



THE

COLLIER STAR

SHERIFF KEVIN RAMBOSK

EDITION 25

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Sgt. Jim Baker of the CCSO Bureau of Technical Services navigates a drone while capturing video of the Traffic Unit on a recent day. CCSO is one of a growing number of law enforcement agencies nationwide using drones as a public safety tool. Photo by Efrain Hernandez/CCSO

CCSO Drone Unit Takes Flight

A new Collier County Sheriff's Office aerial unit took to the skies in the form of five flying robots.

The Drone Unit is made up of members from throughout the Sheriff's Office, who conduct drone operations as needed in addition to their assigned duties. Lt. Scott Barnett of the agency's Bureau of Technical Services oversees the new unit under the supervision of Sgt. Jim Baker, who developed the agency's program.

"We work closely with our Aviation Unit to assure the best cooperative effort to attain the goals of the Sheriff's Office," Lt. Barnett said. "By having non-pilots fly the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) we can offer a fast deployment and allow the pilots to be free to operate our manned aircraft."

"Sgt. Baker has been instrumental and tenacious in his efforts to develop a drone program for the Collier County Sheriff's Office," Sheriff Rambosk said. "His efforts have put him and our agency at the forefront of this new technology with recognition both state and national."

Each drone weighs less than 5 pounds and is equipped with a video camera, said Lt. Barnett. They are mostly being used for tactical support, searches for missing children and event documentation, he said.

Drones are more cost effective than manned aircrafts like helicopters and can be used in dangerous environments and situations without putting deputies in harm's way.

"The use of UAVs will enhance the Sheriff's Office's ability to effectively serve our citizens and is an

opportunity for us to use technology as a tool to keep the community and deputies safe," Sheriff Kevin Rambosk said.

The drones were used throughout Collier County after Hurricane Irma to document the devastation, road blockages and safety issues. They've also been used to

assist local fire departments in performing checks of roofs and eaves and to record firefighting efforts.

"Our drones have on several occasions offered unobtrusive surveillance of barricaded individuals, offering the SWAT team real-time data without

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Dear Friends:

Here we are at the peak of our busy winter tourist season. We are fortunate to live and work in an area that is an international tourist destination. At the same time, this also means that traffic on our roads increases exponentially when our visitors come to Collier County. Driving in heavy traffic can be frustrating, but by working together we can all reach our destinations safely.

First, you are probably interested in finding out what we are doing to help. I can tell you that we make traffic education and enforcement a priority year-round. But during the winter months our Safety & Traffic Enforcement Bureau conducts a special operation to enhance traffic safety on our roads and keep lanes flowing. You can read all about it on Page 2 of this issue.

That said, roads are safest when law enforcement and motorists work

together. All of us play a role in keeping traffic moving as smoothly as possible when roads are full. You can partner with us by allowing for plenty of travel time, being patient, using your turn signals and paying attention to the actions of other drivers on the road. Most importantly, when you are operating a vehicle keep your full attention on the task at hand. Any activity that requires you to take your full attention away from driving increases the likelihood of a crash.

By working together we will keep our roads as safe as possible.

Yours in a safe community,

Kevin Rambosk
Collier County Sheriff



Winter Traffic Safety Initiative Underway

With the return of seasonal residents, the Collier County Sheriff's Office Traffic Unit is prepared for more vehicles on the roads.

Last season Collier County's population increased by nearly a third and there were more than 4,500 traffic accidents on local roads.

Road Patrol deputies typically handle these crashes. The average collision takes a deputy 20 minutes to complete, not including the time it takes to get to the scene. This has a significant impact on Patrol deputy manpower.

Enter the CCSO Traffic Unit.

Starting in December, Traffic Unit deputies began working traffic crash scenes so that Patrol deputies can stay available for high priority and regular calls for service.

Traffic deputies are also conducting high-visibility traffic enforcement efforts at high-crash intersections.

"We're doing our best to quickly clear the roadways after crashes to keep the flow of traffic moving safely," said Lt. Jeff Boyd of the Safety Traffic and Enforcement Bureau. "We're also conducting high-



During the busy winter tourist season the CCSO Traffic Unit will be working traffic crash scenes so that Patrol deputies can stay available for high priority and regular calls for service. Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO

visibility traffic enforcement and education in identified high-crash areas." With the increased amount of traffic on our roadways we want to ensure safe travels for everyone utilizing our roads."

The initiative will continue through April 27.

Deputies worked a total of 4,695 crashes last winter season, with 19 percent of those crashes resulting in injury. Rear-end collisions were the most common type of crash, making up 40 percent of total crashes. Most of the crashes were caused by the driver following too closely.

More crashes occurred on Thursdays and Fridays than any other day and during peak travel times: 7-8 a.m., 11 a.m. to noon and 3-4 p.m.

So far this season, deputies have worked 1,255 crashes, with 18 percent of those crashes resulting in injury. This is an

8 percent increase in crashes over the same time period last winter. Rear-end crashes still account for 40 percent of the accidents.

Here are some of the intersections deputies are focusing their efforts on:

- Pine Ridge and Airport-Pulling roads
- Immokalee Road and Collier Boulevard
- Golden Gate Parkway and Livingston Road
- Golden Gate Parkway and Santa Barbara Boulevard
- Immokalee Road and U.S. 41 North
- Vanderbilt Beach Road and Livingston Road
- Collier Boulevard and U.S. 41 East
- U.S. 41 North and Vanderbilt Beach Road
- Airport-Pulling and Vanderbilt Beach roads
- Collier Boulevard and Vanderbilt Beach Road

► DRONE continued from page 1

endangering officers," Lt. Barnett said. "We have used the drone for bomb threats on one occasion at a local high school."

Drone usage by public safety agencies is on the rise.

At least 347 state and local police, sheriff, fire and emergency units in the U.S. are using drones as a public safety tool, including 11 in Florida, according to a 2017 report by the Center for the Study of the Drone, a research institute based out of Bard College in New York. More drone acquisitions by public safety agencies took place in 2016 than in previous years, with local law enforcement departments leading the way, the study said.

All CCSO drone pilots are licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration and have completed an extensive training program designed by CCSO to assure they are proficient in operating a UAV and know state law and agency policy.

CCSO began using drones in

2015. The drone program was originally conceived as a way to supplement documentation of crime scenes. From there, research into federal and state requirements and available equipment brought the agency to its current position.

Led by Sgt. Baker, CCSO developed the first policy of drone operation for an accredited law enforcement agency in Florida. The training program adopted by CCSO was one of the first developed to meet new FAA regulations and because of this the agency now has multiple FAA certified drone pilots. CCSO also became one of the first agencies to receive FAA waivers for night flight and operational flight near airports.

Sgt. Baker also has been actively involved with assisting other law enforcement agencies with developing drone programs and policies. The Lee County Sheriff's Office has adopted CCSO's training program. Other counties, including Highlands

and Putnam, have reached out for direction in starting drone programs.

Sheriff Rambosk recently honored Sgt. Baker with a Command Recognition for his efforts to bring a drone program to the agency.

"Sgt. Baker has been instrumental and tenacious in his efforts to develop a drone program for the Collier County Sheriff's Office," Sheriff Rambosk said. "His efforts have put him and our agency at the forefront of this new technology with recognition both state and national."

Plans are on the horizon to expand the agency's drone program, Lt. Barnett said. Plans include having a drone in each of the Sheriff's six patrol districts. They also include acquiring several drones with heat-sensing thermal imaging cameras to assist in searches for lost individuals at night and magnification capabilities to assist with tactical incidents.



CCSO currently has a fleet of five drones. Each drone weighs 5 pounds and is equipped with a video camera.



Cpl. Jerry Gibson poses alongside Sheriff Kevin Rambosk after being named 2017 CIT Officer of the Year by the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Cpl. Gibson Honored For Crisis Intervention Skills

A Collier County Sheriff's Office deputy has been honored for his work responding to crises as part of the agency's Mental Health Unit.

Like more than 600 deputies at CCSO, Cpl. Jerry Gibson has gone through Crisis Intervention Training in order to better identify mental illness while in the field. In December, he received the CIT Officer of the Year Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness recognizing his skills in this area.

Cpl. Gibson responded to a call through the Mental Health Unit's on-call team where a mother was in need of treatment. Cpl. Gibson was patient with the woman and helped persuade her to seek treatment. Months later the family called to thank Cpl. Gibson for his calm under pressure and what it has done for their family dynamic.

Cpl. Gibson joined the Army as military police in 1992. He served until 1994 when he sustained an injury during training. He was honorably discharged in 1995 and went on to join the Collier County Sheriff's Office.

Cpl. Gibson began as a Corrections deputy in the jail before transferring to Patrol four years later. He has since worked for the Safety & Traffic Enforcement Unit as a DUI deputy and later worked as a commercial motor vehicle inspector. He is currently assigned to the Golden Gate Estates District as the misdemeanor investigator. He is also part of the Mental Health on-call team and is a hostage negotiator.

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) teaches de-escalation techniques and has proven to reduce injuries and deaths to police and those with mental illness.

At 90, CCSO Volunteer Dedicated To Law Enforcement

Birthday cards lined the buffet in Richard Plager's dining room. Balloons bobbed lazily in the corner and gifts lay stacked on the table. More than 60 friends and family members filled Plager's home the second week in January to celebrate his 90th birthday.

Among the gifts was a blown-up print featuring Plager, 30 years younger, straddling a police motorcycle, wearing his uniform and a familiar smirk. Behind him a Sanibel Police SUV, boat and bicycle stand at the ready.

"There were 191 applications for that position," Plager says, pointing to the photo. "And I got it."

Plager served first as Deputy Chief of Police for Sanibel before earning the coveted role of Chief in 1988. He served until his retirement in 1996.

His Sanibel stint capped a 45-year career in law enforcement which began when he applied to the City of Miami Police Department as a 21-year-old Navy man.

He would go on to spend three years at the police department before moving to the Dade County Sheriff's Office where he worked road patrol, homicide, corrections, vice narcotics, and a handful of other departments, ultimately becoming captain before leaving the agency for Sanibel.

"This is what's in my resume," he says, waving a hand toward the list. "What's not in there is seven years with you all."



Richard Plager has worked as a CCSO volunteer since 2010, staffing major events and helping with community patrols on his bicycle. Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO.

Plager has volunteered with the Collier County Sheriff's Office since 2010, staffing major events and helping with community patrols. For the past few years,

he's done bike patrols in his neighborhood and nearby Lely Resort, passing out information about bicycle and traffic safety while wearing the tan uniform

standard for CCSO volunteers.

His wife Grace Plager also worked as a CCSO volunteer for a few years. Outside of volunteer work, they competed in running

competitions. Plager completed his last competition in 2017 at the age of 89. A photo in his office shows him doubled over toward the end of a race with the caption "Richard's last hurrah."

"You get old," he says, smiling. "Things slow down."

Plager says that and yet he's known for his dedication to the work, according to his supervisor, Cpl. Tamela Martin.

"He comes to all the meetings we schedule and he goes out alone on a bike," she said. "He self-initiates and he has lots of experience."

The New Jersey native keeps a plaque of each of his eight badges next to a wooden clock fashioned in the shape of a Metro Dade Police badge. Each memento triggered a story ranging from the time he carried the torch in a law enforcement run to the years he kept two police boats in his backyard when the station didn't have dock space.

While volunteers don't carry weapons, Plager keeps up with his firearms training and CPR certifications each year alongside certified members.

Aside from having given up the use of agency vehicles for volunteer duties, he showed few signs of stopping.

When he walked outside to pose for photographs alongside his two-wheeler, he pointed to a reserve waiting on the lanai.

"I've got a three-wheeler out," he said laughing. "That's next."

Want to volunteer for the Collier County Sheriff's Office?

CCSO has more than 100 active volunteers.

Volunteers work in a variety of capacities throughout the agency including patrol support, crime prevention education, issuing disabled parking citations, fingerprinting, administrative / clerical duties, assisting detectives, monitoring jail video visitations, translating, and chaplain services to inmates.

All CCSO volunteers must apply and be interviewed. Applicants must also pass a drug screen, medical exam and background investigation. Some positions will also require a polygraph test.

For more information, call Human Resources at 239-252-0530.

Deputies, Dispatchers Honored For Saving Lives

The Collier County Bureau of Emergency Services recognized 20 Collier County Sheriff's Office members in November 2017 with Phoenix Awards for successful lifesaving efforts.

The Phoenix Awards program began in October of 1986 when the Bureau of Emergency Services decided to begin recognizing local emergency responders who were involved in the rescue and treatment of patients who had suffered sudden cardiac arrest and were without a pulse before being brought back to life. The award was named after the mythological bird because the phoenix is said to have been consumed by fire before rising, renewed, from its own ashes. The bird is a symbol of immortality and resurrection. The award recipients are first responders who were nominated

by paramedics who were also on the call.

The ceremony took place at the Emergency Service Center on Lely Cultural Parkway. Friends, family and coworkers of the recipients attended the ceremony.

The following CCSO deputies were recognized:

Cpl. Sylee Gibson performed CPR on an unconscious man who was not breathing until EMS arrived on scene to take over treatment.

Cpl. David Schaare and **Cpl. William Pschigoda** responded to a call of a man slumped over in the driver side of a pickup. Because the man was unconscious and not breathing, the deputies administered CPR until EMS arrived.

Detective Scott Peterson assisted

in the care of a 75-year-old man in cardiac arrest by providing CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) instructions.

Dispatcher Diacys Fuentes provided CPR chest compression instructions for a 70-year-old man who had collapsed.

Deputy Jonathan Schlichte and **Dispatcher Sandy Garcia** assisted in the care of a 51-year-old man who was not conscious or breathing. Deputy Schlichte used an AED and began giving chest compressions while Dispatcher Garcia provided CPR ventilation instructions.

Cpl. Christopher Lukasz, **Cpl. Matthew Piccoli** and **Cpl. Steve Maholtz** administered CPR and used an AED to shock a man who was experiencing agonal breathing.



CCSO deputies and dispatchers were recently recognized with Phoenix Awards for successful lifesaving efforts.

Dispatcher Simone Hatch provided CPR chest compression instructions while answering a call of a 65-year-old man in cardiac arrest.

Cpl. Rashaad Smith and **Dispatcher Kathryn Wilson** assisted in the care of an unconscious female with agonal

breath. CPR was administered until EMS arrived on scene.

Cpl. Sylee Gibson and **Cpl. William Pschigoda** assisted in the care of a 62-year-old unconscious man who was not breathing while Dispatcher Staci Bellantoni provided CPR instructions.

Cpl. Andres Delgado and **Cpl. James Casey** assisted during a possible overdose of a 46-year-old man who was unconscious and not breathing. They used an AED and administered CPR until EMS arrived.

Cpl. Eugene Raley administered CPR after responding to a call of a 51-year-old unconscious man who was experiencing agonal breathing.

Deputy Meghan Schwab, who was off duty at the time, rendered first aid to an infant in cardiac arrest by performing CPR.

Cpl. Brad Deluca and **Dispatcher Phillip Dixon** assisted in the care of a 67-year-old man who was unresponsive and did not have a pulse. Cpl. Deluca assisted North Collier Fire & Rescue with CPR while Dixon provided the chest compression instructions.

Award Elevates CCSO Accreditation Status

The Collier County Sheriff's Office has earned an award elevating its accreditation status through the Commission

on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies Inc. (CALEA).

CCSO has maintained

accreditation from CALEA since 1994. Accredited agencies must meet a body of standards that translate to excellence in management and service delivery.

In a November 2017 letter, CALEA officials informed the CCSO that the agency had received the Accreditation with Excellence Award, handed down by CALEA Commissioners. The designation will attach to the agency's accreditation status for a period of four years.

"Your agency has clearly demonstrated a commitment to professionalism and CALEA Accreditation has undoubtedly

become an institutionalized management model for the organization," the letter read.

Members of CCSO accepted the award at a CALEA Conference in Jacksonville the same month.

CALEA based the award on a number of factors including the development and use of contemporary policies and procedures within the agency, use of data for the purpose of public safety improvements and exceeding CALEA standards of accreditation, among others.





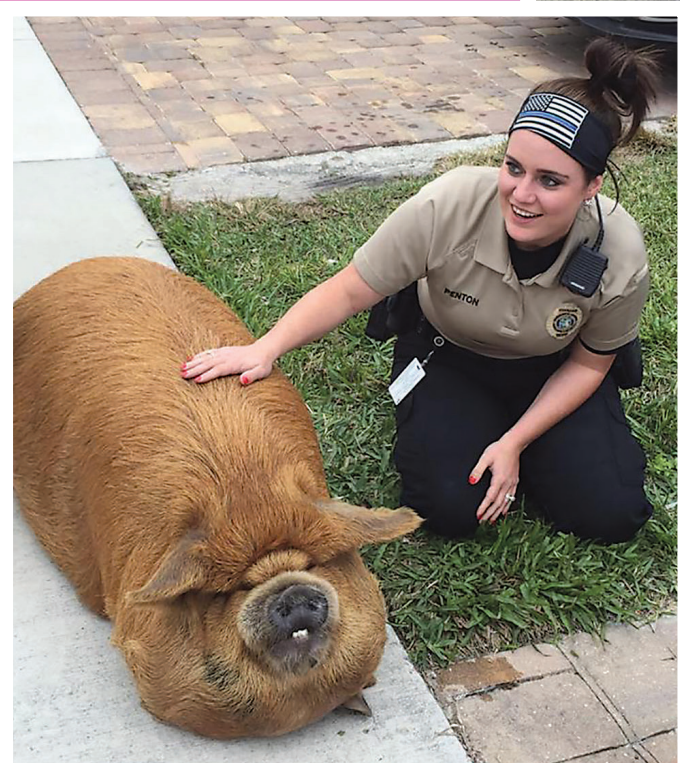
COLLIER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Community Snapshots



◀ CCSO was recently honored by the Southwest Florida's Fallen Heroes Wreath Program. Chapter President Bud Boyer presented Sheriff Kevin Rambosk and Commander William McDonald with 10 wreaths decorated in blue _ one for each of CCSO's officers who died in the line of duty. Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO

► Members of the CCSO's Agriculture Bureau got hands-on experience while attending a University of Florida Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue (T.L.A.E.R.) Operator Course. Hosted by the Lee County Sheriff's Office Agriculture Unit, the course was intensive and members were trained and certified to utilize specialty equipment and technical skills. Photo by Sgt. David Estes/CCSO



▲ Community Service deputies Jeanette Penton and Allison Curry (not shown) helped return this lost pig to its owner in January. The 300-pound animal was spotted running loose through Amberton Townhomes in North Naples when CCSO was called to help. Submitted photo

► Residents of the Bonita Springs American House stopped by the substation in North Naples to meet officers and drop off gifts bags they made for Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. Photo by Sgt. Thomas Orr/CCSO



◀ Deputies served up free hot coffee with a side of safety tips to more than 300 people who were out in 35-degree temperatures in Immokalee on Jan. 4. The "Coffee With A Cop" event was part of an ongoing effort by the CCSO to build trust and relations between deputies and the community, while raising awareness about safety issues. Photo by Cpl. Michael Taylor/CCSO

