



THE COLLIER STAR

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With his wife Pat by his side, Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk officially entered his fourth term Jan. 5 when he was administered his oath of office by 20th Judicial Circuit Judge Joseph Foster. Sheriff Rambosk took the oath during a brief ceremony in the Collier County Courthouse atrium. Photo by Matt Schipper/CCSO

Sheriff Rambosk Sets Priorities For Fourth Term

Making the most of technology to maintain low crime, meeting the needs of the community and keeping up with growth are among the long-term priorities for Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk as he enters his fourth term of office.

Perhaps most significantly, deputies will continue to balance being tough on criminals while maintaining a strong philosophy of partnering with the community.

“Law enforcement agencies can do both — be tough on crime while being community service oriented,” Sheriff Rambosk said. “Our community wants us to be both, and I believe we are among the best at it. We are a leader in law enforcement professionalism, we are forward-thinking and we are making a difference.”

In the short term, Sheriff Rambosk’s priority is helping the community emerge safely from the COVID-19 pandemic. Deputies are continuing to assist the Florida Department of Health by providing security and traffic control at vaccination sites. In addition, with many people suffering from isolation, financial problems or other COVID-related stressors, the agency’s Mental Health Bureau will continue to assist those who find themselves in crisis. Sheriff Rambosk recently added two positions to the unit — another deputy and a second David Lawrence Center civilian clinician.

“The best way forward in regard to the pandemic is for all of us to work together,” Sheriff Rambosk said.

Among the Sheriff’s long-term goals is implementing multiple technological advancements. Later this year the agency will begin to roll out body-worn cameras. The \$2.8 million project supplements the dash-cam systems that are already in place. Also, the agency is currently in the process of transforming existing space into a Realtime Operations Center, or R.O.C. The R.O.C. will help reduce crime by providing real-time information to field units about potential suspects or known felony offenders in an area where a crime may have just occurred. It will also support large-scale incident management teams when we have wildfires, hurricanes or significant incidents in which many deputies are needed.

When it comes to the community’s young people, CCSO will continue to exceed the requirements of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Act. Deputies will continue to mentor students and the agency will continue to partner with organizations that help keep at-risk students safe and on the right path. CCSO works closely with organizations; including Youth Haven — the Trinity Life Foundation and the NAACP; that address the needs of at-risk young people.

“I firmly believe that an investment in our young people is an investment in our community’s future,” Sheriff Rambosk said.

Keeping crime low also ranks high on the Sheriff’s priority list. Collier County is the safest metropolitan county in Florida and the 2019 community crime rate is the lowest since the agency began tracking the figure in 1971.



Kevin Rambosk
Collier County Sheriff

Dear Friends,

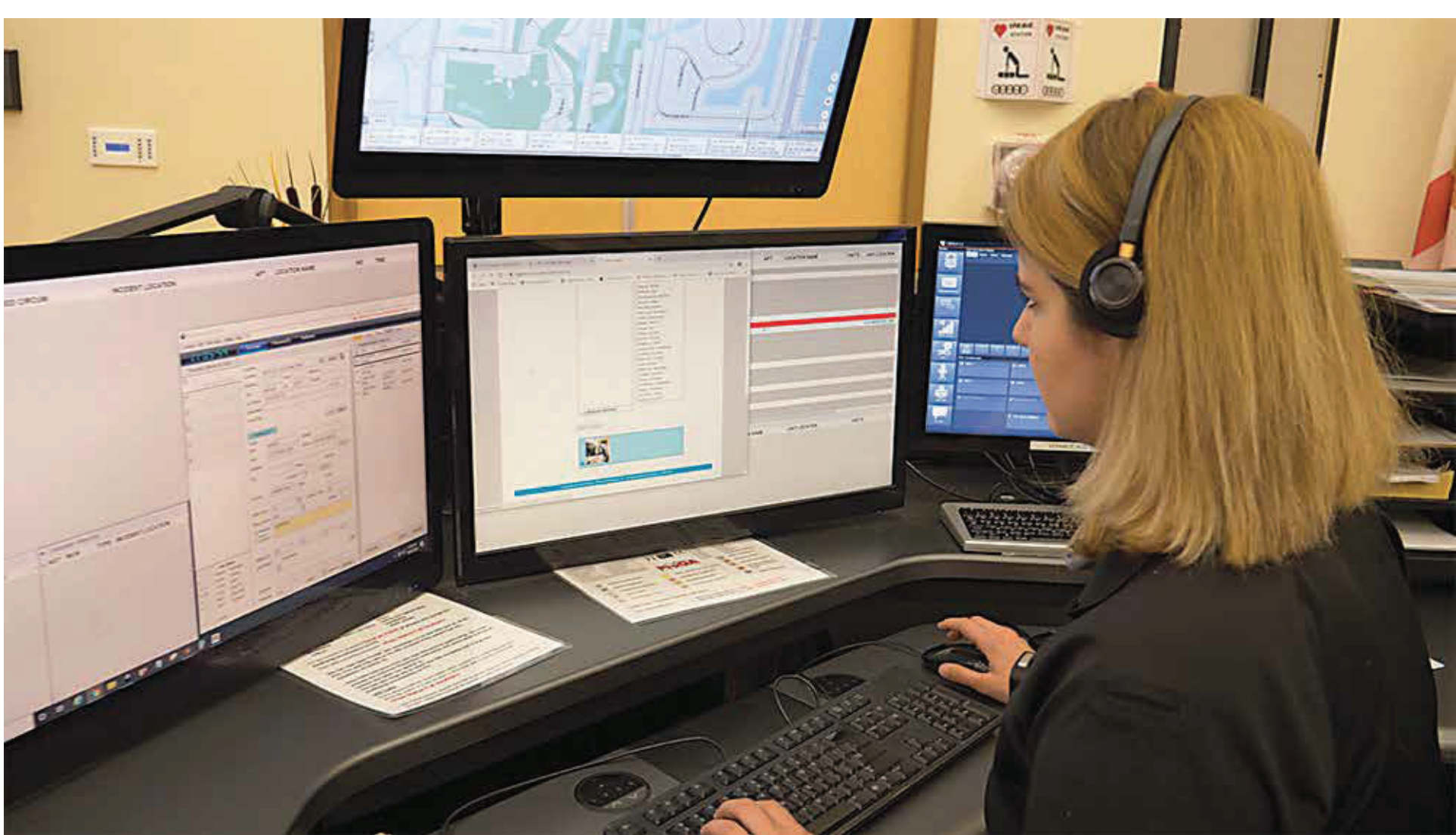
As you may know, traffic safety is a high priority here at the Collier County Sheriff’s Office. Our deputies are out in the community daily, educating motorists and enforcing driving laws. They examine traffic and crash patterns and conduct regular, data-driven operations focusing on everything from aggressive driving to red-light running.

Our roads are particularly crowded during the busy winter months as our community hosts visitors from around the nation and around the world. That’s why I am asking you to partner with us as we work to keep our roads safe. You can do that by obeying traffic laws, focusing solely on driving when you are

behind the wheel and staying off the phone until you reach your destination. And just as importantly, please allow ample travel time and be patient with your fellow drivers. If all of us do these few, simple things we will have the safest roads in Florida.

Yours in a safe community,

Kevin Rambosk,
Collier County Sheriff



Collier County dispatchers are now able to receive photos and videos via cell phone text message. New technology allows first responders access to images and video of suspects, suspicious vehicles and emergency scenes in real time.

Collier Residents Can Now Text Photos, Video To 911

The Collier County Sheriff’s Office is the first public law enforcement agency in Florida to provide the community with the ability to text photos and videos to 911 dispatchers.

The cloud-based technology gives first responders nearly instant access to pictures and videos of suspects, suspicious vehicles, or emergency scenes. When someone in Collier County uses a cell phone to call 911 or our non-emergency number, (239)252-9300, they can send photos and/or videos to dispatchers. The dispatchers can forward those videos and images to first responders.

“We have always told our community, ‘See it, say it,’” Sheriff Kevin Rambosk said. “Now we can tell them, ‘See it, say it, send it.’”

Sheriff Rambosk said this is next-generation 911 technology that enhances public safety.

“The more information first responders have, the quicker they can help, and a picture is worth 1,000 words,” he said.

“People will be able to send us pictures and videos of damaged areas and roads that are blocked by fallen trees or downed power lines,” Director Finney said. “This will help us prioritize the areas that need us the most.”

In the case of a missing child or endangered adult, for example, the person calling 911 to make a report can text a photo of the missing person to dispatchers, who can share it with first responders throughout the county within seconds. Witnesses to a car crash can send

images or video clips that show first responders the number of people who are injured, their location at the crash site and how severe the crash was.

The capability will also be an asset in a post-hurricane situation, said CCSO Communications Director Bob Finney.

“People will be able to send us pictures and videos of damaged areas and roads that are blocked by fallen trees or downed power lines,” Director Finney said. “This will help us prioritize the areas that need us the most.”

In 2014 the Collier County Sheriff’s Office was the first agency in Florida to provide text-to-911 service to its community.

“We are always looking at technology to identify ways we can enhance public safety here in Collier County,” Sheriff Rambosk said.

‘Mostly Harmless’ Hiker ID Solved

Sheriff Kevin Rambosk is pleased to announce that after more than two years, thanks to the great work of our detectives, tips from the public and the use of DNA technology, we now know the identity of the deceased hiker who went by the trail name ‘Mostly Harmless.’ Although an autopsy did not indicate foul play in his death, our detectives worked tirelessly to identify him.

On July 23, 2018, two hikers stumbled upon the body of a man at a small campsite deep within Big Cypress National Preserve. The man had no identification, phone or computer with him and the agency’s exhaustive efforts to identify him through traditional means were unsuccessful. Today

we know that ‘Mostly Harmless’ was a man by the name of Vance Rodriguez, an IT worker in New York with roots in Louisiana.

Through the agency’s investigation investigators learned that Mr. Rodriguez set out to hike the Appalachian Trail in 2017. He spent several months hiking south, toward Florida using only paper maps. He was friendly with other thru hikers, but also reserved. No one we interviewed knew his real name even after spending time with him on the trail, sharing stories and snapping photos of him.

Mr. Rodriguez had reached Southwest Florida by April of 2018, which was the last time a witness reported seeing him on the

trail. A few months later, his body and his belongings were found in a tent at Noble’s Camp Ground in Ochopee, near mile marker 63 of Interstate 75.

We began our investigation with traditional means, combing missing persons databases for matching fingerprints or dental records. Later that summer, the agency posted a composite photo to Facebook. Within minutes, fellow thru hikers had sent dozens of photos of Mostly Harmless and reported meeting him along the trail.

We interviewed the hikers, pieced together a timeline and looked into dozens of tips submitted by members of the public.

This past year, our agency



partnered with Othram, a DNA lab in Texas that works exclusively with law enforcement to solve cold cases through forensic genealogy.

But the case was ultimately solved this month when a former coworker of Mr. Rodriguez saw his photo online and reached out to us after seeing a 2019 bulletin our agency issued. The coworker provided us with Mr. Rodriguez’ name and photos. We enlisted the help of the Lafayette Parish County Sheriff’s Office, which made contact with his family. The family then agreed to provide a DNA sample for comparison. Othram has made a positive identification based on that DNA.

We are glad to have solved this case. And we want to thank the community for their interest and for circulating the information that eventually reached the right person.



COLLIER COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SHERIFF
KEVIN RAMBOSK



Members of the agency's Mental Health Bureau are shown from left: civilian Danielle Bower, civilian Susan Vivonetto, Sgt. Thomas Tavery, Lt. Leslie Weidenhammer, and Cpl. Sean Ellis. Photo by Media Relations Bureau Photographer/Videographer Ryan Sheets/CCSO

CCSO Expands Mental Health Bureau

The Collier County Sheriff's Office has expanded its unit that handles mental health-related calls and connects people with the services they need.

Under the direction of Sheriff Kevin Rambosk, the agency formed its Mental Health Bureau (MHB) in 2016 with four specially trained deputies and one mental health clinician from the David Lawrence Center. The bureau recently added two positions: a certified deputy and a second mental health clinician.

The seven-member unit partners to connect individuals in crisis to resources to help address their physical and mental health needs and divert them from the criminal justice system. CCSO is one of only a few law enforcement agencies in the country with a dedicated unit aimed at helping individuals who are experiencing mental illness or substance use disorder.

MHB members provide external support for the community; participate in Collier County's three treatment courts Mental Health Court, Drug Court and Veterans Court; are a liaison with the agency's community partners; are essential with law enforcement assisted diversion; and provide internal peer support

and critical incident stress management for all CCSO members.

MHB members are part of the Mental Health Intervention Team. This team, which includes corrections deputies and firefighter/paramedics, conducts wellness checks to ensure individuals have the resources and support they need to live productive and meaningful lives while keeping them from unnecessarily entering the jail or hospitals. They also assist individuals who might be in need of treatment. The added deputy and mental health clinician will serve on MHIT.

The MHB also oversees CCSO's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training program, a 40-hour curriculum provided to all officers throughout the agency, and works closely with partners with the David Lawrence Center, local hospitals, and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill in Collier County.

CIT ensures that all deputies have the proper tools to handle a call safely and effectively when encountering an individual who is experiencing a behavioral health crisis resulting from mental illness or substance abuse. All MHB members are CIT-trained. The MHB provides support to various bureaus

in the agency for the prevention, intervention, wellness, and treatment of members in the community who are in need of support and services.

The MHB is involved in the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program and is an innovative diversion program developed through a partnership between the Collier County Sheriff's Office and David Lawrence Center. The LEAD program allows law enforcement officers to redirect certain drug-related activity to community-based treatment services, instead of jail and prosecution. By diverting eligible individuals to services, LEAD is committed to saving lives, and improving public safety and public order.

The MHB is also responsible for gathering intelligence and filing with the court information on obtaining a risk protection order (RPO) in cases where it is believed an individual has the ability to be of significant danger to their self and the public. If the RPO is granted by a judge, the individual may be legally prohibited from possessing or obtaining a firearm for a minimum of a year. The bureau tracks and follows all RPOs while the order is active.

CCSO Master Plan Honored

The Collier County Sheriff's Office was recently recognized with two prestigious awards for its innovative, long-term master plan.

The agency earned an Award for Innovation by the Florida Planning and Zoning Association and an Award of Merit from the Florida chapter of the American Planning Association.

The Award for Innovation and the Award of Merit honor a project or development that is unusual or ahead of its time.

To determine the impacts of future growth, Sheriff Rambosk directed his staff to work with Metro Forecasting Models to create a unique incident predictive model to determine what changing land uses outside the urban area means for future facilities, hiring, patrol districts, and other essential resources required by the Sheriff's Office. The Bonita Springs-based consulting and forecasting firm discovered how to forecast calls for service using land use and population forecast data.

The CCSO Long-Range Master Plan demonstrates how development will influence the need for four new patrol

districts, several administrative and substation facilities, and hundreds of new employees over the next 80 years. Previously the Sheriff's Office had a long-term planning horizon of approximately 10

years into the future.

The FPZA Awards recognize outstanding land development and public/private sector planning statewide. For several decades, the awards program

has been the centerpiece of the FPZA's acknowledgement and promotion of best practices in planning throughout Florida. The APA Award of Merit recognizes outstanding planning projects in Florida.

CCSO Podcast Wins National Award

The Collier County Sheriff's Office has been honored with a national award for its podcast.

Sworn Statement earned an Award of Commendation in the podcast category of the Public Relations Society of America's 2020 Bronze Anvil Award competition for its success in furthering the agency's goals of communication and transparency with the public.

"Sworn Statement gives listeners a clear and up-close understanding of everything from investigations to complex issues like community mental health needs," Sheriff Kevin Rambosk

said. "I am pleased that the PRSA has recognized its value as a tool to partner with our community."

Each year, PRSA recognizes the "best of the best" public relations practices nationwide by businesses and government entities. This year PRSA recognized 67 of its 322 entries with its Bronze Anvils and Bronze Anvil Award of Commendations.

Sworn Statement is a podcast exploring local cases and public safety issues all unfolding right here in Collier County. Launched in 2019, the podcast allows community members to learn about these issues directly from



the deputies on the ground. The podcast is produced and hosted by Media Relations Specialist Kristine Gill.

The first season of the podcast featured the case of a deceased hiker whose identity was unknown until recently. The second season focused on the work of the agency's Mental Health Bureau.

You can subscribe to Sworn Statement on iTunes, SoundCloud and Google Play. New episodes are due out this year.

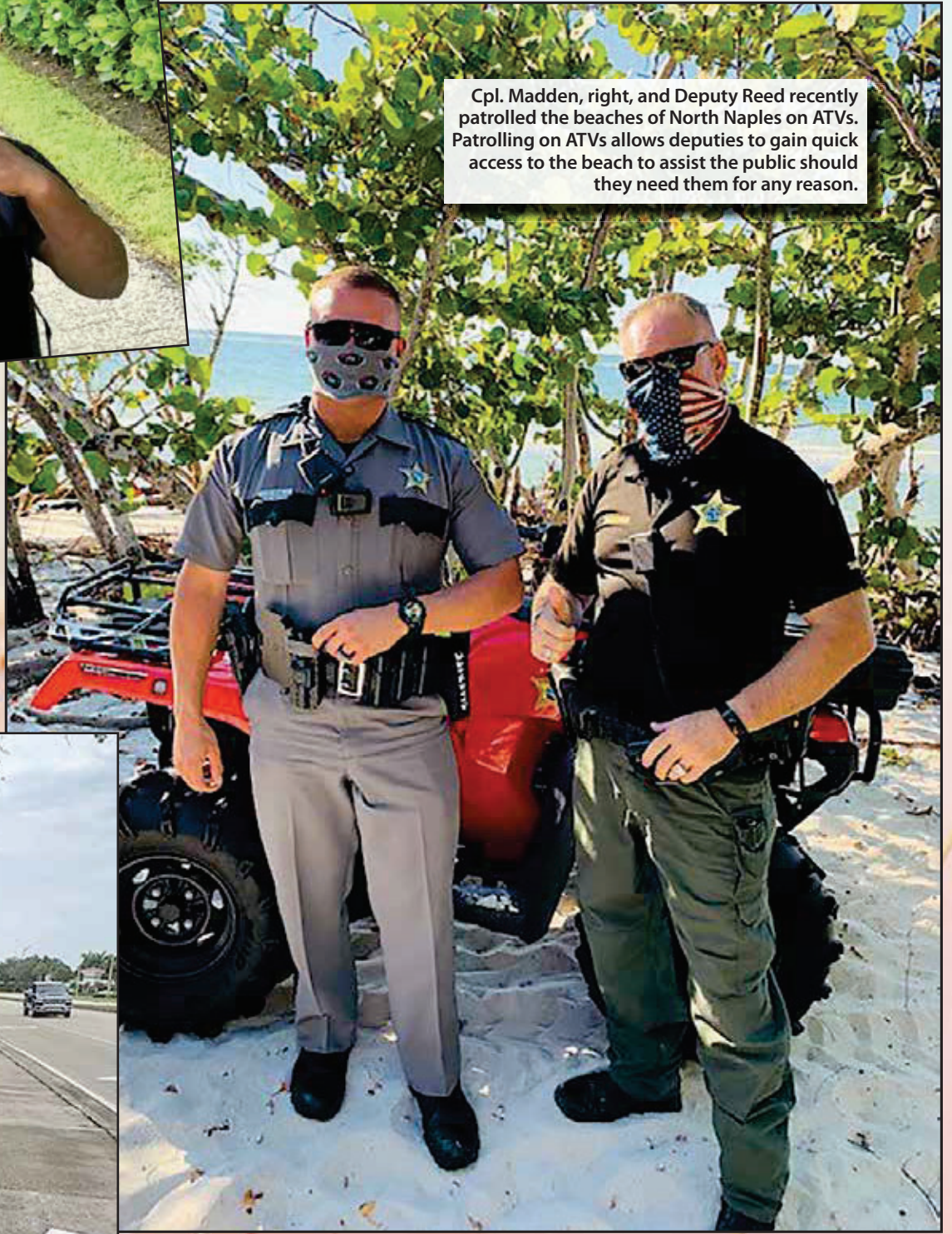
Community Snapshots

Sheriff Kevin Rambosk, left, is shown with Undersheriff Jim Bloom, right, and Captain Rich Hampton after being presented with the CCSO Medal of Distinguished Service during his oath of office ceremony Jan. 5. The honor is bestowed only upon agency members who have performed their duties in the most extraordinary and exemplary manner. Photo by Media Relations Specialist Kristi Lester/CCSO



Cpl. Goetz walked two Avalon Elementary School students home after some crazy rain made for a slip-and-slide situation on the sidewalks. Everyone got home safe and stayed dry!

Cpl. Madden, right, and Deputy Reed recently patrolled the beaches of North Naples on ATVs. Patrolling on ATVs allows deputies to gain quick access to the beach to assist the public should they need them for any reason.



Cpl. Jackson conducts a laser radar traffic detail along Orange Blossom Drive in North Naples, following complaints of vehicles speeding in the area. The goal was to educate drivers of the 30 mph speed limit while keeping the roadways safe for all Collier County drivers.



Immokalee Community-Oriented Policing deputies have been conducting patrols in areas targeted for crimes such as vehicle break-ins in an effort to educate the community. COPs deputies have been going door to door passing out safety brochures and sharing crime prevention tips.