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Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk has long been a proponent of tougher texting-while-driving laws. A new Florida law allows law enforcement officers to pull over drivers who are texting and driving, making the action a primary offense. CCSO photo

Sheriff Rambosk: Collier Even Safer Under New Texting/Driving Law

Most everyone agrees that texting while driving is dangerous. Now, deputies across Florida can stop and ticket motorists who text and drive behind the wheel.

Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk has long advocated for tougher statewide laws cracking down on texting while driving.

"I'm happy to see that this law has made texting while driving a primary offense," he said. "We all know distracted driving is dangerous. Now our deputies can crack down on this behavior to make Collier County an even safer place."

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill into law in May that allows deputies to ticket drivers for texting while driving. The law went into effect July 1. Under the new law, phones can still be used for calls and navigation, as well as to read emergency messages such as weather alerts. Drivers also can text if their vehicle is stopped at a traffic signal.

Before July 1, texting while driving was considered a secondary offense, meaning you couldn't be pulled over for that infraction alone. Instead, if a deputy pulled you over for a primary offense such as speeding or running a stop sign, he or she could also cite

you for texting while driving.

Now that texting and driving is a primary offense, motorists can be stopped for texting while operating a vehicle, even if they aren't speeding or breaking other rules of the road. If you are cited for this infraction the fine is \$30 plus court costs. In Collier County the court cost for this offense is \$83, bringing the total to \$113.

The Collier County Sheriff's Office has been working to alert drivers of the new law, and educate them about the dangers of texting while driving. But it's also important that parents

follow these rules and remind teenage drivers of the new law.

More changes are ahead. Beginning Oct. 1 drivers will be prohibited from using hand-held devices in designated work and school zones. Deputies will be authorized to issue warnings to drivers for this infraction from Oct. 1 until Jan. 1, 2020, when they can begin issuing citations.

Concerned about your teen texting while driving? Enroll him or her in the CCSO's Teen Driving Academy. Information is on our website, colliersheriff.org.

Message Boards Drive Home Safe Habits

Get your head out of your apps. Click it. Click it good.

The Collier County Sheriff's Office is rolling out the humor to encourage motorists to drive safely.

CCSO is using a sign campaign to get drivers to think before they talk or text, and to encourage seat belt usage. Electronic message boards with lighthearted sayings like, "Who you gonna call? Nobody. You're driving," are posted on county roads.

"As I drive around the community

and I go by a sign, I see the rest of the vehicles either slowing down or getting off their phones, doing what we hoped they would do," Sheriff Kevin Rambosk said.

The signs have generated a lot of positive feedback on CCSO's social media.

"Love seeing those signs around," CCSO Facebook Top Fan Susan Parker wrote. "Makes you pay attention more."

CCSO Facebook Top Fan Patti Mirena-Hoover commented, "You guys crack me up with these signs! Love it!"



Dear Friends,

I believe the safest communities are those in which law enforcement partner together. That philosophy is behind the redesign of www.colliersheriff.org.

We devoted a great deal of time and attention to analyzing our website traffic to identify the most frequently used areas. With those areas in mind we worked to make these elements of the site most prominent and easy to locate. Careers, traffic information, arrests and crime maps are among the most conspicuous searches. In addition, the redesigned site features a dynamic search function so that you can find whatever information you need in seconds. In addition, our website can now be translated into virtually any language through a tool on the home page.

I hope you'll check out the new colliersheriff.org when it debuts in late July and let me know what you think of it. You can send your



feedback to me on this or any other topic at sheriff@colliersheriff.org.

Yours in a safe community,

Kevin Rambosk
Collier County Sheriff

CCSO Victim & Senior Advocacy Unit Earns National Award

The Collier County Sheriff's Office's victim assistance program has been honored with a national award.

The CCSO Victim & Senior Advocacy Unit was named a winner of the 2019 Tadini Bacigalupi Jr. Outstanding Program Award by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). The annual award recognizes a distinguished victim service program

The award was announced at the NOVA Voices of Advocacy Reception in Washington, D.C., in observance of the annual National Crime Victim Rights Week, held April 7-13.

CCSO was one of two law enforcement agencies with victim assistance programs chosen to receive the award from a field of more than 20 nominees. The CCSO Victim & Senior Advocacy Unit's (VSAU) hard-working attitude, dedication and professionalism to the victims of crime, the elderly and the community will be spotlighted when the award is formally presented during the 45th annual NOVA Training Conference July 22-25 in Phoenix.

"This is a richly deserved honor for our Victim & Senior Advocacy Unit," said Sheriff Kevin Rambosk. "The members of this unit work tirelessly to support crime victims and our senior population."

The goal of the VSAU is to guide victims through the most difficult experience that a person may face and help them return to a sense of normalcy they experienced before the victimization.

In 2018, the VSAU assisted 5,526 victims. The six-person unit, augmented by an in-house team of 10 agency

members, are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to assist victims of all violent crimes and elderly victims of both violent and non-violent crimes.

The VSAU has a distinctive approach to assisting victims: Detectives or patrol deputies can request that an advocate respond to the crime scene and immediately provide crisis intervention assistance to victims. If an advocate is not required on scene, a victim is still provided support and services because every report is reviewed daily to determine what services may be needed.

The unit's advocacy support reflects Collier County's culturally diverse population with bilingual full-time and on-call members. The agency's victim rights and domestic violence brochures are available in Spanish and Creole.

Services provided by the unit include assisting victims with crimes compensation applications, explaining various aspects of the judicial process; assisting with injunction for protection applications/hearings; accompanying victims to hearings and trials; and, providing resources and referrals for long-term counseling and support.

The program nurtures many strong community partnerships that are critical to meeting the victim's long-term care needs. Full-time victim advocates are deputized by the Clerk of Courts, which allow them to provide a unique service to homebound victims by responding to the home to accept the injunction petition and submitting it on their behalf.

Another distinctive feature of the VSAU program is senior advocacy.



The CCSO Victim & Senior Advocacy Unit was recently honored by the National Organization for Victim Assistance. Pictured from left: victim advocate Laura Annis, victim advocate Jeanette Penton, victim advocate Leticia Cuevas, unit supervisor Angela Larson, victim advocate Loretta Eash, and senior services specialist Jacqueline Borchers.

Two full-time members specialize in elderly issues including elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, crime prevention education targeting the elderly, dementia, and local services and resources for this specialized population. The senior advocacy component offers the rare opportunity to prevent the victimization of elderly residents, whether it is assisting the state Department of Children and Families with rescuing a neglected elderly victim, educating the senior population on scam/fraud prevention, or connecting seniors or their caregivers to local resources.

Senior advocates assisted more than 600 elderly victims in 2018. All full-time VSAU members strive to stay abreast of new laws and best

practices that help the victims they serve. To enhance services to the community, members of the unit provide training to first responders throughout the county including other law enforcement agencies, fire and emergency medical services on topics such as crisis response and working with dementia patients. For example, the unit worked with the local Alzheimer's Support Network to bring the Virtual Dementia Tour to the CCSO substations to help deputies understand and recognize how dementia effects an elderly person's ability to follow directions and comprehend instructions. Each advocate holds the Florida Victim Services and the NOVA National Advocate Credential designations.



Lt. Nicole Minick is shown with Sheriff Kevin Rambosk and Corrections Chief Chris Roberts, left, after accepting her award as Accreditation Manager of the Year from the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission.

Lt. Minick Honored for Accreditation

The Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission has honored Collier County Sheriff's Office Lt. Nicole Minick as its Accreditation Manager of the Year.

Lt. Minick has led the Collier County Sheriff's office through seven flawless FCAC assessments. She is instrumental in involving all members in the accreditation process and utilizes best practices. She has taught at new supervisory training classes, attended shift briefings, and meets one-on-one with different sections to ensure compliance with policies and the accreditation standards. She started a group in Southwest Florida to meet and discuss current trends and concerns regarding accreditation for agencies in Collier, Lee, Hendry, Charlotte and Sarasota counties.

She is committed to the accreditation process and the members of her agency.

Lt. Minick also serves as an assessor and team leader for both FCAC and the Commission for Florida Law

Enforcement Accreditation.

The accreditation commission honored Lt. Minick at its meeting in Orlando in June. Sheriff Rambosk and Corrections Chief Chris Roberts attended the presentation.

"Accreditation demonstrates that we are committed to delivering the highest level of law enforcement to the community," Sheriff Rambosk said. "Again and again Lt. Minick has ensured that we are documenting our adherence to these high standards."

CCSO holds seven professional accreditation certifications, including both national and Florida law enforcement accreditations; national communications; Florida corrections accreditation; Florida pre-trial accreditation; accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care; and national Emergency Medical Dispatch accreditation.

Cpl. Puka Honored As LEO Of The Year

The American Legion has named CCSO Cpl. Michael Puka the recipient of the V-795 Grand Du Florida 2019 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award.

Cpl. Puka has made more than 475 arrests since joining CCSO five years ago. He has also assisted in over 25 narcotic search warrants, seizing illegal narcotics including marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamines, heroin and other controlled substances.

Outside of work Cpl. Puka dedicates his time to helping children by dressing up as Superman and responding to special events and local hospitals. During the Christmas holiday season Cpl. Puka dons his Superman costume and delivers presents to local hospitalized children who cannot leave due to their illnesses.

Cpl. Puka is also an agency trainer. He instructs a variety of training opportunities including Stop Sticks, felony traffic stops and defensive tactics. He is also a member of an Incident Management Team.

In a letter nominating Cpl. Puka for the honor, CCSO Sgt. Jon Russo said, "Cpl. Puka is dedicated to the citizens of Collier County both on and off duty. He is an asset to the Sheriff's

Office as well as the community. He has dedicated his life to upholding the Constitution of the United States and protecting the rights of all people."



Breakfast Club: Jail Staff Bonds Over Sunday Meal



Corrections Cpl. Brittany Axelson warms a breakfast dish she prepared at home and will serve to her B Squad colleagues at the Collier County jail on a recent Sunday morning. Photos by Media Relations Specialist Kristi Lester/CCSO

Metal chafing dishes line a long table, their warm contents brimming with pecan praline baked French toast, ham and cheese poppy seed pinwheels and bacon sous vide egg bites. The comforting aroma of cinnamon and eggs fills the room.



Bacon sous vide egg bites, ham and cheese poppy seed pinwheels and baked French toast with a pecan praline topping await the B Squad.

There's a glass pitcher of orange juice, and two decorative beverage dispensers with cold brew and hot coffees. A wooden caddy is well stocked with coffee accoutrements: stirrers, cardboard cup sleeves, packets of sugar and artificial sweeteners, and a variety of creamers.

A bottle of syrup, plastic cups, lids, paper straws, and foam containers fill out the rest of the table.

Welcome to Sunday mornings at the Collier County jail.

Corrections Cpl. Brittany Axelson organized the biweekly staff breakfasts as a way to help boost morale among her day shift colleagues.

"I came from the night shift where we were very tight knit," Cpl. Axelson said. "We had potlucks and hung out together after work, and when I came here (day shift) that wasn't the case."

Cpl. Axelson transferred to days about six months ago and immediately wanted to bring everyone closer. She felt food could do that.

The next Sunday she came to work early armed with a skillet and a bag of groceries. She served up pancakes, eggs and sausages for her surprised - and grateful - colleagues.

"Breakfast With Brittany" was born.

Since then Cpl. Axelson has organized

the breakfast, which draws around 50 people, with little assistance to reduce any impact on shift staffing. She chooses the meals, drawing heavily on Pinterest for inspiration. She uses the free Adobe Stock app to create a detailed menu with pictures that she sends to her colleagues a few days in advance. She buys the groceries and prepares and cooks the food while off duty and cleans up afterward.

She also supplies all the cookware from the metal chafing dishes to the fuel to heat them and from the plastic beverage dispensers to the little metal holders with place cards that identify each food and drink item.

She asks only for a \$2 donation in return to help cover the costs.

Cpl. Axelson received a Letter of Commendation and was recently nominated for Deputy of the Fourth Quarter for her efforts.

"Our Corrections deputies have a monotonous and grueling job," Corrections Chief Chris Roberts said. "Initiatives like this by Cpl. Axelson help exponentially in breaking up the monotony and building a team spirit that is crucial to having good morale."

Lt. David Dellinger said Sunday shift breakfasts aren't anything new, but they didn't always get the participation. He said Cpl. Axelson approached those deputies who weren't participating and addressed their concerns. She also consults her co-workers on the menu and makes sure to include offerings for those with special dietary considerations.

The result has been 100 percent shift participation.

"We've had breakfasts in the past and you usually get a lot of participation, but for these everybody comes down. Everybody," Lt. Dellinger said.

On a recent Sunday, seven deputies are already lined up at the table in the breakroom at 8:30 a.m. when breakfast is served buffet style. Some ask Cpl. Axelson for her recipes, while another suggests she compile a book. Most drop cash in the donations bowl and offer appreciative comments.

"I think it's a good morale booster and

something to look forward to after a long week," said Corrections Cpl. Lazar Grubin. "Everybody enjoys it."

Corrections Deputy Kevin Perrault said the breakfasts have "definitely built camaraderie" among the shift. He said

other shifts do breakfast but it's standard fare like bacon, eggs and sausages.

"This is a lot of weird stuff," Deputy Perrault said. "Really, pecan French toast? Yes, please. This is something new and different, so it's cool."



The biweekly teambuilding breakfasts organized by Cpl. Axelson draw 100 percent participation and have brought the jail staff closer.





Community Snapshots



Sheriff Kevin Rambosk cut the ribbon on the newest disposal box for unwanted medicine at Moorings Park at Grey Oaks as part of Operation Medicine Cabinet on June 12.
Photo by Kristine Gill/CCSO



Deputies, including K9 Kerel and Cpl. James Casey, were proud to be a part of a recent Make-A-Wish Southern Florida cruise aboard the Naples Princess on May 25. *Photo by Erin Dever/CCSO*



The Mounted Patrol Unit conducted extra patrols along Barefoot Beach. Although the pictures sure are scenic, these horses are hard at work alongside deputies and volunteers who help keep public areas safe for residents and visitors. *Photo submitted by Sgt. David Estes/CCSO*



Sheriff Rambosk served up tasty treats during the Hot Summer Nights event at Corkscrew Middle School. Hot Summer Nights is one of the many activities offered during Summerfest, CCSO's annual summertime youth activities program. It's all part of Sheriff Rambosk's commitment to youth programming in Collier County.
Photo by Cpl. Debra Gross/CCSO



Deputies held the inaugural "You Can Do It All!" event June 17 for girls who will be attending sixth grade next year. The girls spent the day with CCSO female deputies who shared their wisdom on topics such as mental strength and self-defense with the goal of empowering them as they enter adolescence. *Photo by Kristine Gill/CCSO*