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The Motor Unit is one of several specialty elements that make up the CCSO Safety Traffic and Enforcement Bureau. Motor deputies can respond more easily and quickly to calls for service or traffic accidents where traditional marked cars are unable to access due to heavy traffic or crowds. Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO

CCSO Traffic Unit A Driving Force For Safety

The Collier County Sheriff's Office's traffic unit focuses on improving traffic safety and educating the public about safe practices on the road.

"Our award-winning traffic program is a testament to the dedication that the Sheriff's Office has to keeping drivers and passengers safe on our roads," Sheriff Kevin Rambosk said.

In 2018, traffic unit deputies made 12,982 traffic stops, wrote 8,408 traffic citations and gave 8,029 traffic violation warnings. These numbers represent activity for the traffic unit only. In addition to traffic units, CCSO's patrol deputies also conduct traffic stops, write citations and give warnings. Patrol deputies and traffic deputies all focus on keeping our roads safe.

All deputies assigned to the traffic unit are specialists in traffic crash analysis and DUI enforcement. Last year the unit worked 2,012 crashes and made 376 arrests, of which 152 were for DUI. Patrol Division deputies made additional traffic and DUI arrests.

The Safety Traffic and Enforcement Bureau, or STEB, as the traffic unit is formally known, is made up of several elements that specialize in different fields:

-Motor Unit. These deputies are highly skilled motorcycle riders whose primary responsibility is to enforce all traffic laws within the county. The mobility of the motor enables them to respond quickly to crashes around the county and move through heavy traffic with ease, resulting in quicker response times. Members train regularly to maintain their skills and compete nationally.

-Commercial Motor Vehicle Unit. This two-member team inspects over

60 vehicles each month to ensure that the commercial motor vehicles traveling on the roads of Collier County are safe. CMV deputies are highly trained and attend several schools to obtain certifications to inspect commercial motor vehicles. Collier County is one of the few counties in Florida that provide this service, which is a function of the Florida Highway Patrol.

-Aggressive Driving Unit. These deputies focus on roadways identified as high-crash areas and high-speed corridors. The team uses data-driven statistics to direct resources. They are equipped with unmarked patrol vehicles not easily identified by the public, allowing them to blend into normal traffic flows. Distracted driving, a major cause of crashes in the county, is a primary focus. They conduct specialized details and operations, and are always looking for novel solutions to traffic problems. The team currently conducts operations focusing on motorists passing school buses as well as weekly red light details.

-DUI Unit. These deputies have specialized training and focus on nighttime enforcement operations. They are highly motivated to reduce drinking and driving, and have received awards from Mothers Against Drunk Driving for their efforts. Members are Breathalyzer operators and drug recognition experts. The team utilizes two "ghost" vehicles.

The bureau also has a full-time hit-and-run investigator who closed 212 hit-and-run crashes in 2018. Members investigate crashes resulting in serious bodily injury or death when FHP is unable.

Two civilian traffic technicians assist the unit responding to traffic crashes. They provide support for the bureau with logistical operations on a daily basis.

During the busy winter season, STEB's primary mission is assisting road patrol deputies in responding to crashes. This is due to the increase in the number of vehicle crashes during season.

Sgt. Terence Smith said deputies use a combination of education and enforcement tools to keep roads safe.

"A lot of thought goes into picking the areas of enforcement," Sgt. Smith said.

The traffic unit considers crash statistics, areas of concern and complaints generated as well as injury crashes and traffic fatalities. The unit then compiles the data, some of it only days old.

"The bureau provides educational awareness of the issues and enforcement actions in those particular areas of concern in hopes of reducing traffic fatalities and injury crashes, ultimately saving lives," Sgt. Smith said.

Dear Friends,

Every year we look at our agency's achievements for the prior year. It's a great way for us to ensure that we are staying on course and keeping our community safe. In looking back at 2018, I can tell you that your Collier County Sheriff's Office deputies accomplished many things that furthered public safety in our community.

I'm happy to report that thanks to all of these efforts and the partnership of our community, preliminary numbers show that crime dropped 3.5 percent in 2018. You can read all about that reduction in crime in a story on Page 2 of this edition of the Collier Star.

Here are some more interesting facts. In 2018 CCSO and its deputies:

- Responded to 412,530 calls for service
- Made 9,275 arrests
- Partnered with Collier County Public Schools to make Collier County one of the earliest adapters to meet the requirements of the state's Marjory Stoneman Douglas school safety act
- Conducted active shooter presentations training for thousands of attendees at various locations throughout the county



- Established the CCSO Mental Health Intervention Team
- Made tens of thousands of citizen contacts via tours, demonstrations and presentations
- Hosted thousands of attendees at Celebrating Safe Communities events throughout Collier County

You can be assured that we are continuing to work hard in 2019. I look forward to keeping you posted on what we're doing throughout the year. Together we will keep Collier County a great place and a safe place.

Yours in a safe community,

Kevin Rambosk
Collier County Sheriff

Collier County Crime Down In 2018

Crime dropped for the fourth consecutive year in unincorporated Collier County in 2018, preliminary figures show.

The 4,660 crimes reported in 2018 is the lowest number since 1984.

Numbers recently submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement by the Collier County Sheriff's Office show that the area patrolled by CCSO saw a 3.5 percent decrease when compared to 2017 figures.

The statistics represent the categories of homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

Sheriff Kevin Rambosk credited the overall drop in reported crimes to a combination of the agency's continuing partnerships with residents, visitors and businesses and the hard work and dedication of deputies.

"Collier County continues to be one of the safest counties in Florida," Sheriff Rambosk said. "People are securing their homes and belongings, and they are taking other appropriate measures to stay safe and help us keep crime low."

They are also heeding the agency's ongoing push to report all crime to law enforcement, the Sheriff noted.

"Our deputies depend on the community to be their eyes and ears on the ground," he said.

Burglary showed the largest overall decrease from 639 in 2017 to 505 in 2018, for a 21 percent drop. Sheriff Rambosk pointed to the agency's safety campaigns, initiatives and events that focused on educating the community about the importance of home security. CCSO also offers free home and business security surveys to the community.

Aggravated assaults dropped 11 percent from 722 in 2017 to 642 in 2018. Robberies dipped 9.2 percent from 152 in 2017 to 138 in 2018.

Categories showing an increase were homicide, which rose from six in 2017 to nine in 2018; rape, which increased from 77 in 2017 to 109 in 2018; motor vehicle theft, which saw an uptick from 209 in 2017 to 215 in 2018; and larceny, which rose from 3,025 in 2017 to 3,042 in 2018.

The last time there were fewer than 4,660 reported crimes in Collier County was 1984 when there were 4,327 reported crimes. However, there were 90,663 residents in Collier in 1984 compared to 329,909 residents in 2018.

Here are some of the ways the



Crime was down 3.5 percent in Collier County in 2018 thanks, in part, to events like Coffee With A Cop where deputies share safety tips with the public. Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO

community can help deputies drive down crime:

- * Lock your car and keep valuables out of view
- * Schedule a home or business security survey by a CCSO Crime Prevention specialist
- * Report unusual activity to law enforcement
- * Start or join a Neighborhood Watch program

* Mentor a child

- * Be alert and aware of your surroundings
- * Join one of CCSO's Community Safety Teams to help address code enforcement and other problems at the neighborhood level
- * Protect personal information like your Social Security number, computer passwords and banking information
- * When online, don't chat with strangers or respond to their e-mails

New CCSO Podcast Explores Hiker Mystery, Other Cases

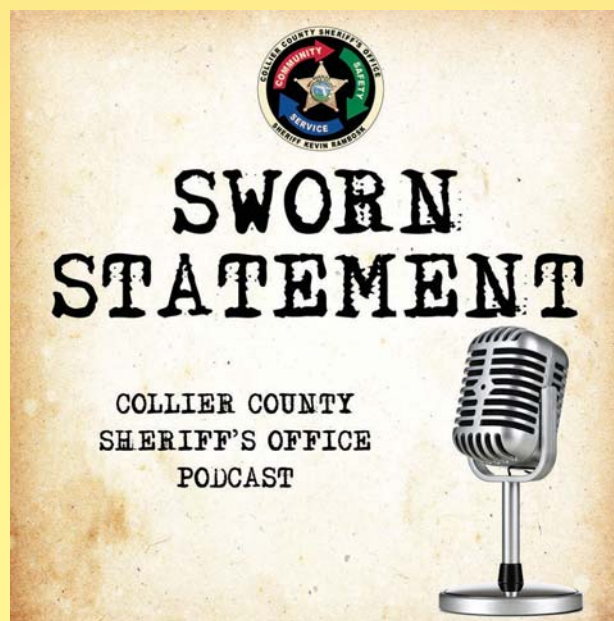
The Collier County Sheriff's Office has launched the first three episodes of its new podcast.

"Sworn Statement" will explore local cases and public safety issues affecting Collier County. It is currently available for listening on iTunes, GooglePlay and SoundCloud.

"The podcast is really just a way to reach residents of Collier County on a different kind of platform," said Media Relations Specialist Kristine Gill. "This medium is long form as well, so we can really dive into topics folks might not take the time to read in press release format or in Facebook posts."

The first three episodes focus on the case of the deceased thru-hiker known as Mostly Harmless.

Hikers found the man's body in Big Cypress National Preserve in July 2018. Facebook tipsters quickly linked a composite image of the man to photos taken of him during his hike along the Appalachian Trail, beginning in 2017. But detectives have not yet made a positive ID.



"The hope is to reach a wider audience with the podcast to help solve this case," Gill said.

The episodes include firsthand accounts from the 911 caller, fellow hikers who met Mostly Harmless on the trail and CCSO's own investigators.

"I'm just hoping that maybe somebody sees

this who hasn't seen it before and knows who he is," said Kim Cherney, a criminal research investigator for the agency.

Cherney is featured prominently in the podcast alongside Detective Kevin O'Neill of the Special Crimes Bureau. They explain their work on the case and the roadblocks they've run into since July.

"Usually someone is missing you somewhere," Detective O'Neill said. "But we haven't received that call."

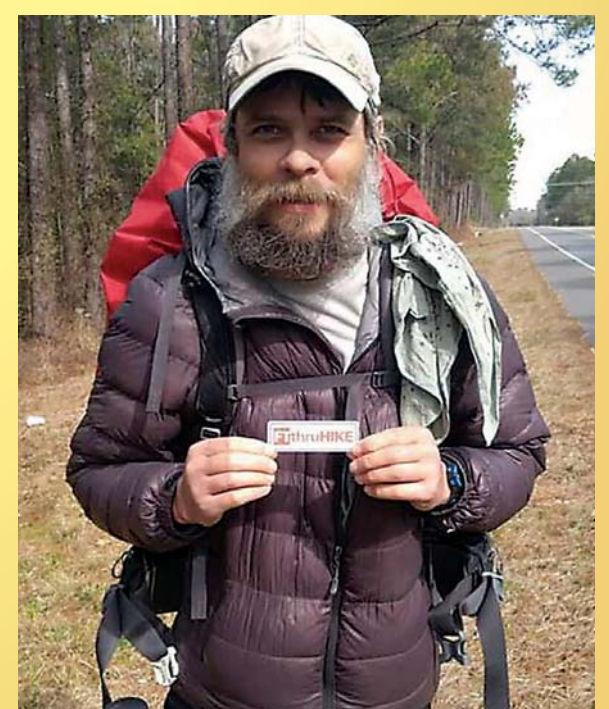
Future episodes of the podcast will delve into other issues and cases taking place in our community.

"The goal is to explore other topics CCSO deals with that affect people here and in other parts of Florida and beyond," Gill said. "And you'll get to hear it straight from the deputies who encounter these cases daily."

For updates, links to the podcast and photos of the hiker featured in the first three episodes, visit colliersheriff.org/news/sworn-statement.



Media Relations Bureau Specialist Kristine Gill is the host, writer, editor and producer of the Collier County Sheriff's Office's new podcast "Sworn Statement." Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO



Mostly Harmless holds a sticker for the Florida Trail in a photo snapped around Crestview, Fla., in January 2018.

Calling All Dogs: CCSO Safety Campaign Enlists Pups, Walkers

Walking your dog can help deputies take a bite out of crime.

That's the message behind the Collier County Sheriff's Office's newest safety



A close-up look at the informational flier deputies are handing out.

campaign called Paws on Patrol.

The campaign enlists dog owners who are out on the streets anyway to serve as extra eyes and ears, reporting any suspicious activity or unusual behavior to law enforcement.

In Collier County, more than 80 percent of car burglaries are to unlocked vehicles; and most occur in the overnight hours. This is just one example of how Paws on Patrol can work in potentially reducing crime.

"When dog owners walk their animals, they oftentimes have one mission and that is to allow their dog to do its business," said Sgt. Brian Sawyer of the CCSO Crime Prevention Unit. "We want you to know that your dog's time can solve a crime."

CCSO launched the campaign at the Humane Society of Naples in December to highlight one of the many cooperative efforts that the Sheriff's Office has with organizations in the community.

The campaign encourages pet owners to be cognizant of their surroundings while outside walking their pet. The idea is that pet owners know their community and can recognize suspicious people, vehicles, and activity better than anyone. Do not just focus on your pet, be aware of your surroundings. Have your smartphone



Deputies spent a recent morning at local dog parks spreading the word about the Collier County Sheriff's Office's new Paws on Patrol safety campaign. Pups received a collapsible dog bowl and their owners received a flier with information about the program.

with you. It will allow you to call law enforcement if you see something suspicious.

If you see suspicious activity or a crime in progress, contact law enforcement immediately. Gather as much information as you can such as your location, the type of activity that is occurring and whether a person and or a vehicle is involved, along with a description. If you can safely do so, take a picture of the person and/or vehicle.

If it is a non-emergency, contact the

Collier County Sheriff's Office non-emergency line at 239-252-9300. If it could be a crime in progress, call 911. If you have information on past occurred crimes or people who are involved in criminal activity, call the CCSO TIPS line at 239-775-8477, or to remain anonymous and be eligible for a possible reward call Crime Stoppers at 800-780-TIPS. You can also email CCSO at TIPS@colliersheriff.org

CCSO Implements Automated Abandoned Callback

Abandoned calls plague many 911 call centers.

Whether it is a telephone in a pocket that accidentally dials 911, or an individual with an emergency that impatiently disconnects and redials 911, it may lead to delays in getting help to those who need it.

In 2018, the Collier County Sheriff's Office became the first 911 call center in the U.S. to implement a new technology called Automated Abandoned Callback (AAC). The AAC system called back 3,382 callers who had abandoned their call last year. The system utilizes a voice prompt that determines if the caller has an emergency and needs help. If they do, then the caller is routed to a 911 call taker. If the caller indicates that the call was accidental, then the call is considered serviced and resources (call takers and deputies) are not needed to attempt to locate the device.

"To have a solution that automates the process makes a tremendous difference in our ability to better serve residents and visitors," said Bob Finney, CCSO Communications director.

More than 240 million calls are made to 911 in the U.S. each year. For Collier County, abandoned calls total around 4,000 annually with no indication of decreasing. Abandoned calls impact time, resources and employee morale, Finney said.

Finney said an abandoned call situation generally occurs when call takers are handling an unusually large volume of calls. These situations are difficult to predict making it difficult to anticipate staffing needs and creating more work for those at hand. It is CCSO policy to call back every abandoned call, and it is the same personnel already tied up with calls who are responsible for returning abandoned calls.

CCSO remains committed to having groundbreaking technology that puts the agency ahead of the curve to best protect residents and visitors.

Recent data shows 80 percent of abandoned calls returned by AAC were resolved without call taker intervention. Of this number, only 16 percent had an emergency and were put back into the queue for call taker assistance. These capabilities remove the burden from call takers to return each call, saving valuable time and allowing call takers to focus on callers who truly require help. This benefit also extends to deputies in the field, since it is the agency's policy to dispatch a deputy to the abandoned caller's location. However, with AAC verifying their well-being, response efforts have been redirected to those in need.



Last year CCSO became the first 911 call center in the U.S. to implement a new technology called Automated Abandoned Callback (AAC).

Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO



Cpl. Steven Pulizzotto, right, poses with Sheriff Kevin Rambosk at a luncheon honoring Pulizzotto as Crisis Intervention Team Officer of the Year.

2018 CIT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

A Collier County Sheriff's Office deputy has been honored for his work responding to mental health crises.

The Collier County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) recently named Cpl. Steven Pulizzotto as Crisis Intervention Team Officer of the Year for 2018 at its annual Hope Shines luncheon and awards event.

Like more than 1,000 deputies at CCSO, Cpl. Pulizzotto has gone through Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) in order to better identify mental illness while in the field.

The Brooklyn, N.Y., native started his career working with the New York City Police Department in 1983 after earning a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He joined CCSO in 2003.

During his time with CCSO Cpl. Pulizzotto, who is assigned to the agency's Golden Gate patrol district, has garnered numerous awards including the Gallantry Star, which he earned for verbally de-escalating a suicidal man who was pointing a gun at both himself and deputies.

He responded to another call for service in which he offered support to a heartbroken 16-year-old girl who was emotionally distraught and suicidal. During the call, the teen's mother noted that Cpl. Pulizzotto displayed kindness, compassion and patience; sitting and talking with her daughter for quite some time. The mother later said Cpl. Pulizzotto was able to get a smile out of her daughter at one point, which she advised was quite a milestone. Cpl. Pulizzotto also persuaded the teen to seek help.

For more than a decade, CCSO has been providing its deputies with Crisis Intervention Team training, which helps them de-escalate crisis situations, recognize signs of mental illness and substance abuse, and helps divert people from the justice system to the resources they need. Since 2008, over 97 percent of CCSO patrol officers have completed the 40-hour CIT training program. Sheriff Kevin Rambosk's goal is to have 100 percent of the agency's deputies trained in CIT.

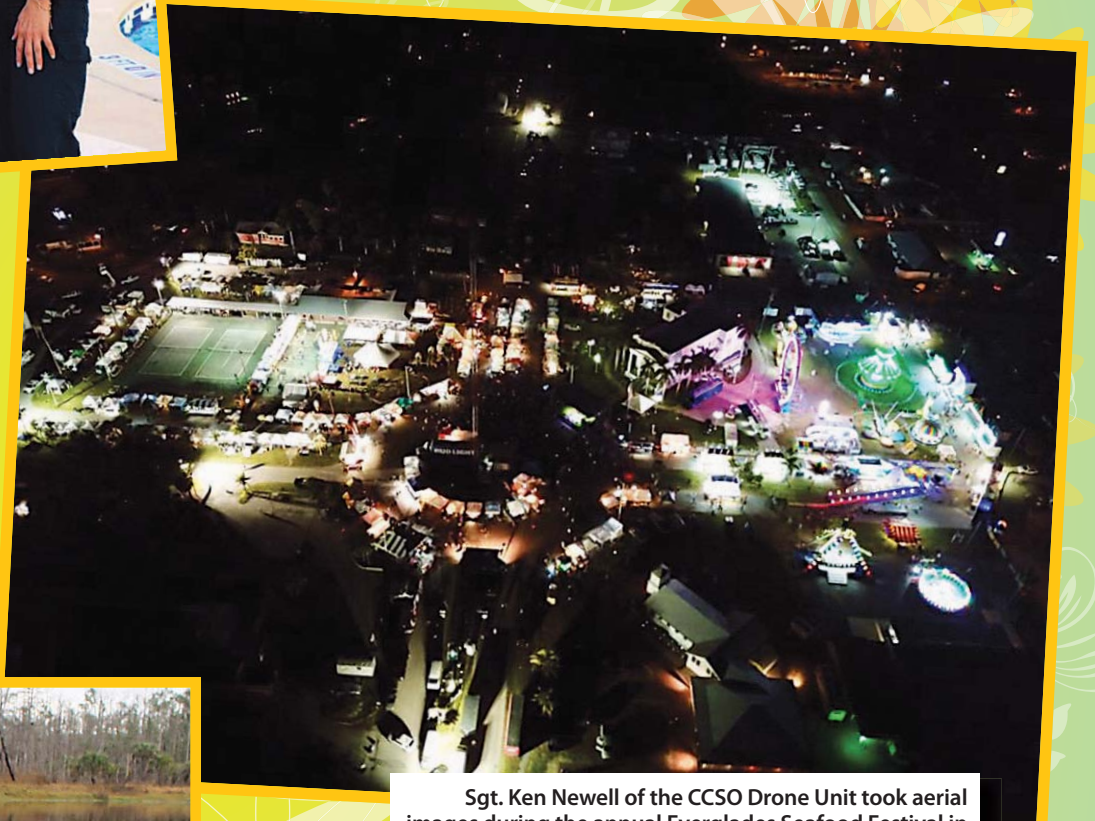


Community Snapshots

CCSO partnered with United Way and Habitat For Humanity to give away bicycles to children in need. Cpl. Sherry Rego and Crime Prevention Specialist Robbie Lewis inflated tires and adjusted seats and handlebars. Photo by Sgt. Brian Sawyer/CCSO



Sheriff Rambo joined deputies at the Great Naples Duck Race at Sun-N-Fun Lagoon. The annual event raises money and awareness for water safety.



Sgt. Ken Newell of the CCSO Drone Unit took aerial images during the annual Everglades Seafood Festival in February. The Drone Unit enhances event security operations to help keep everyone safe.



Cpl. Todd Davis showed off an impressive catch made during the 12th annual "Kids Love Fishing" event at Florida Sports Park on Feb. 16. Photo by Cpl. Debra Gross/CCSO



Representatives of the CCSO including the Honor Guard and D.A.R.E. car participated in the 22nd annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in downtown Naples. Photo by Cpl. Efrain Hernandez/CCSO