i>Calls for Service</i>	9,596
<i>Arrests</i>	199
<i>Vessel Stops</i>	1,946
<i>Security Checks</i>	6,838
<i>Boating Citations</i>	97
<i>Distressed Swimmers</i>	250

The Marine Unit has a solid reputation of working well with surrounding agencies, to include the United States Coast Guard, FWC, and the local Fire Department marine units. Working as a force multiplier has made the waterways of Okaloosa County safer than in previous years. Due to the increase in our boating community, all local agencies have realized more assets are needed to help make this happen.

Several local agencies have acquired newer and larger vessels. OCSO also was granted extra funding through the Tourist Develop Department to acquire a larger vessel. This vessel is currently in the manufacturing process and will assist with calls for service when water conditions are less than favorable. The marine unit consists of five full time boat coxswains. All agency boat coxswains receive advanced training throughout the year in boat operations during the day and nighttime hours. Boating Under the Influence (BUI) enforcement and Boating Safety continue to be a primary focus. These efforts of diligent patrols coupled with unwavering BUI enforcement resulted in another decrease in BUI arrests for 2024.





DIVE TEAM

The Dive Team consists of 14 active members. These members primarily consist of full-time OCSO Deputies with one Officer participating from the Fort Walton Beach Police Department. Their roles encompass additional duties in addition to their regular assignments. Members conduct monthly advanced training ensuring the team builds upon their current capabilities.

The Dive Teams primary function continues to pivot on the recovery of submerged items. With the ample amount of coastal beach areas, the Dive Team is consistently called upon to assist and locate missing divers, drowning victims, and items of evidentiary value for the OCSO Criminal Investigations Division.

During 2024, the dive team was called upon to assist with the recoveries of several divers who went missing in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. They were also requested to assist other law enforcement agencies with the recoveries of vehicles and firearms utilized in crimes.

Additionally, team members participated throughout the county in several annual underwater clean-up (removing trash from the underwater environment) dives with non-profit organizations. The clean-up dives were conducted at the Okaloosa Island Pier and the East Jetty in an effort to protect the aquatic environment and ensure the safety of people recreating within these areas. During the spring cleanup, multiple scuba divers removed 93 pounds of debris from the pier pilings and sandy bottom.



BEACH WARNING FLAGS



WATER
CLOSED



HIGH
HAZARD



MEDIUM
HAZARD

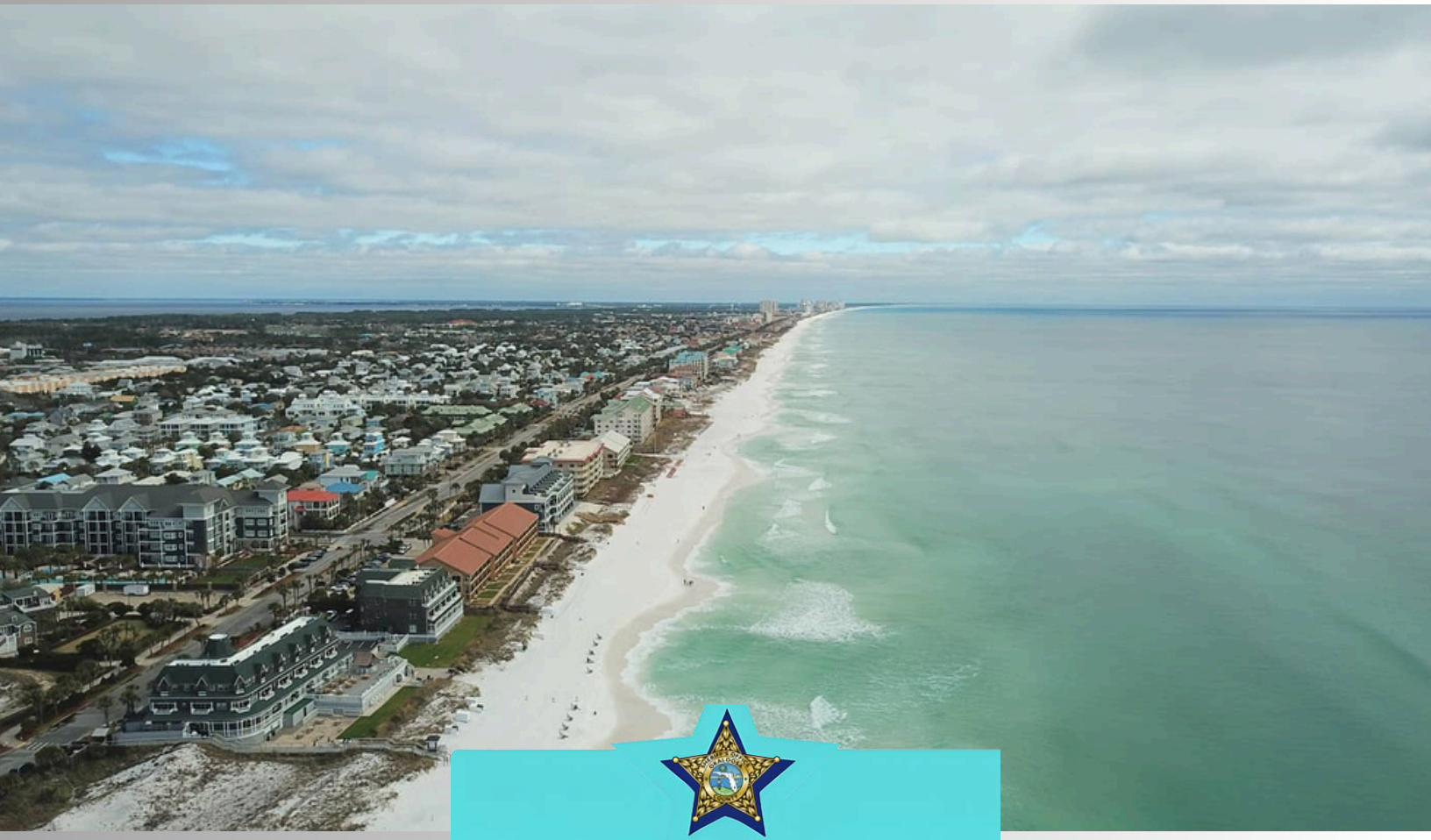


LOW
HAZARD



MARINE
LIFE

ALERTOKALOOSA.COM



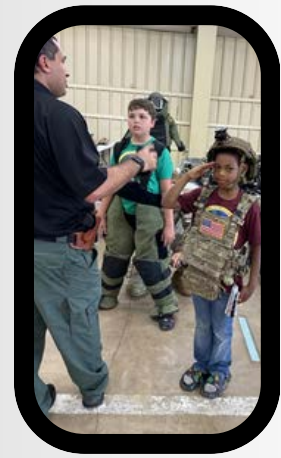
YOUTH SERVICES



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 58 deputies who deliver law enforcement services to 42 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.





Community Involvement

The SRO program is a vital link between local law enforcement and the community. By integrating community-oriented policing with the principles of the Triad, SROs exemplify fundamental values such as intentionality, investment, and trust-building. This approach strengthens the relationship between law enforcement and the community, fostering social capital that benefits both the agency and its community partners.

Our SROs actively engage with the community and voluntarily dedicate extensive hours to support various initiatives.

They organize several community-based events, including:

- The Angel Tree campaign, which provided Christmas gifts to more than 300 children and their families.
- The Hospice Tree Program, delivering over 300 Christmas trees to local hospice facilities.
- The "Hop with a Cop" event at Surge Trampoline Park, where nearly 200 students of various ages received entry vouchers, free food, drinks, free bike helmets, toys, and participated in carnival games.
- The "Cruisers and Cops" free car show event.
- The Youth Week initiative, where the SROs host a complimentary week-long summer camp.
- The Clothing Closet initiative offering clothing, shoes, and other needed items free of charge
- 5K Color Run, which lends support to the Okaloosa County Explorer Post #245

These examples underscore the commitment of our dedicated SROs, who consistently demonstrate a willingness to give back to their community while recognizing the importance of supporting organizations beyond their immediate region.

One such organization, the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches Camp Sorenson, required counselors for its year-round retreat for at-risk youth. In response, the SROs stepped forward to provide staffing support by serving as camp counselors and mentors. This outreach initiative enabled the camp to accommodate nearly 1,000 young individuals.





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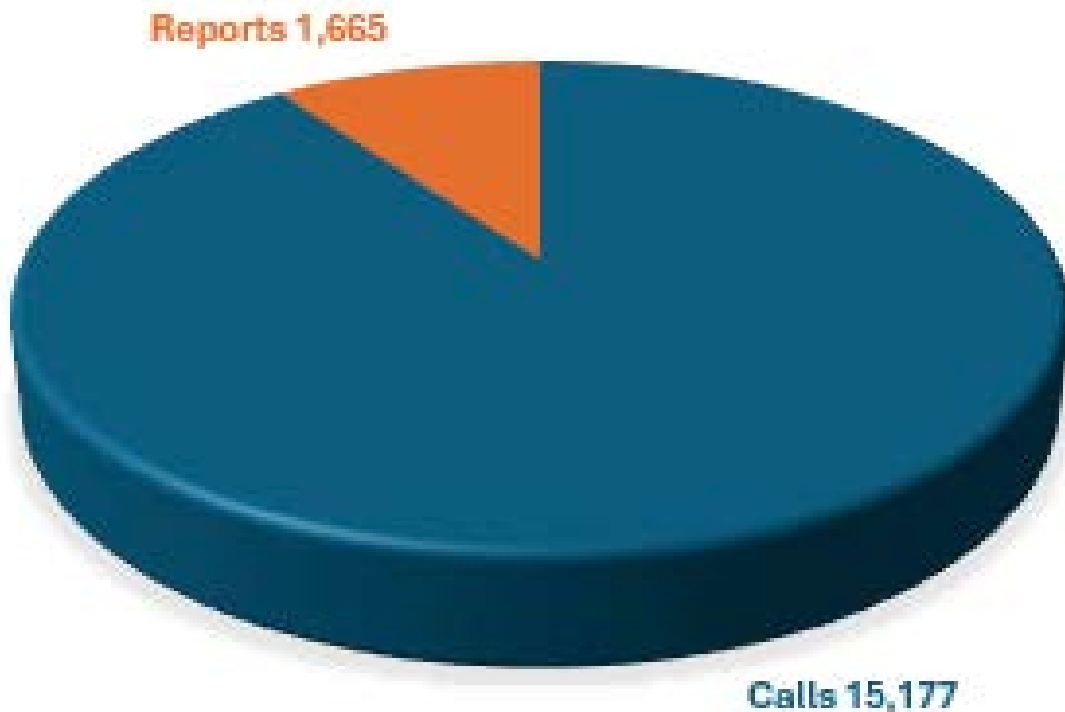
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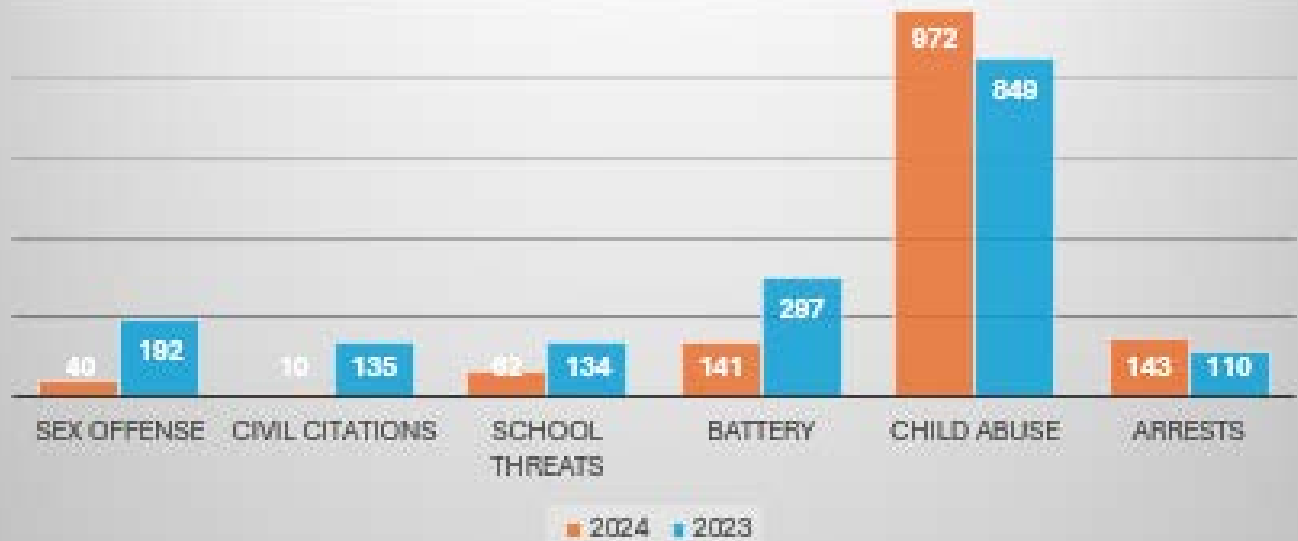
School Safety and Involvement

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. The Youth Services Division has provided statistical data covering the period from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

CALLS FOR SERVICE VS REPORTS GENERATED



Calls for Year 2024 vs 2022

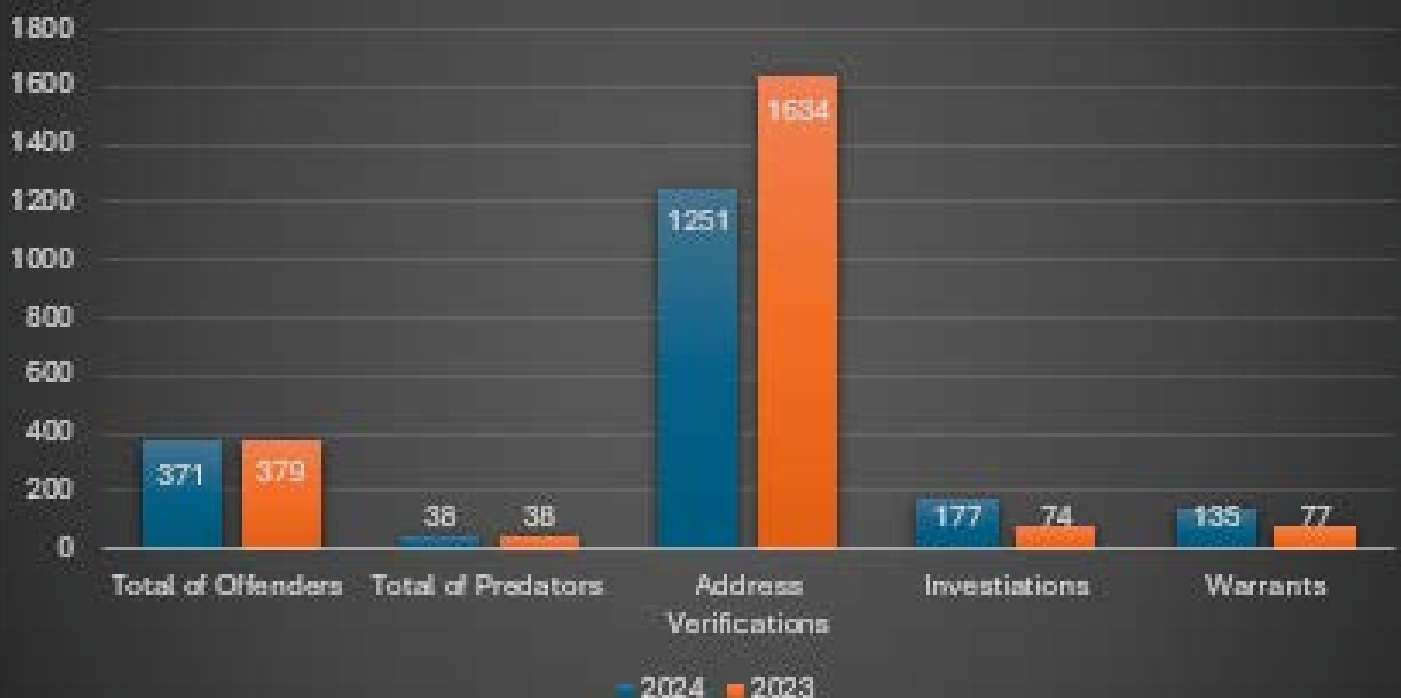


Ensuring school safety is of utmost importance; the protection of our youth, educators, and school staff is our primary responsibility. As the adage "iron sharpens iron" suggests, our SROs are dedicated to continuously enhancing their skills to improve their past performances. The Youth Services Division 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.

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.

Statistics for 2024 vs 2023



Noteworthy Accomplishments and Incidents

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 have received commendations throughout the agency for the year 2024, including divisional honors and advancements in rank, and recognition from Florida state organizations.

- *Deputy Willie Foster – Florida Association of School Resource Officers Finalist for Officer of the Year*
 - *Deputy Kris Staley – Jo Hunter Award*
 - *Deputy Kris Staley – Promoted to Investigator*
 - *Investigator Genrich – Promoted to Sergeant*
- *Deputy Miguel Rojas – Florida Association of School Resource Officers Lifetime Achievement Award*
- *Deputy Tom Henry - Florida Association of School Resource Lifetime Achievement Award*
 - *Deputy Matt Christmas – SRO Practitioners Award*
 - *Deputy Ryan Burke – Certificate of Commendation*
 - *Deputy Karla Pagani - Certificate of Commendation*
 - *Deputy Mark Kane – Certificate of Commendation*
- *Deputy Jeremy Hawkins - Certificate of Commendation*
 - *Deputy Amber Flanagan – Commendation*
 - *Sergeant Joe Trimboli – Bachelor's Degree*





Though the SROs admirably serve the community in many ways, two incidents demonstrate their bravery, selflessness, and commitment to those they serve. The first involved exceptional investigative work and the second a structure fire. The first event occurred in August 2024, whereby Deputy Pagani, Destin Elementary School's SRO, sensed something was amiss when a father arrived to pick up his daughter.

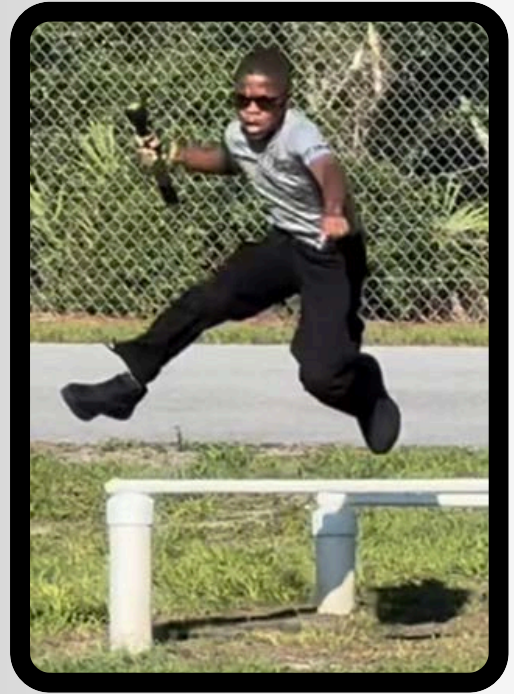
Leveraging her intuition and investigative wits, Deputy Pagani discovered the father had an active warrant out of Georgia for absconding from the state and his mandated sex offender requirements. An investigation was opened, ultimately leading to this individual's arrest. Deputy

Pagani's instincts and unwavering dedication to the safety of her students and community were instrumental in investigating and arresting this offender.

In October 2024, an active fire call at Crestview High School was reported. The fire was discovered to be intentionally set by two students. Springing into action, Deputies Kane and Hawkins, the SROs for Crestview High School, quickly assessed the situation and extinguished the fire before it could cause devastating damage. Both SROs were later

transported to the hospital and medically cleared. Deputies Kane and Hawkins demonstrated extreme bravery in the face of personal and imminent danger and mitigated a potentially deadly event.





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.





Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office
Youth Services Division
 Presents a community event

Cruisers & Cops

Saturday, October 5th 2024
9 am - 12:00 pm
Spanish Trail Park, Crestview FL

NO ENTRY FEE!

Join us for our second annual car show and kid zone. Youth can vote on which cars they like the best for a Kids' Choice Award. There will be activities for kiddos to enjoy. Crestview Police and Fire Department will also be on site! The car show has no entry fee and is open to the entire Okaloosa Community!

For entry into Car Show or more info please pre-register at the following:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cruisers-and-cops-car-show-2024>

SPONSORED BY:
DAVID SCOTT LEE
 CRESTVIEW MUNICIPAL COMMISSION





Consolidated Emergency Communications Center

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Consolidated Emergency Communications Center serves as the primary Public-Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the entire county. The Communications Center is tasked with receiving and processing all emergency and non-emergency service calls. Additionally, the division handles dispatch services for the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, Northwest Florida State College Police Department, Shalimar Police Department, Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and all Fire Departments across Okaloosa County, with the exception of Crestview Fire and Eglin Fire.

The center proudly serves a population of over 218,464 full-time residents, along with countless visitors, across a vast 1,082-square-mile service area. In 2024, the Consolidated Communications Center handled 121,875 emergency calls and 172,148 non-emergency calls. This equates to an average of 806 calls per day, with communications officers efficiently dispatching EMS, Fire, and Law Enforcement services throughout Okaloosa County.

The Sheriff's Office Communications Division is staffed by a dedicated team of fifty-five full-time employees, five part-time employees, and one Lieutenant overseeing the center's operations. The center upholds the highest standards of professional dispatching and call answering services, ensuring compliance with rigorous accreditation criteria, comprehensive training protocols, and a robust Quality Assurance Program.



2024 Communications Division Highlights

Communications Advanced Certification:

- Delta Supervisor Ryan Duval graduated from the Florida Leadership Academy through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.
- Communications Assistant Manager receives 2024 Women of Honor, Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women.



Communications Division Commendations:

Jennifer Root, Mollie Huff, Kaylyn Pursley, Stephen Stringer, Mike Miller, Kayla Wiggand, Casey Bilbrey, Dylan White, Anja Moon (2), Eric Salter, Stephen Sinsel, Lacey Crews, Julie Strehle, Lauren Hockman, and Malia O'Rourke



ROSC Awards (Return of Spontaneous Circulation):

Julie Strehle (2)

Josie Iannello (2)

Hannah Durette (2)

Naomi Gomillion (2)

Eric Salter

Tri-Discipline Certification

Kayla Wiggand

·Calli Bautista

Communications Longevity Certificates:

- Dusty Beck celebrated 5 years with the Sheriff's Office*
- Taylor Tasco celebrated 5 years with the Sheriff's Office*
- Heather Willoughby celebrated 5 years with the Sheriff's Office*
- Denise Sledge celebrated 30 years with the Sheriff's Office*



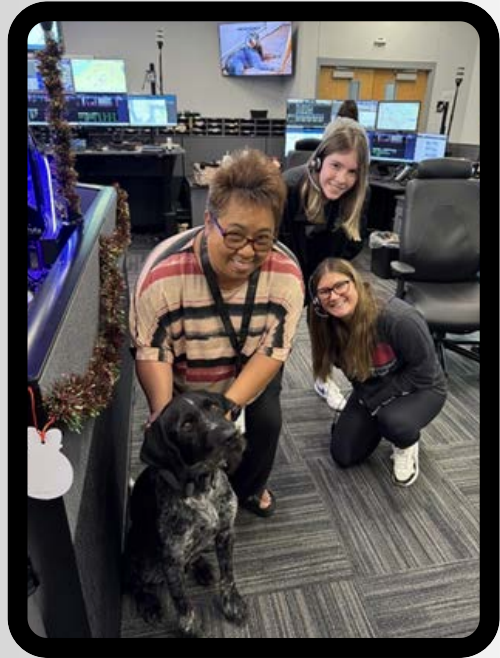
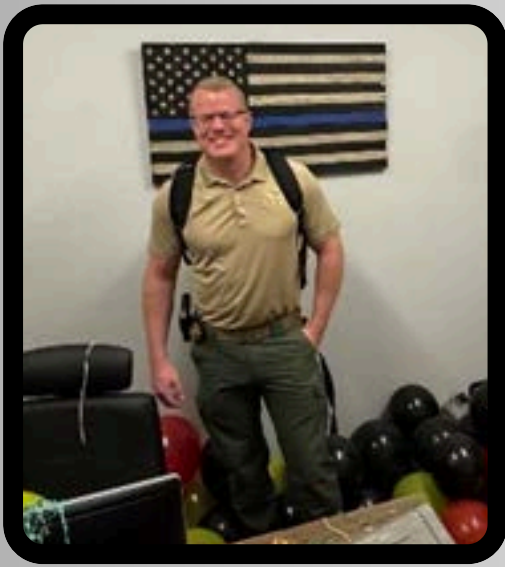
Retirements:

Hilton Livingston 24 years of service



Denise Jones 25 years of service





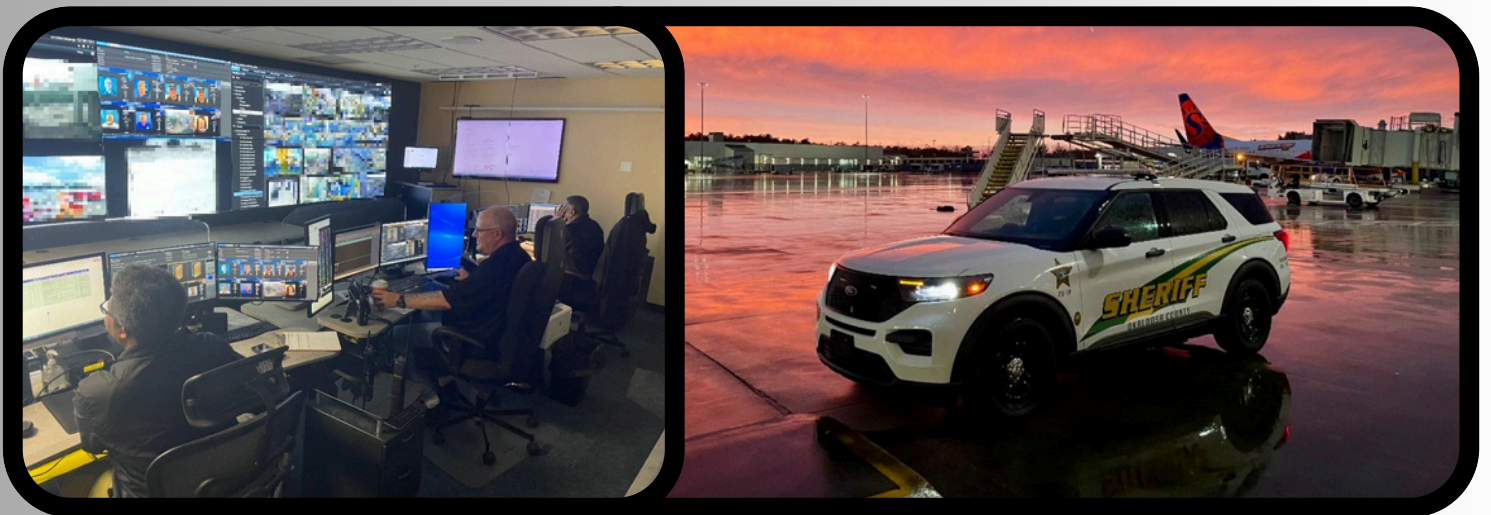


AIRPORT SECURITY

Among the many highlights of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, we are proud to celebrate the OCSO Airport Security Unit (ASU), which has successfully completed its eighth year of service to the three county-owned airports, Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS), Bob Sikes Airport (CEW), and Destin Executive Airport (DTS). OCSO ASU deputies responded to 20,863 calls for service in 2024.

Since its establishment in 2017, the Airport Security Unit has been a cornerstone of our mission to ensure the safety and security of travelers, airport personnel, and the surrounding community. Tasked with overseeing the dynamic and complex environment of commercial airports, the ASU has consistently demonstrated excellence in safeguarding these vital transportation hubs.

This year marks another milestone in their continued dedication to public service. From implementing advanced security protocols to fostering strong partnerships with partner agencies and local stakeholders, the Airport Security Unit has remained steadfast in adapting to the ever-evolving landscape of aviation security. Their efforts not only enhance the safety of our airports but also bolster the public's confidence in the security of air travel within our region. Additionally, the unit provides around-the-clock protection for visitors, employees, and travelers, ensuring a secure environment for all who pass through our airports. The unit also coordinates with federal, state, and local partners to thwart emerging threats, further solidifying its role as a leader in aviation security.





This year, Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) has set another record-breaking year for the number of passengers (estimated at over 2.3 million), underscoring the importance of the Airport Security Unit's role in maintaining the safety and efficiency of this rapidly growing transportation hub.

As we celebrate this eighth year of exemplary service, we extend our deepest gratitude to the members of the Airport Security Unit for their unwavering commitment to protecting our community. Their professionalism, vigilance, and dedication serve as an inspiration to us all and a reminder of the critical role they play in maintaining the safety and well-being of Okaloosa County.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT

The Office of Professional Standards Professional Development Unit manages the Career Development Program and provides career guidance, recognition of accomplishments, and financial incentives for non-supervisory deputies and communications officers within the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. It sets out a distinct career track for those who want to go beyond the minimum requirements of their jobs and to be recognized and rewarded for their extra efforts to excel. The program is based upon a system that awards credits in such areas as training, higher education, professional achievement, and community involvement. Currently, there are three levels of advancement for Deputies and four levels of advancement for Communications Officers in the Career Development Program.

2024 Career Development Program accomplishments:

Calli Bautista – Basic Communications Officer
Jennifer King – Basic Communications Officer
Anja Moon – Basic Communications Officer
Deputy Zachary Putnam - advanced to Deputy 1
Deputy Jermaine Scott - advanced to Deputy 1

2024 advanced leadership training:

Captain Chad Rewis – FCJEI Senior Leadership Program
Lt Dale Carter – FBI-LEEDA Supervisor Leadership Institute
Lt Dale Carter – FBI-LEEDA Command Leadership Institute
Sgt. Jessica Trimboli – FBI-LEEDA Command Leadership Institute
Lt. Heath Hehl – Leadership Okaloosa



Training Section

The training section staff consists of an Inspector, an Annual Training Sergeant, a Field Training and Evaluation Program Sergeant, two Range Masters, an Armorer, and a civilian Training Coordinator. In 2024, a Use of Force Sergeant was added to the staff. The training section is primarily housed at the Larry Ashley Public Safety Training Complex in Crestview, Florida. This training complex is considered a regional training center with access to national-level assets. The training complex has three shooting ranges, an explosive breaching range, a shoot house, a rappel tower, a physical abilities course, a firearms MILO simulator, and several classroom spaces. In 2024, approval was received to design and construct a CJSTC driving pad for vehicle operations. This regional training complex routinely hosts many local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that conduct annual training at this location.



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Intra-Agency Training

In 2024, OCSO employees attended 11,100 training hours outside of our agency and 14,958 hours within the agency. This training included a variety of topics including statutorily required and mandatory retraining topics such as Human Diversity, Officer Use of Force Training, Dart Firing Stun Gun, Firearms Qualification Standards, Defensive Tactics, Crowd Control, Vehicle Operations, Physical Abilities Testing, Leadership courses, Crime Scene training, major crimes, interviewing, and various other areas of law enforcement instruction.

8,008 hours of online training programs were completed through various websites outside of the agency. Internally, our own “PowerDMS” virtual training system provided 3,855 hours of online training, saving the agency thousands of dollars in tuition, travel, and instructor costs, while also reducing manpower shortages and/or overtime costs.



Intra-Agency Training

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 each cadet with extensive opportunities to receive extra training at the Larry Ashley Public Safety Training Complex as well as ride-alongs with multiple divisions within the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. In total, 24 cadets were hired in 2024.

The agency continued to provide on-the-job training post academy in the form of the Field Training and Evaluation Program. The program consists of several months of training while assigned to a specially trained Field Training Officer. In total, approximately 98 sworn members were hired in 2024.



Chaplaincy

For the year of 2024, the Chaplaincy completed a variety of tasks outlined in this e-mail. Included are calls for service, as it relates to “Chaplain Assists”, which include medical emergencies unattended deaths, to include suicides.

The Chaplaincy for the year consisted of six Chaplains. From January to May, Chaplain Geoff Prows served as a Chaplain, separating from the agency in May, moving out of state.

Chaplain Larry Carter served as Lead Chaplain until August, separating for retirement.

Chaplain Tim Sheldon started the Chaplaincy at the end of June.

Currently for the end of the 2024 calendar year from September to December, Chaplains’ Sheldon, Wendt, Malheiro and Rainey served, and are currently serving for the Calendar Year of 2025.

Besides the listed calls for service, Chaplain Sheldon as well as Chaplain Wendt attended awards, promotion and swearing in ceremonies. The Chaplaincy also participates in Employee Orientations throughout the year.



Lastly, at the end of the year, the OCSO Chaplaincy Unit reached out specifically to the Special Operations Command, Command Chaplain in bringing on Military Chaplains to be a part of our Chaplains program due to the vast size of the military community that lives in our county, but to also bridge a closer bond with our counterparts. This work continues into the new year of 2025 in hopes to recruit these future Chaplains.

Total Calls for Service:	69
Chaplain Assists/Unattended/Medical:	52
Training/Other:	7
Participated in CISM's	7

**Birthday Cards delivered to all OCSO Employees:
Approximately 500**



*Celebrating
Countless
Contributions
from
Beloved
Chaplain
Larry
Carter
(Retired in 2024)*



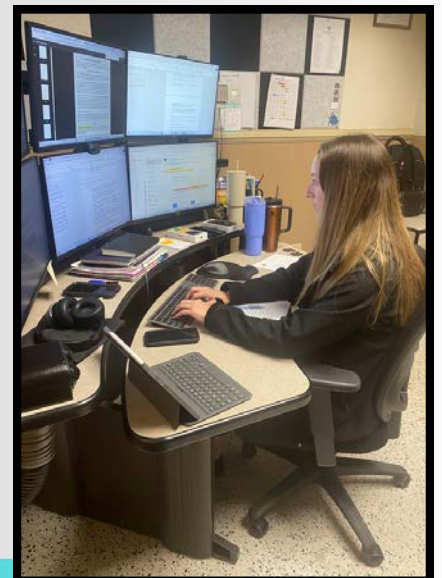
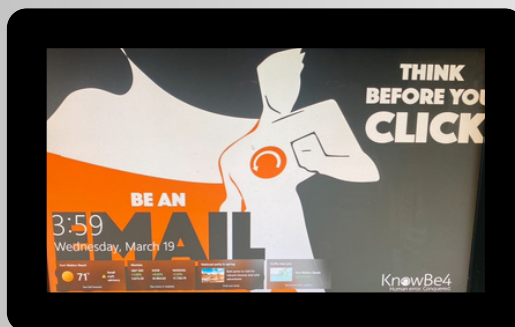
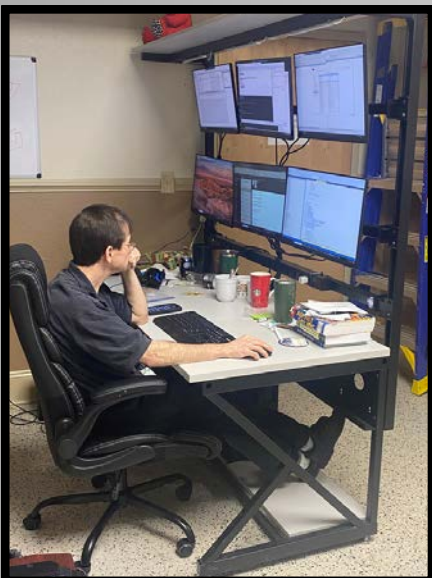


INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

2024 was a productive year for the Information Technology section as we made significant improvements to enhance our cybersecurity posture, prepare for our agency's transition to a new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS), 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:

- Implemented and deployed new tools to enhance our agency's security posture and adapt to modern cybersecurity principles
- Handled 3,721 IT help desk tickets addressing issues such as printer repairs, workstation setups, software installs, cell phone setups, etc.
- Setup and prepared for the agency's transition to our new CAD and RMS software
- Setup workstations to support training sessions
- Purchased and installed new network equipment
- Supported Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton deployments by providing the deployment team technology resources to support the mission



CRIME SCENE

Crime Scene investigators attended 80 autopsies, responded to 162 crime scene processing call outs, processed numerous high profile crime scenes, and processed 25 search warrants. They assisted local municipal agencies and Sheriff's Office Investigators by handling 26 ballistic analysis requests. 2024 end of the year total amount of items stored within the Evidence Unit is 129,000 items.

Total amount of evidence items received in 2024 was 12,399.

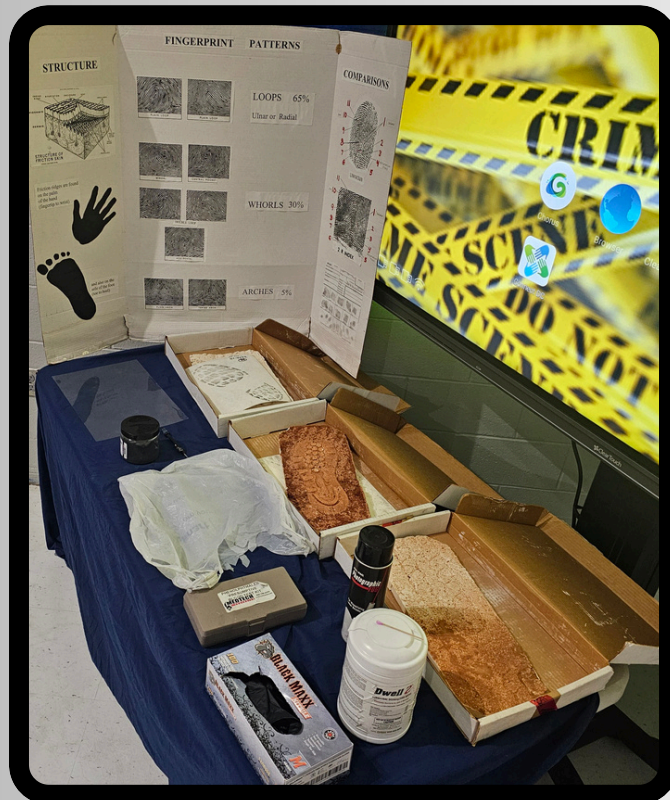
The total amount of evidence items purged/destroyed was 10,055.

Total requests via Help Desk tickets were 2,761.

This includes requests to check out and review evidence, analyze/process evidence, evidence supply requests, record expungements orders, releasing evidence to owners, etc.



Help Desk Tickets Created: 2,761
FDLE Lab Processing: 820
FDLE Firearm Eligibility System Checks completed: 373
ATF gun traces conducted: 695
Court Orders Executed: 40
Escorts into secured areas: 29
Vehicles Processed Thru Impound Lot: 37



Fleet & Supply Accomplishments:

867 completed work orders for vehicle repairs and maintenance

89 new vehicles were commissioned and put in service

46 vehicles were decommissioned and sent to auction or donated

81 vehicle accidents or incidents were handled

47 new hires were completely outfitted

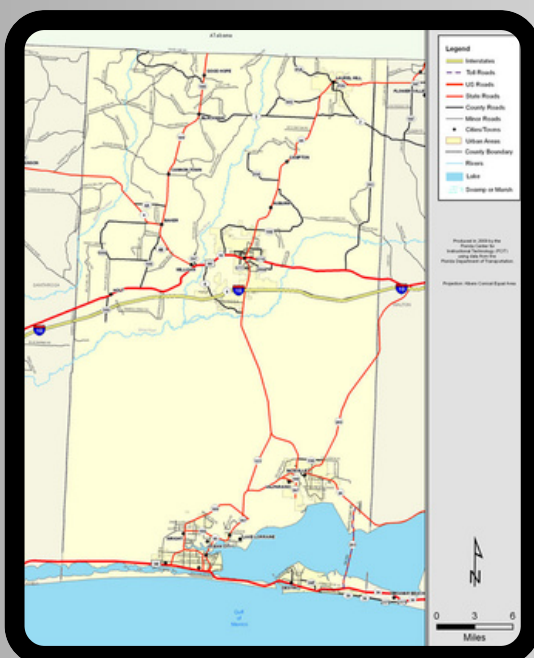
45 out processing's were handled





Land/Mobile Radio Section

The Okaloosa Public Safety Radio Network (OPSNET) project made significant strides this year as Williams Communications, Inc. completed the installation of the towers infrastructure with the towers going live on AUG 2024. Inspections, coverage testing and transition of the first agency (OCSO) began in SEP 2024. Coverage testing showing incredible results with an overall 99.75 % passing percentage. On DEC 2024 there were four county agencies that began transition into the new P25 system. Complete transition is expected to happen around summer 2025.



2024 Highlights

Jan-Mar 2024

Started integration of New Logging Recorder

Coordination with hospitals for integration into the new P25 System

L3 Harris System training and certification for LMR Department

Apr-Jun 2024

Factory acceptance of all tower radio equipment

Completion of L3 Harris System training and certification for LMR Department

Began Fleet map creation for all agencies (handheld/vehicle radio numbers)

Discussion to develop a GPS mapping solution utilizing new P25 radio system

Jul-Sept 2024

Initial Tower Site Inspections finalized

Received first batch of radios for OCSO training and distribution

Coverage testing finalized with a 99.75% passing percentage

Oct-Dec 2024

P25 radio system fiber redundancy completed

All dispatches (SO, Crestview, Valparaiso, Niceville and Ft Walton) received new wiring for connectivity between the current and new P25 radio systems.

OCSO, NWFSC, SAO and Shalimar PD received training and were issued all portable radios (approx. 354) following with installation of vehicle radios.



Facilities

Completed 668 work tasks

Deployed three times for hurricane relief efforts

Added access and security controls to all 12 new radio tower sites

Performed several renovation projects of OCSO facilities

Managed the construction of a new bathroom facility at the PSTC

Managed the installation of an emergency standby generator at the PSTC





Finance Annual Report

Finance successfully submitted five hurricane claim packages. This is a huge feat given the multiple software changes made by the state and the amount of documentation required.

Finance processed 144 check batches, 335 training/travel orders, and 420 purchase orders.

Two of our team members were significantly involved with Girl Scout Troop #94004 and the Headquarters Beautification Project. Lots of planning and many man hours went into cleaning up the front of the building, planting, landscaping, and installing handmade bat houses. It was a great opportunity to share with the girls what the memorial garden means to us.

The Finance team continues to volunteer with various organizations and committees such as Christmas Trees for Hospice, OCSO Employee Council, Saving with Soul Pet Rescue of Northwest Florida, and Florida Elk's Lodge #1795.

We are very dedicated, and we work well together to provide the best financial services possible. We look forward to another year of serving Okaloosa County.





1,203 TIPS



47 ARRESTS



57 CASES CLEARED

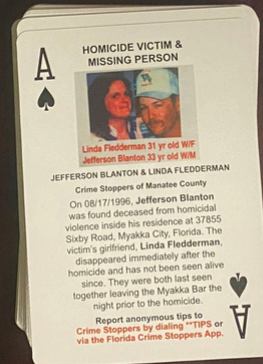
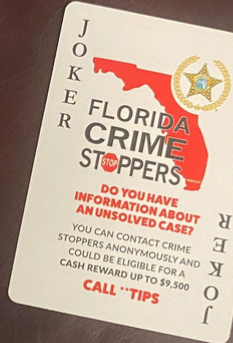
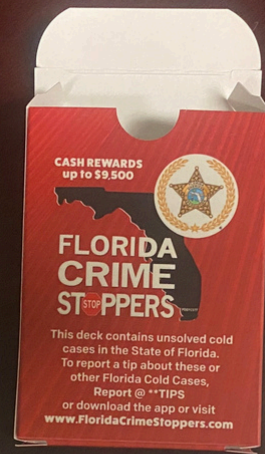
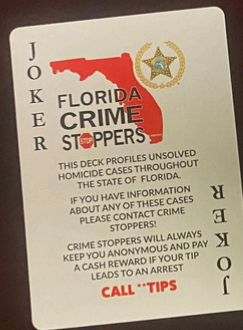


**\$20,600 REWARDS
APPROVED**

2024



www.EmeraldCoastCrimeStoppers.com



2024 Florida Association of Crime Stoppers President's Award

Presented to

Nicole Hodskins

*For Outstanding Dedication and Service to the Florida Association of Crime Stoppers
as Project Manager of the Cold Case Homicide Playing Cards initiative.*

*Please accept our Gratitude & Appreciation for helping make
Florida a Stronger, Safer Place to Live, Work & Raise a Family.*

June 12, 2024



NOW HIRING
Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office



DEPUTY OF THE YEAR

Deputy Chris Fordham

With this award, we recognize a leader, a servant, and a protector—Deputy Christopher Fordham, whose unwavering dedication to the citizens of Okaloosa County exemplifies the very best of law enforcement.

Over the past year, Deputy Fordham has responded to nearly 1,900 calls for service, a testament to his tireless commitment to public safety. But beyond just duty, his impact runs even deeper. As a steadfast member of the Community Resource Deputy Unit and the North District Patrol, he is always ready to assist—volunteering for critical roles, stepping up when his team needs him, and demonstrating a selfless devotion to the mission of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office.

Deputy Fordham's leadership goes further. As Vice President of OCSO Star Charities, he plays a key role in organizing charitable initiatives, strengthening community ties, and making a real difference in the lives of those around him. He and his wife often prepare and serve food at community events, embodying the spirit of generosity that defines his character.

His vision and commitment to community engagement are evident in the events he has planned and led. He was instrumental in the inaugural OCSO Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranch Clay Shoot, a tremendous success that is now set to become an annual tradition. And his leadership in organizing the first-ever Farm & Military Appreciation Event created an unforgettable day for families, farmers, and service members—bringing together over 35 vendors, live performances, and interactive exhibits. Thanks to his efforts, the event is already set to return in 2025, bigger and better than ever.



DEPUTY OF THE YEAR

Deputy Chris Fordham



Deputy Fordham's service reaches some of the most vulnerable in our community. As a core member of the Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership POST Response Team, he has been on the front lines of the fight against opioid overdoses. Through his outreach, he has provided life-saving resources, connected families with harm reduction services, and worked to prevent further tragedies—saving lives in the process.

Deputy Christopher Fordham is a leader, a mentor, and a true community servant. His actions inspire trust, build bridges, and create lasting change. It is with great honor that we recognize his outstanding service and dedication as our 2024 Deputy of the Year.



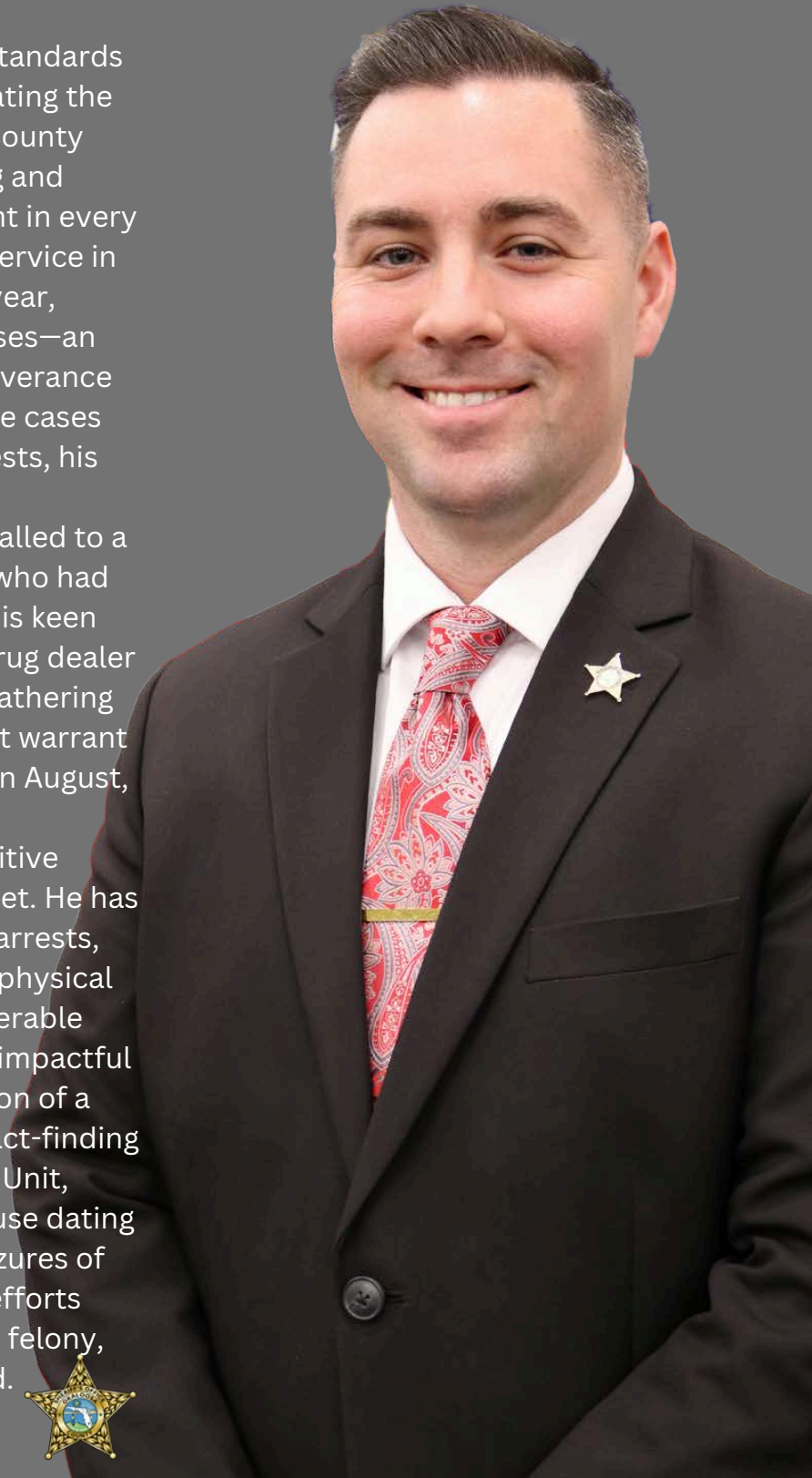
INVESTIGATOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Inv. Tyler Colonna

Investigator Colonna embodies the highest standards of law enforcement, consistently demonstrating the core values and mission of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. His dedication to serving and protecting the citizens of this county is evident in every aspect of his work, particularly through his service in the Special Victims Unit. Over the past year, Investigator Colonna has undertaken 77 cases—an incredible workload that speaks to his perseverance and commitment to justice. With 62 of those cases successfully closed and 20 resulting in arrests, his impact is undeniable.

In February 2024, Investigator Colonna was called to a tragic case involving a 16-year-old juvenile who had suffered a fatal overdose. Demonstrating his keen investigative skills, he quickly identified the drug dealer responsible, securing search warrants and gathering crucial evidence. His diligence led to an arrest warrant for Aggravated Manslaughter of a Child, and in August, the suspect was brought to justice.

His ability to navigate complex and sensitive investigations has made him an invaluable asset. He has successfully effected multiple child abuse arrests, obtained confessions, and gathered critical physical evidence in cases involving the most vulnerable members of our community. One of his most impactful cases involved a sexual battery investigation of a twelve-year-old victim. Through meticulous fact-finding and collaboration with the Cyber Crimes Unit, Investigator Colonna uncovered repeated abuse dating back years, leading to one of the largest seizures of child pornography in agency history. His efforts resulted in the suspect's arrest for a capital felony, ensuring that justice would be served.



INVESTIGATOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Inv. Tyler Colonna

Beyond his investigative prowess, Investigator Colonna is a selfless team player. Always willing to step in when needed, he assists his fellow investigators with search warrants, subpoenas, and case guidance. His dedication extends beyond his primary duties, as he was one of the first to volunteer for Hurricane Debby relief efforts, spending a week in Suwannee County assisting in recovery operations.

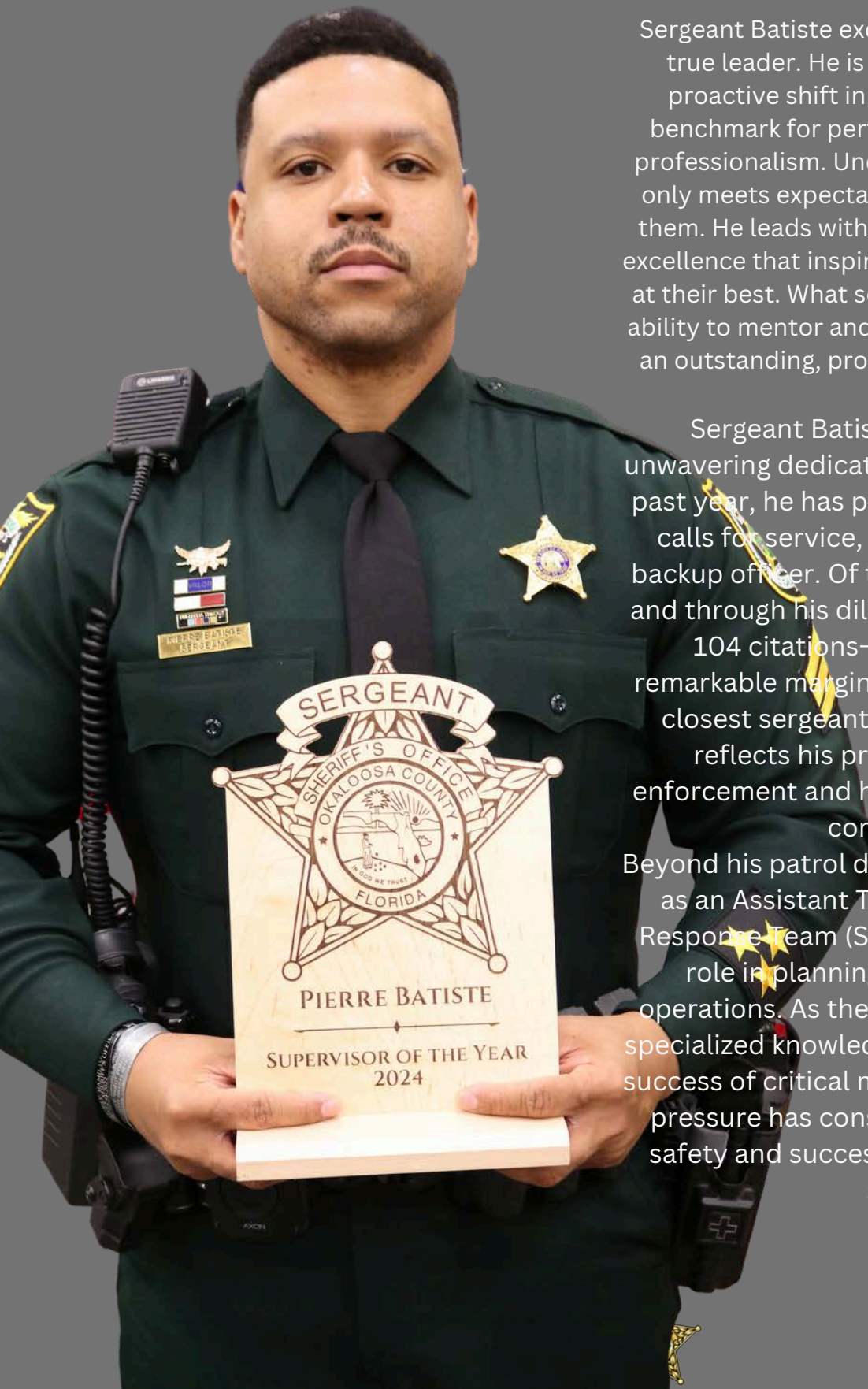
Off-duty, Investigator Colonna is a devoted husband and father who believes in giving back to his community. He dedicates time to mentoring children through his church and coaching youth sports. He and his wife have sponsored multiple children in the Angel Tree Program, ensuring that those in need experience the joy of the holiday season. His heart for service extends far beyond his badge, making a lasting impact both professionally and personally.

Investigator Colonna's exemplary service, relentless pursuit of justice, and deep-rooted commitment to his community embody the Sheriff's Office motto: Service. It's in our DNA. His leadership, integrity, and dedication make him truly deserving of this prestigious honor. Please join me in congratulating Investigator Tyler Colonna, our 2024 Investigator of the Year!



SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR

Sergeant Pierre Batiste



Sergeant Batiste exemplifies what it means to be a true leader. He is the cornerstone of the most proactive shift in the East District, setting the benchmark for performance, accountability, and professionalism. Under his leadership, his team not only meets expectations but consistently exceeds them. He leads with integrity, setting a standard of excellence that inspires those around him to perform at their best. What sets Sergeant Batiste apart is his ability to mentor and guide his team while remaining an outstanding, proactive law enforcement officer himself.

Sergeant Batiste has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to public safety. Over the past year, he has personally responded to 1,281 calls for service, acting as both primary and backup officer. Of these, 449 were traffic stops, and through his diligent enforcement, he issued 104 citations—leading his district by a remarkable margin of 87 citations over the next closest sergeant. This level of commitment reflects his proactive approach to law enforcement and his determination to keep our community safe.

Beyond his patrol duties, Sergeant Batiste serves as an Assistant Team Leader on the Special Response Team (SRT), where he plays a crucial role in planning and executing high-risk operations. As the lead explosive breacher, his specialized knowledge and precision ensures the success of critical missions. His leadership under pressure has consistently contributed to the safety and success of his team in high-stakes situations.

SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR

Sergeant Pierre Batiste

Sergeant Batiste also extends his impact beyond our agency through his role with the United States Marshal Service Fugitive Task Force. His collaboration with federal agencies has been instrumental in the apprehension of dangerous fugitives, showcasing his dedication to fighting crime at the regional and federal levels. His commitment to law enforcement reaches far beyond his primary responsibilities, demonstrating his tireless pursuit of justice.

Perhaps most notably, Sergeant Batiste exemplifies the true spirit of public service through his selfless volunteer efforts. This year alone, he volunteered for three hurricane deployments, leading teams in some of the most devastated areas to provide critical assistance. His willingness to serve in times of crisis reflects his compassion, resilience, and concern for those in need. Sergeant Batiste's leadership is defined by his deep sense of duty, his extraordinary work ethic, and his genuine care for both his team and the community. He not only leads by example but takes the time to mentor and guide the next generation of law enforcement professionals. His contributions to proactive policing, emergency response, and mentorship make him more than deserving of this prestigious honor, our 2024 Supervisor of the year.



SRO OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Deputy Mark Kane

Throughout his tenure as an SRO, Deputy Kane has exemplified unwavering dedication, leadership, and compassion, making a profound impact on the students and staff of Crestview High School. His service and commitment to student safety and mentorship set him apart as a distinguished protector and role model.

His interactions with students, faculty, and fellow officers are characterized by respect, patience, and a firm commitment to fostering a safe and supportive educational environment. His personal motto, "No matter what it takes," is evident in his efforts to support his school community. Whether guiding students toward sound decision-making or stepping up to assist fellow SROs, Deputy Kane's influence is far-reaching and deeply impactful.

Before joining the Sheriff's Office, Deputy Kane answered the call to serve at a young age, enlisting in the United States Air Force at 19. He served with distinction in intelligence operations, completing multiple overseas assignments, including seven years abroad and service in Afghanistan. His military experience instilled in him the discipline, integrity, and leadership that he now brings to his role as an SRO.

Deputy Kane was assigned to Youth Services Division in 2019, first serving at Davidson Middle School before transitioning to Crestview High School in 2021. Since his assignment to Crestview, he has become a pillar of guidance, protection, and encouragement for students.

Known for his ability to connect with young people, he is often seen engaging with students, offering a listening ear, and providing mentorship. His influence helps shape the lives of students, teaching them responsibility, respect, and the value of making positive choices.



SRO OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Deputy Mark Kane



2022 SRO of the Year

Recognizing the needs of students facing financial hardship, he pioneered and maintains a student store where donated personal hygiene products are made available free of charge.

Deputy Kane's innovation is also evident in his contributions to school safety. He played a key role in testing and researching a new entry tool designed to assist law enforcement in accessing locked doors in emergencies. This tool enhances response capabilities while minimizing disruption, proving to be a valuable asset for school security and law enforcement operations.

Deputy Kane's heroism and commitment to safety were demonstrated on October 17, 2024, when a fire broke out in the Crestview High School restroom. Acting swiftly, he located the source of the fire, retrieved a fire extinguisher, and braved heavy smoke to put out the flames before the fire department arrived.

His impact goes beyond physical safety—Deputy Kane is also a guardian of student well-being. In November 2024, his presence proved instrumental in de-escalating a crisis involving a student struggling with mental health issues. Using patience, empathy, and tactical communication skills, he worked alongside the school's Licensed Mental Health Counselor to defuse the situation.

Crestview High School, the largest and one of the busiest schools in the district, benefits immensely from Deputy Kane's leadership. His ability to manage complex investigations, guide troubled students toward better paths, and provide unwavering support to his peers makes him an indispensable member of the school community. His influence extends beyond enforcement—he is a beacon of hope, a trusted advisor, and a positive force for change in the lives of students who need it most.



OPERATIONS OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Deputy Amy Gates

Since joining the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in May 2021, Deputy Gates has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to duty, an unparalleled work ethic, and an exceptional ability to lead. Over the past year, she has distinguished herself through her relentless dedication, outstanding performance, and willingness to take on additional responsibilities—all of which make her an invaluable asset to our team.

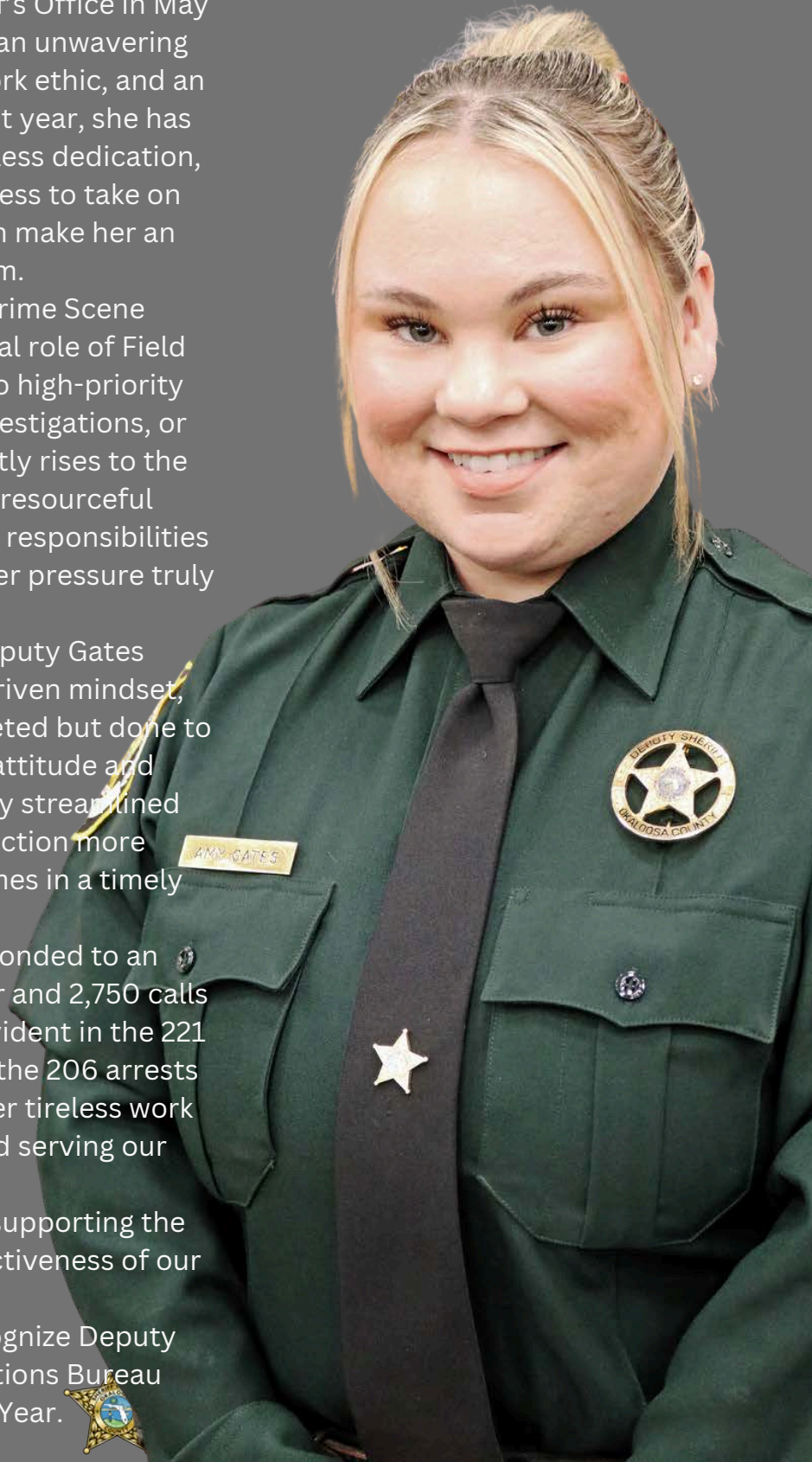
Deputy Gates serves as her shift's Crime Scene Technician and recently took on the vital role of Field Training Officer. Whether responding to high-priority calls, assisting colleagues with their investigations, or mentoring new deputies, she consistently rises to the occasion with professionalism and a resourceful approach. Her ability to manage multiple responsibilities while remaining calm and composed under pressure truly sets her apart.

Her efficiency is second to none. Deputy Gates approaches every task with a results-driven mindset, ensuring that her work is not only completed but done to the highest standard. Her proactive attitude and problem-solving skills have significantly streamlined operations, allowing her team to function more effectively and deliver superior outcomes in a timely manner.

Throughout 2024, Deputy Gates responded to an incredible 1,950 calls as a primary officer and 2,750 calls in total. Her impact on public safety is evident in the 221 offense reports she has completed and the 206 arrests she has made. These numbers reflect her tireless work ethic and dedication to protecting and serving our community.

Her contributions are instrumental in supporting the success of her shift and the overall effectiveness of our agency.

It is with great admiration that we recognize Deputy Sheriff Amy Gates as the 2024 Operations Bureau Outstanding Performer of the Year.



ADMINISTRATIVE OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Deputy Jamie Tedford



Since joining the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in June 2022 as agency armorer, Deputy Tedford has demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to excellence, professionalism, and service.

His extensive law enforcement experience, dating back to 1996, includes serving as Chief Deputy in Jones County, Mississippi, before retiring and relocating to Florida. His wealth of knowledge and expertise has made him invaluable to the OCSO Training Section, where he has played a pivotal role in the maintenance, modernization, and improvement of the agency's firearms and weapon systems.

In 2024, Deputy Tedford implemented a proactive preventative maintenance program for all agency-issued weapons, ensuring deputies have the highest-quality and most reliable equipment available. His meticulous attention to detail was crucial in the return of federally owned weapons to the United States Government—many of which were outdated, in disrepair, or no longer serviceable. Beyond that, he personally inspected, maintained, and repaired over 700 handguns, as well as hundreds of rifles and shotguns, ensuring functionality and readiness for duty.

One of his most significant contributions in 2024 was the assembly, inspection, and calibration of 79 new pistol carbine rifles, many of which were deployed to the SRO Unit.

This initiative improved the ability of SROs to protect the schools, faculty, and students they serve, making our SRO program one of the best-armed school protection units in the nation. His leadership in this effort ensured a seamless transition and deployment of this new capability.

Additionally, he played a key role in the agency's transition to pistol-mounted optics. His expertise was vital in assembling firearms, educating deputies on the new technology, and instructing them on proper usage.



ADMINISTRATIVE OUTSTANDING PERFORMER Deputy Jamie Tedford



Despite his demanding responsibilities as the agency armorer, Deputy Tedford has also dedicated hundreds of hours as an instructor in 2024. He consistently steps up to assist in annual training, often arriving early and staying late to support his fellow instructors. His enthusiasm for mentoring extends to the OCSO Cadet Program, where he ensures each cadet is properly equipped from day one. His passion for teaching has resulted in specialized training sessions covering weapons maintenance, basic firearms fundamentals, and more—setting future deputies up for success.

Beyond his professional duties, Deputy Tedford embodies the spirit of community service. He actively participates in charitable events, including serving as a member of the OCSO Star Charity Clay Shooting Team, where he contributed to a first-place victory in their final match of 2024. Additionally, he volunteered his time in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to facilitate the first Youth Hunter Safety Course and Youth Hunt of the year, sharing his passion for hunting and firearm safety with the youth of Okaloosa County.

It is with great enthusiasm and appreciation that we recognize Deputy Sheriff James "Jamie" Tedford as the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office 2024 Administrative Bureau Outstanding Performer of the Year.



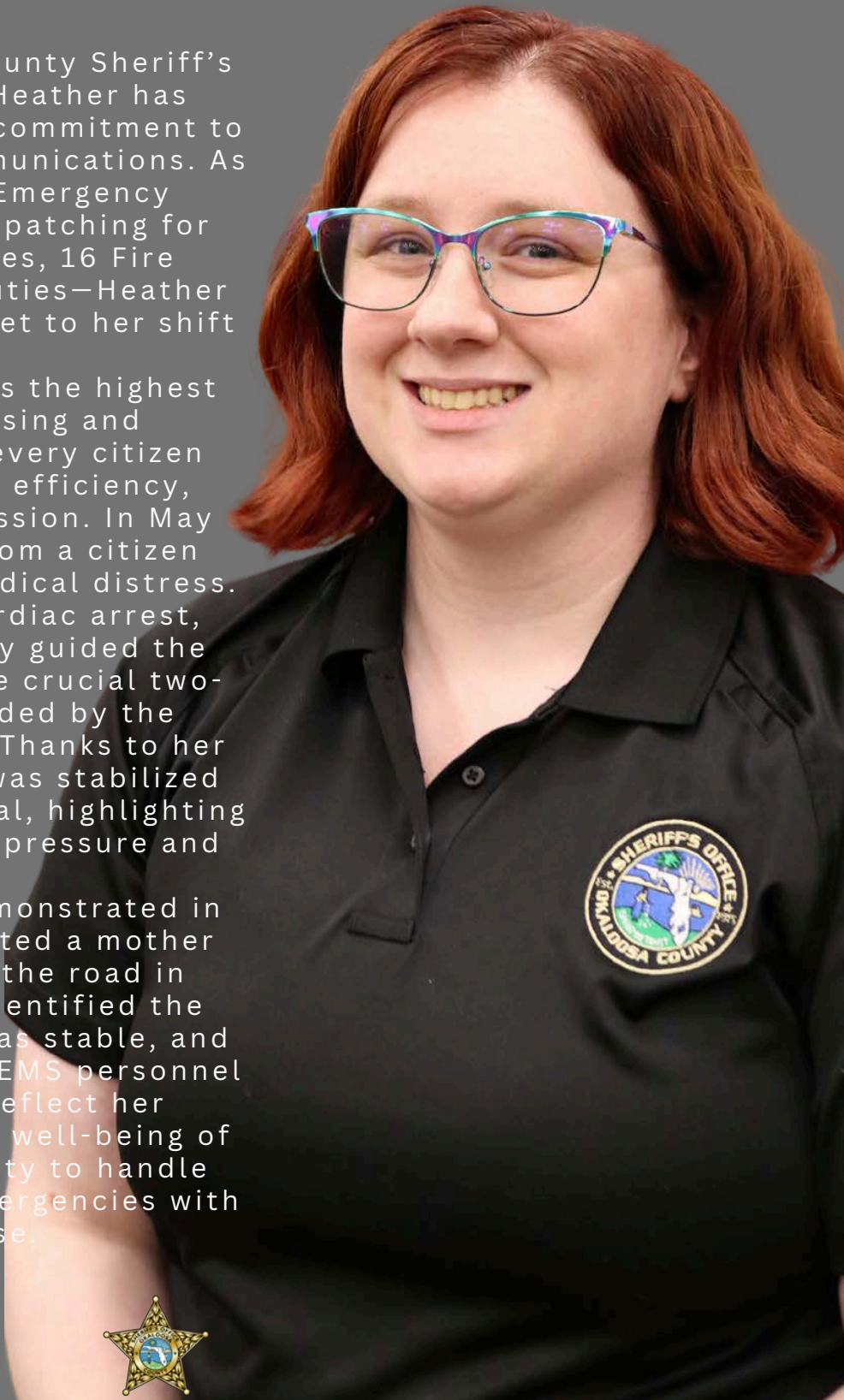
COMMUNICATIONS PERSON OF THE YEAR

Heather Willoughby

Since joining the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in December 2018, Heather has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to excellence in emergency communications. As part of our consolidated Emergency Communications Center—dispatching for Emergency Medical Services, 16 Fire Departments, and OCSO deputies—Heather has become an invaluable asset to her shift and our agency.

Heather consistently upholds the highest standards in call processing and dispatching, ensuring that every citizen interaction is handled with efficiency, professionalism, and compassion. In May 2024, she received a call from a citizen reporting his roommate in medical distress. Recognizing the signs of cardiac arrest, Heather quickly and expertly guided the caller through CPR within the crucial two-minute window recommended by the American Heart Association. Thanks to her swift response, the patient was stabilized and transported to the hospital, highlighting her ability to perform under pressure and save lives.

Her excellence was again demonstrated in August 2024, when she assisted a mother giving birth on the side of the road in Destin. Heather promptly identified the location, ensured the baby was stable, and provided vital guidance until EMS personnel arrived. These moments reflect her unwavering dedication to the well-being of our community and her ability to handle even the most high-stakes emergencies with grace and expertise.



COMMUNICATIONS PERSON OF THE YEAR Heather Willoughby

Beyond her outstanding performance in emergency communications, Heather has embraced a mentorship role. She devoted 545 hours this year alone to training her colleagues, sharing her vast knowledge and experience. Her leadership and dedication have earned her the respect of her peers, who often seek her guidance. Additionally, her contributions to the Communications Policy Committee have helped refine and improve operational procedures, ensuring clarity and effectiveness.

Heather's commitment to professional development extends to improving our training program. She created training resources and tutorials that enhanced our team's preparedness and knowledge. As a tri-discipline certified telecommunicator, her contributions strengthened our agency's capabilities. Following her attendance at the 2024 APCO conference, she shared her insights with her colleagues, encouraging them to pursue further learning and growth. Heather's impact reaches beyond her professional responsibilities. During the Communications Center's major remodel, she volunteered her artistic talents to create a "Tree of Life" mural, celebrating the heroic efforts of staff members who have saved lives. Her dedication to her colleagues and her community is truly inspiring, reflecting her deep passion for service.

. It is for these noteworthy contributions and more that we recognize Heather Willoughby as our 2024 Communications Officer of the Year.



ADMINISTRATIVE OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Kimberly Blackmon



Kimberly's contributions to the Legal Unit and the agency have been nothing short of extraordinary. She has demonstrated a relentless commitment to excellence, a spirit of teamwork, and a willingness to go above and beyond in her service to this agency. As a paralegal, Kimberly's role extends far beyond what is traditionally expected. In fact, she serves as the backbone of our legal operations, seamlessly managing an array of responsibilities with precision and efficiency.

The Legal Unit often tasked with navigating complex and demanding legal matters. From contracts and civil liability cases to employment matters and criminal issues, Kimberly has played an integral role in ensuring the smooth handling of each case. Her ability to meticulously organize discovery materials, track critical deadlines, and assist in high-profile litigation has made her indispensable. Without her dedication and expertise, the challenges of the past year would have been insurmountable.

Kimberly has been instrumental in assisting with Risk Protection Orders, a vital legal tool designed to enhance public safety. Her keen understanding of statutes, attention to deadlines, and collaboration with multiple departments have ensured that these cases are handled with efficiency and accuracy. Her work has directly contributed to the protection of our community, making a real and lasting impact.

ADMINISTRATIVE OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Kimberly Blackmon



Kimberly's influence extends beyond the legal unit. She assists in the management of agency contracts, compliance tracking, and even steps in as a backup for our Risk Manager, assisting our members with workers' compensation matters and ADA requests. Her depth of knowledge and versatility make her an invaluable asset to this agency, and her unwavering professionalism and positive attitude make her a pleasure to work with.

Colleagues and outside counsel alike have continuously praised Kimberly's expertise, professionalism, and unwavering dedication to her work. She meticulously prepares for litigation, organizing thousands of documents, and ensuring that every detail is accounted for. The success of our legal unit and our ability to serve this agency effectively would not be possible without her.

Kimberly Blackmon exemplifies what it means to be a dedicated public servant. Her work ethic, intelligence, and commitment to this agency are evident in everything she does. It is because of her tireless efforts and unwavering dedication that we proudly recognize her as the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Administrative Employee of the Year.



LT. MOMMA JO HUNTER “SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE” AWARD

Deputy Deja Riley

Investigator Deja Riley exemplifies the true spirit of excellence, dedication, and service. With nearly four years of service with the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office, Deputy Riley has consistently demonstrated leadership, resilience, and a profound commitment to both her agency and her community.

Prior to her career in law enforcement, Deputy Riley honorably served as a Combat Engineer in the United States Army from 2017 to 2020. She continues her military service as a Sergeant in the Florida Army National Guard, where she leads a team of seven soldiers. Balancing her responsibilities as a deputy, a leader, and a single mother, she is a testament to perseverance, strength, and selfless dedication.

Deputy Riley’s ability to remain calm under pressure and her strong problem-solving skills were evident when she joined the Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) in November 2023. Her expertise was put to the test on September 25, 2024, when she responded to a highly volatile situation involving an armed suicidal subject. Through patience, empathy, and skillful negotiation, Deputy Riley spent an hour and a half de-escalating the situation, preventing a tragedy, and ensuring the individual was taken into protective custody safely.



LT. MOMMA JO HUNTER SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

Deputy Deja Riley

Beyond crisis intervention, Deputy Riley played a key role in shaping the agency's approach to mental health and substance abuse recovery. She was personally selected by Command Staff to establish and oversee the Certified Recovery Peer Support Specialist (CRPS) program. Committing herself to this initiative, she completed an intensive 75-hour course in substance abuse recovery and mental health support, further equipping herself to provide meaningful assistance to those in crisis. As one of only two CRPS-certified deputies in the agency, and among the first in the nation, her impact on the lives of individuals struggling with these challenges will be difficult to measure.

Her dedication to professional growth is evident through her extensive training achievements, including over 540 field training hours, five trainees, and a total of 1,140 calls for service, as well as an additional 135 hours of specialized training. Her leadership extends beyond her direct duties, as she serves as an Employee Council representative, advocating for her fellow deputies and fostering a culture of support and collaboration.

Her leadership, compassion, and dedication to excellence make her a true role model and an exceptional candidate for this prestigious award.

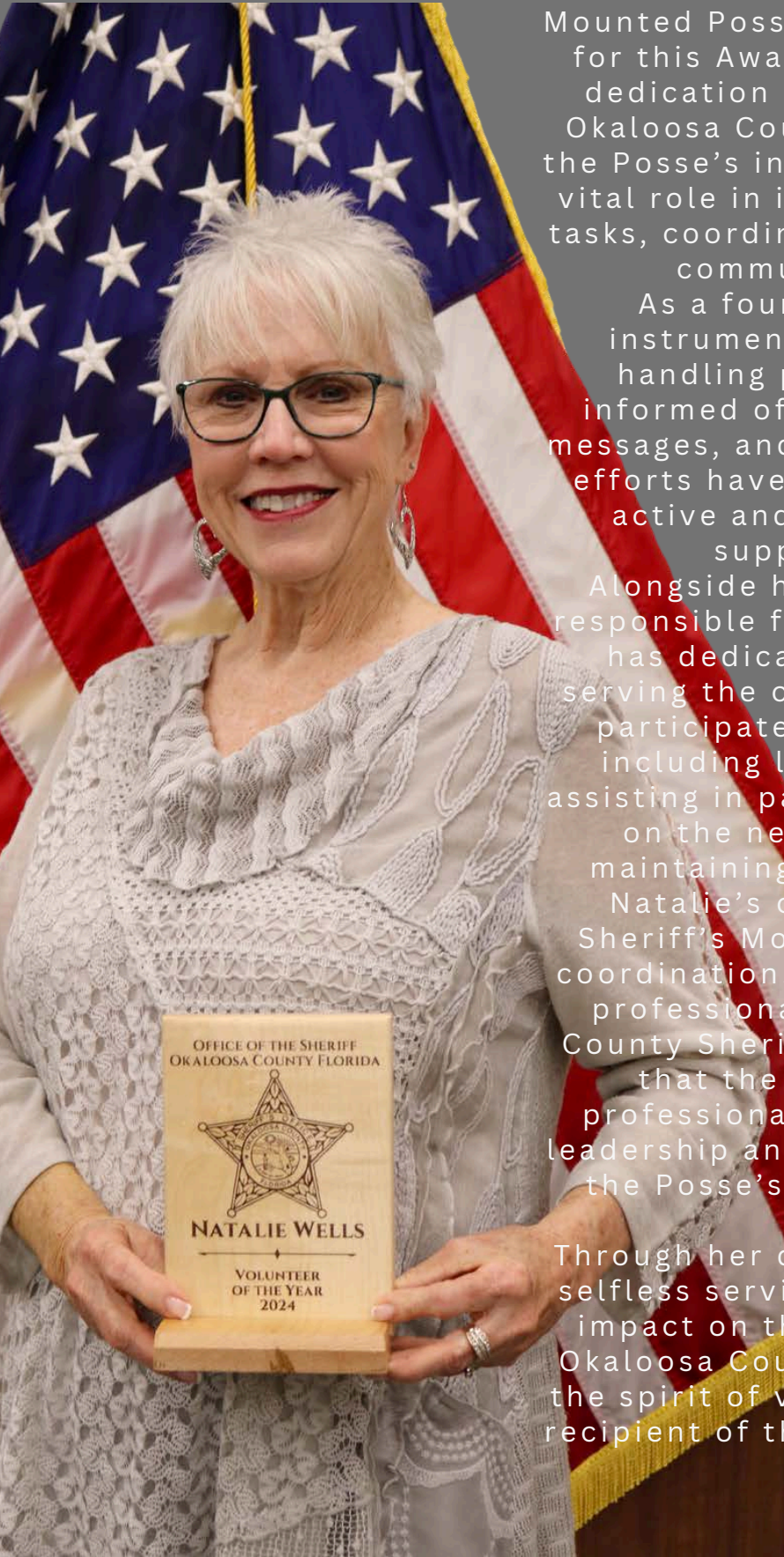
In recognition of her extraordinary service, dedication, and the lasting impact she has made, Investigator Deja Riley is proudly presented the 2024 Lt.

"Momma Jo Hunter" Spirit of Excellence Award.



OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER

Natalie Wells



Mounted Posse Member Natalie Wells is nominated for this Award in recognition of her unwavering dedication and countless contributions to the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Mounted Posse. Since the Posse's inception in 2011, Natalie has played a vital role in its success, managing administrative tasks, coordinating events, and ensuring seamless communication among its members.

As a founding member, Natalie has been instrumental in organizing Posse activities, handling paperwork, and keeping members informed of event details through emails, text messages, and phone calls. Her behind-the-scenes efforts have ensured that the Posse remains an active and well-coordinated volunteer unit supporting the Sheriff's Office.

Alongside her husband, James Wells, who was responsible for the creation of the Posse, Natalie has dedicated countless volunteer hours to serving the citizens of Okaloosa County. She has participated in numerous community events, including leading children on horseback and assisting in parades, where she has willingly taken on the necessary but unglamorous task of maintaining parade routes behind the horses.

Natalie's commitment to the mission of the Sheriff's Mounted Posse extends beyond event coordination. She understands the importance of professionalism in representing the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and consistently ensures that the Posse maintains a polished and professional presence at all engagements. Her leadership and attention to detail have reinforced the Posse's reputation as a valued community program.

Through her dedication, organizational skills, and selfless service, Natalie Wells has made a lasting impact on the Sheriff's Mounted Posse and the Okaloosa County community. Her efforts embody the spirit of volunteerism, making her a deserving recipient of the 2024 Volunteer of the Year Award.

POSSE MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Laurie Doughty

This year's selection for Posse Member of the Year is both unique and well-deserved. In just a short time, Posse Member Laurie Doughty has demonstrated outstanding dedication, professionalism, and commitment to the mission of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Posse. With 26 years of service in the United States Air Force, she attained the rank of Senior Master Sergeant and completed multiple deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Her distinguished military career reflects her unwavering sense of duty, leadership, and expertise—qualities she has seamlessly carried into her role with the Posse. Following her retirement from the Air Force, she continued her commitment to service by enrolling in the Florida Police Academy. In June of this year, she officially joined our ranks and immediately made an impact. In just five months, she has already contributed over 130 hours of service, exemplifying dedication and enthusiasm for the role.

Her presence has been a tremendous asset to both the Sheriff's Office and the citizens of Okaloosa County. She approaches every challenge with professionalism, skill, and a steadfast commitment to excellence. It is with great pride that we recognize and honor Laurie Doughty as the 2024 Posse Member of the Year.

