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Traffic Unit deputies have been conducting details in school zones around Collier County, flagging down motorists who are in violation of Florida's new hands-free statute. The statute went into effect Oct. 1, making it illegal for motorists to handle a phone while driving in a school or work zone. Photo by Media Relations Bureau Specialist Kristine Gill/CCSO

Get Schooled On 2nd Phase Of New Texting And Driving Law

If you're driving through a school zone on your way to work or on your way to drop your child off to class, be sure to put your phone down. Deputies are warning drivers of a new law that will take full effect Jan. 1, banning the use of handheld devices while driving in school and work zones throughout Florida.

In May, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill into law allowing deputies to ticket

drivers for texting while driving. The law went into effect July 1 and deputies at the Collier County Sheriff's Office immediately began enforcing it, conducting details targeting the behavior and handing out citations.

The second part of the new bill went into effect Oct. 1. Florida State Statute 316.306 prohibits handling of any communication devices while in a work or school zone. That includes texting

while driving and holding the phone while talking. This part of the law only pertains to the stretches of designated construction zones and school zones while those zones are in effect. Citations for this infraction are more costly than those issued for texting while driving outside of a school or work zone.

Our deputies began warning motorists of this change beginning Oct. 1. Deputies will begin issuing full

citations as of Jan. 1, 2020.

During the agency's first detail warning motorists of the new law, deputies conducted 30 traffic stops and issued a total of 10 warnings for use of a phone in a school zone. Three deputies patrolled the Poinciana Elementary School zone as parents and buses dropped students off during the one-day detail. In addition to 10 warnings regarding the new law,

deputies also issued three citations for failing to use a seatbelt and one citation for a suspended driver's license.

This was the first of many the Safety & Traffic Enforcement Bureau will conduct in the coming weeks leading up to Jan. 1.

Under the original texting and driving law, which went into effect July 1, drivers can still use their phones for calls and for navigation purposes outside of a school zone. They're also able to read emergency messages such as Amber Alerts and severe weather alerts.

Before July 1, 2019, 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, you could also be cited for texting while driving on top of the initial infraction.

Now, texting and driving has become a primary offense and motorists can be stopped for using their phones while operating a vehicle, even if they aren't speeding or breaking other rules of the road. The one exception is that motorists will still be allowed to use their phones while their vehicle is stopped at traffic lights.

Dear Friends,

Well, here we are heading into another busy winter season. You have probably already noticed the uptick in traffic. I can assure you that our deputies are working hard and have a solid plan in place to enforce traffic laws and encourage motorists to practice safe driving skills. The roads will be crowded this winter, but we'll get through it together by being alert, allowing ample travel time and obeying the speed limits.

If you were traveling over the summer, we'd like to catch you up on a few important things that happened while you were away.

Most significantly, beginning July 1 it became illegal to text-message while driving in Florida. Before July 1, a deputy had to see you committing another infraction in order to pull you over for texting behind the wheel. Now it is a primary offense, meaning that a deputy can stop you for it. And, since Oct. 1, drivers in designated school and work zones in Florida can only use their communication devices in a hands-free manner. Details of these texting laws can be found in a story on this page.

Also over the summer our community faced a potential threat from Hurricane Dorian. While the storm diverted and spared us, our terrific community rallied to support the hard-hit Bahamas. CCSO members helped with donations and their time. We were part of a communitywide drive organized by Chef Brian Roland and his wife Nicole, co-

owners of Venue Naples. City of Naples Vice Mayor Gary Price also helped by rallying pilots and securing hangar space to store outbound supplies. It was an inspiring example of one community helping another.

Finally, we launched the second season of our podcast, "Sworn Statement." This three-part series explores mental health services and funding in Florida and Collier County. And it explains why I established a CCSO Mental Health Bureau to help meet our community's needs. Check out the full story on our podcast on Page 2, and listen to it wherever you download your podcasts.

I wish you and your family a happy and healthy winter season here in Collier County.

Yours in a safe community,

Kevin Rambosk
Collier County Sheriff



Sgt. Williams Honored For Fight Against Human Trafficking

Collier County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Wade Williams has been honored by the Florida Attorney General's Office for his work in the fight against human trafficking.

State Attorney General Ashley Moody presented Sgt. Williams with the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award at the 2019 Human Trafficking Summit in Orlando on Sept. 30. The award honors Floridians who took extraordinary measures to combat human trafficking.

Sheriff Kevin Rambosk praised Sgt. Williams for his hard work toward abolishing human trafficking and for helping provide aid to victims.

"Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that affects Collier County," Sheriff Rambosk said. "Sgt. Williams has worked tirelessly with our state and local partners for victims and our community to combat this evil. This honor is well deserved."

Linda Oberhaus, chief executive officer of The Shelter For Abused Women & Children, nominated Sgt. Williams, who supervises the sheriff's Human Trafficking Unit, for the award. She noted in her nomination letter that since 2014, CCSO has initiated 98 human trafficking investigations, making 20 arrests and identifying 69 probable victims. Of those victims, 18 were juveniles.

"Sgt. Williams makes a significant impact on the issues and challenges of human trafficking in Collier County through high-quality criminal investigations as demonstrated in the results of his case work, and by his sincere commitment to educating the public," Oberhaus wrote.

Sgt. Williams said the award is the result of teamwork.

"It's the hard work of the members of the Human Trafficking Unit, other members of CCSO who work



Collier County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Wade Williams accepts the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award from Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody at the 2019 annual Human Trafficking Summit in Orlando on Sept. 30.

closely with our Human Trafficking Unit and our partnerships with organizations in the community like the Shelter for Abused Women & Children that resulted in this shared accomplishment," he said.

Sgt. Williams played an integral role in Operation Human Freedom in 2015. The multiagency investigation revealed a human trafficking network involving multiple victims operating from Central to South Florida and resulted in 17 arrests.

He also played key roles other major investigations that ultimately led to arrests and convictions, including:

-Gary Cherelus of East Naples who was convicted of sex trafficking women and sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2016

-Gregory Hines and Keith Lewis, who were sentenced earlier this year

to 15 years and eight years in prison, respectively, in connection with a human trafficking case involving at least four women.

Sgt. Williams continues to lead ongoing investigations of major significance. He has further demonstrated his commitment to the community through his many presentations on human trafficking. He frequently conducts anti-human trafficking training for law enforcement officers and service providers.

"He is sincerely motivated to educate and engage the public about the overwhelming statistics of human trafficking," Oberhaus wrote in her nomination letter, noting that his presentations are so well received that they often lead to extended question-and-answer periods.

Sgt. Williams joined the Collier County Sheriff's Office in September 2004 as a road patrol deputy. In 2008 he transferred to the Criminal Investigations Division as a detective in the General Crimes Bureau, where he was responsible for investigating felony crimes such as robbery, burglary and other violent crime. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 2013 and was named the supervisor of the Special Crimes Bureau-Exploitation Section.

The Attorney General's Office hosted the human trafficking summit, along with the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, the Florida Department of Children and Families, and the University of Central Florida.

Mental Health Focus Of CCSO Podcast 2nd Season

The second season of the Collier County Sheriff's Office's podcast shines a light on what the agency is doing to connect those with mental illness to resources that can help.

"Sworn Statement" is produced

by CCSO Media Relations Specialist Kristine Gill. Season two includes three 40-minute episodes highlighting the work of the agency's Mental Health Bureau in conjunction with county resources and specialty courts.

"What we're doing for mental illness here in Collier County is unlike most other communities throughout the nation," said Sheriff Kevin Rambosk, who was interviewed for the podcast. "There are a few communities that have created teams and services directly related to law enforcement, but we are one of the few in the nation doing the proactive work and creating the partnerships we're creating."

The first season of the podcast debuted in February 2019 and examined the case of the deceased hiker Mostly Harmless, whose true identity remains a mystery. The three-episode season garnered more than 10,000 listens as residents of Collier County and beyond tuned in to dissect the case.

Season two has already racked up more than 4,000 listens since its debut in late September.



Season two follows the story of a man whose 2012 arrest for robbing a bank led him down a path with law enforcement and the justice system that ultimately helped him to reach stability with his mental health diagnosis.

Gill conducted interviews with Sheriff Rambosk; Lt. Leslie Weidenhammer, who heads the agency's MHB; officials from the David Lawrence Center; Judge Janeice Martin, who oversees Mental Health Court; and administrators of the Collier County Public Schools; among many others.

You can listen to "Sworn Statement" on SoundCloud, iTunes and Spotify.



The second season of our "Sworn Statement" podcast features the agency's Mental Health Bureau. Pictured from left are MHB Coordinator Danielle Bower, Sgt. Thomas Tavery, Lt. Leslie Weidenhammer, Coordinator Susan Vivonetto, and licensed clinical social worker Keri Miller.

CCSO, Community Partners Celebrate Safety In Collier

The Collier County Sheriff's Office hosted its annual weeklong series of fun-filled Celebrate Safe Communities events throughout the county.

The free events commemorated the successful community partnerships that help CCSO keep crime down and were held the week of Oct. 7 in each of our patrol districts: North Naples, Golden Gate, East Naples, Golden Gate Estates, South Naples/Everglades City and Immokalee.

Celebrating Safe Communities functions are designed to promote crime prevention awareness and cement the critically important partnership between CCSO and the community. Each of the six events were unique, and activities included cookouts, refreshments, demonstrations by CCSO and its fellow first responder agencies, informational booths and activities like rock climbing and a bounce house.



Photo by Community Engagement Coordinator Erin Dever/CCSO



Photo by Media Relations Bureau Specialist Kristi Lester/CCSO



Photo by Media Relations Bureau Specialist Kristine Gill/CCSO

CCSO Earns State Re-accreditation

The Collier County Sheriff's Office has been approved for state law enforcement re-accreditation.

Policy Compliance Lt. Nicole Minick and Corrections Chief Chris Roberts attended the Oct. 2 ceremony in St. Petersburg where CCSO received recognition by the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement (CFA) for completing the review process to maintain its accreditation.

CCSO was initially state accredited in 1998. Accreditation is for three years. This was the agency's eighth completion of the accreditation process.

"Accreditation is a voluntary but very important process intended to show that a law enforcement agency has policies and procedures in place before an incident or event happens," Sheriff Kevin Rambosk said. "Re-accreditation demonstrates the Collier County Sheriff's Office's continuing commitment to professional excellence and to keeping our community safe."

In August, a team of CFA assessors traveled to Collier County to examine all aspects of the Collier County Sheriff's Office policies and procedures, management, operations, and support services. CCSO had to comply with approximately 115 standards in order to receive accredited status. Many of the standards are critical to life, health and safety issues.

As part of the on-site assessment, agency members and the general public were invited to offer comments to the assessment team.



Pictured from left: Clay County Sheriff Darryl Daniels, chairman of the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement; CCSO Corrections Chief Chris Roberts; CCSO Policy Compliance Lt. and Accreditation Manager Nicole Minick; and Executive Director of the Florida Accreditation Office Danielle Terrell.

An assessment team comprised of law enforcement practitioners from similar accredited agencies reviewed written materials, conducted interviews and visited offices and other places where compliance could be witnessed. The CFA Assessment Team Leader was Capt. David Pate of the Florida Fish and Wildlife

Conservation Commission. Other team members were Officer Brigid Larson of the West Palm Police Department and Deputy Christopher Padgett of the Clay County Sheriff's Office.

CCSO holds seven professional accreditation certifications,

including both national and Florida law enforcement accreditations; national communications; Florida Corrections accreditation; Florida pretrial accreditation; accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care; and national Emergency Medical Dispatch accreditation.



Community Snapshots



On Aug. 24 Sheriff Kevin Rambosk had the honor of presenting CCSO's Community Star award to Thelma Hodges during a rodeo-themed party held in honor of her 91st birthday. The award recognizes the many ways she has enriched the quality of life in Collier County. She and her late husband Earl Hodges provided generous support to the university that bears their name and carried out countless quiet acts of kindness to benefit those in need.
Photo by Media Relations Bureau Specialist Kristi Lester/CCSO



Former "You Can Do It All!" participants returned to share an update on how they were doing since starting middle school. The empowerment program for girls is hosted by our Youth Relations Bureau and teaches team-building skills, hands-on CPR, basic self defense, Internet safety, and more. Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity of Collier County.



Fifth-graders at Shadowlawn Elementary School signed the CCSO Pledge Car to help kick off Red Ribbon week in Collier County. The annual Red Ribbon Week (Oct. 23-31) promotes healthy living and encourages elementary school students to pledge a drug-free lifestyle by signing their name on the Pledge Car and by participating in various school activities.
Photo by Youth Relations Cpl. Debra Gross/CCSO.



To celebrate the grand opening of Wawa's newest East Naples location, deputies squared off against firefighters and EMTs at the Hoagies for Heroes competition Oct. 17. While CCSO lost the sandwich making contest (we suspect foul play) both teams walked away with \$2,000 from Wawa to donate to the charity of their choice. CCSO chose to give our money to Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches.
Photo by Media Relations Bureau Specialist Kristine Gill/CCSO

Deputy Robert Pounds spotted a car doing 63 mph in a 45 mph zone on Airport-Pulling Road around 4:30 a.m. on Oct. 1, so he conducted a traffic stop. When he approached the car he quickly realized the passenger was in labor and about to deliver a baby. Deputy Pounds called for EMS and backup, then grabbed a blanket. He delivered a beautiful baby girl and made sure the mom was OK and the infant was breathing. It was a busy scene but we managed to take a quick photo of Deputy Pounds with the happy dad. Photo by Sgt. David Drucks/CCSO

