



The Sheriff's Report

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**Bob White,
Sheriff**

“When a child is abducted and murdered, 75 percent are killed in the first three hours.”

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From the Sheriff's desk

New program may help find missing kids faster

The Pasco Sheriff's Office is unveiling a new program aimed at reducing a terrible statistic in our society. The focus of Operation Find Me is to facilitate the quick release of photos, video and a physical description of a missing or abducted child. Here's how it works: The Pasco Sheriff's Office will soon be giving away free "thumb drives," or a portable computer memory storage device. Parents and guardians can put digital photos and video of their children on the thumb drive, and it will also feature a description of the child. If their child becomes lost or abducted, they merely have to give the thumb drive to a Pasco deputy or other law enforcement officer who can then download all the information about the child to a computer. It can then be sent instantly to the news media, which can broadcast the photos and description to viewers who may have seen their child.

When a child is abducted and murdered, 75 percent are killed in the first three hours after they are taken. That leaves law enforcement with a very small timeframe to begin the search to successfully locate and safely return an abducted child. That is why it is vital for pictures and even video of a missing child to be available and quickly disseminated to other law enforcement agencies and the news media so that the public can be on the lookout for the child and his or her abductor.

Operation Find Me also enables parents to assist the Pasco Sheriff's Office's rapid-response Missing and Abducted Child Team (MAC). This group of specially-trained deputies

uses a state-of-the-art vehicle to quickly get to the scene of an abduction or where a missing child was last seen. Using the MAC vehicle as a mobile office, the team can use the Operation Find Me thumb drive to forward the photos and video of the child to the Pasco Sheriff's Office website, where the news media and public can instantly view the information.

Since minutes count in these cases, the quicker we can disseminate the photos and video of a missing or abducted child, the more eyes and ears we can have helping us to ensure their safe return. If you are the parent or guardian of a child, I urge you to participate in this new program. We hope you never have to use it. But if you do, it may save your loved one's life. For more information, please visit our website at www.pascosheriff.com where we will soon have information on how to receive your thumb drive.



The PSO Missing and Abducted Child Team recently received a donated six-wheel all-terrain vehicle to assist them in searching for children in some of Pasco's many swamps and wooded areas. The vehicle is worth \$12,000 and did not cost anything to county taxpayers.

Weapons destruction secure, safe process

**Doug Tobin,
Public Information Officer**

What does a law enforcement agency do when it needs to dispose of several hundred weapons? Periodically, the Pasco Sheriff's Office Property and Evidence section is faced with this dilemma and the job is no easy task. Every year, thousands of items of evidence in crimes and other incidents are confiscated by deputies in Pasco. In addition, citizens often turn in property they no longer want to the Sheriff's Office. This evidence and property is securely stored by the PSO Property and Evidence section, until a court order is received to legally dispose of it.

A recent destruction process included 741 guns, and this was the first large-scale destruction of weapons by the Pasco Sheriff's Office in nearly two years. But guns weren't the only dangerous items destroyed. Other items included lights and transformers from marijuana grow houses, an old large screen TV and a collection of knives.

In an evidence destruction process, there are several factors involved that require supervision and security. First of all, transporting the property across several different counties involves an appropriate amount of security. Deputies have to escort and monitor the convoy of vehicles transporting the property from the moment it leaves the secure confines of the PSO Property and Evidence building in Land O' Lakes to the shredding facility in Sarasota. Prior to the guns being loaded into the transport vans, each weapon has to be checked and rechecked to make sure there is no live ammunition. A box of rifles, several boxes of handguns and even an inert grenade were among the items destroyed in the recent process.

A new company was used by the PSO for its destruction process. Ameri-

can Electronics Recycling in Sarasota cannot only handle the destruction of such a large amount of weapons, but also agreed to do it for free. Joe Blodgett, Plant manager for the recycling company, said his boss saw a news report about law enforcement agencies disposing of weapons in the Gulf of Mexico.

"There are some environmental concerns about disposing of weapons in such a manner," he said. "We then began asking law enforcement agencies to bring the weapons to us and we'll do it for free."

Several law enforcement agencies responded to the offer, which must work with limited funds but still need a way to destroy hundreds of weapons and keep them off the streets. Now, the Sheriff's Offices from Sarasota, Hillsborough, Manatee, and Pasco, and the Bradenton and Tampa Police Departments, use this facility to destroy weapons. The Pasco Sheriff's Office is also tasked with the destruction of weapons from Pasco's smaller law enforcement agencies, such as Zephyrhills, Dade City, Port Richey and New Port Richey Police Departments. Florida statute dictates that it is the Sheriff's Office's responsibility to destroy abandoned or confiscated weapons.

"We feel like our company is doing its part to help the environment by providing a place to dispose of such items,



Hundreds of weapons were loaded into vans to transport to the recycling facility.

and we also feel like we're doing our part to give to our community by helping law enforcement," Blodgett said. Blodgett's biggest concern is ensuring all the weapons have been cleared of ammunition for the safety of his employees and the multi-million dollar industrial shredding machines.

"I have a 9 millimeter bullet that sits on my desk as a reminder that we find live shells from time to time," he recalled. "We even had a 9 mm clip filled with rounds that we caught before it was about to be shredded."

Pasco Sheriff's Office Property and Evidence Manager Linda Hypes said by using the Sarasota company it saved our agency a tremendous amount of time and money.

"We used to have to transport these weapons all the way to Jacksonville or

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Sheriff recognizes agency volunteers

2008 PSO Volunteers of the Year

Volunteer of the Year

Nellie Robinson is not a newcomer to public service, and is retired with over 25 years in Pasco County government. Nellie joined the Pasco Sheriff's Office's Citizen Service Unit with the inaugural class in November 2004 as one of the original 15 members. Nellie has logged over 4,000 volunteer hours of service and her impeccable record has also earned her the prestigious Presidential Call to Service Award. Nellie Robinson donated 1,080 hours of her time to the betterment of the PSO volunteer program in 2007, and her current duties include:

- Entering every time record for every volunteer bi-weekly (all 39,000 hours worth)
- Providing weekly statistical data analysis for the volunteer program
- Maintaining inventory control and ordering for all commodities related to the volunteer program
- Maintaining supplies for day-to-day needs of in-service personnel
- Maintaining custody and control of all uniform traffic and parking citations issued by CSS personnel. Nellie also developed a file management system for citations and associated photos of evidentiary value being issued by Citizen Service Unit patrol members.
- Maintaining a file system in place that keeps all of our CSU member's training records in compliance with established local and state guidelines

Volunteer Field Training Officer of the Year

Robert Maas logged 800 hours of active patrol time in 2007 and has logged 2,500 hours since joining the patrol in 2004. Bob Maas was among the first to dedicate even more of his

Pasco Sheriff Bob White is looking for qualified people to serve their community as volunteers in a number of positions available at the agency. These diverse positions include:

- **The Citizen's Service Unit**, whose members respond to low priority calls that do not require the presence of a law enforcement officer, such as found property, and assisting in traffic control at automobile accidents;
- **Reserve deputy**, who, in the presence of a full-time law enforcement deputy, is responsible for patrolling an assigned area for the prevention of crime, protecting lives and property, apprehending and assisting in the prosecution of offenders, preserving the public peace, and enforcing various regulatory measures;
- **The civilian mounted posse**, equestrians who participate in parades, special events, and assist in the search for missing people and wanted suspects

time to his community by volunteering to become a CSU Field Training Officer. FTOs are tasked with training new members as they enter the field. Bob Maas attended 40 hours of advanced and specialized training to prepare himself and since that time, his unique blend of academic and technical skills as a trainer have proven to be an invaluable asset to the CSU program. One of the most dangerous (and frequent) tasks a CSU must perform is that of traffic control. Learning to dissect a traffic problem, implement a traffic flow strategy, and manage a congested highway can be a daunting task for a new and inexperienced volunteer. The importance of quality training in this area is paramount.

Robert Maas wrote a customized "Traffic Control Officer (TCO)" lesson plan tailored to the needs of the CSU volunteer. His lesson plan was the product of much research and subject mat-

in rural and wooded areas;

- **Parking enforcement specialist**, who enforce parking statutes and ordinances;
- **The Chaplain Corps**, who provide spiritual help, guidance and counseling in various religious denominations;
- **And numerous clerical positions** in different units.

Prospective volunteers must undergo a background check and fingerprinting. Volunteers do not receive any salary or benefits but are covered by worker's compensation. Volunteering is a good way to learn or hone valuable job skills and can be an asset when applying for jobs with prospective employers. If you think you would like to work as a volunteer and assist the law enforcement mission of the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, contact the Human Resources Unit at 1-800-854-2862, extension 7791.

ter expertise as a former Pasco County Traffic Control Officer of many years. The course included a practicum skills session on the Safety Town concourse in which he coordinated four intersection scenarios with live traffic. Bob also prepared a 25 question, multiple-choice examination to measure the learning process of new recruits. Bob Maas deserves the credit for the consistent quality of new CSU members to traffic details today.

Bob Maas was assigned to the busiest intersection of the largest event held in western Pasco County. Bob was the officer-in-charge at US 19 and Main Street for the 2007 Chasco Fiesta in New Port Richey. The intersection of US 19 and Main Street was the end of the parade route. The intersection already has thousands of vehicles travel-

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Pasco Explorers excel again

The PSO Explorer's Post 916 recently competed in the state competition in Orlando and finished in ninth place out of 28 teams. In addition, they took home three first place trophies, two second place trophies, and one third place trophy in individual competitions. Pictured left to right are Explorer Lt. Josh Short, Explorer Captain Chris Ryan, Explorer Major Kevin Beckman, Explorer Lt. Ryan Nye and Explorer Billy O'Dell. The Explorers program, sanctioned by the Boy Scouts, is for both young men and women 14-20 years of age, who assist in special events and functions at the Sheriff's Office while learning the basics of law enforcement.



Weapons, from page two

Miami," she said. "We had to be there at 8 a.m. and that meant leaving Pasco County around 3 in the morning. Now, we can leave around 9 a.m., and are done by noon. This company is really fantastic, and they even had a couple of people here to help us unload." Once at the shredding facility, the guns are unloaded from the vans and placed onto a conveyor belt. The belt takes the weapons to a large industrial shredder that turns steel, aluminum and wood into a chewed-up pile of rubble.

These shredders also separate all the components making the most out of the recycling effort. The wood from the gun stocks are put into one pile, while the steel is shredded, eventually melted and shipped back to the steel mills. Aluminum from the grow house lights can also be recycled into a number of items, and even the plastic from TV's and computer monitors are separated into piles where a company from China buys it and turns it into another product. Hypes also says American Electronic Recycling is extremely effi-

cient.

"It used to take us all day to wait for the weapons to be melted down," she said. "This company can do the job in a few hours." Hypes also said American Electronic Recycling will take more items that need to be destroyed and other places wouldn't take knives and lights. "This company not only destroyed our items, but even gave us a certificate of disposal and a videotape to prove it had been destroyed. They really go above and beyond with their service."

Volunteers, from previous page

ing through it each day. On the day of the festival, this traffic increases, and also includes thousands of pedestrians, numerous parade floats, and marching bands. Bob developed a traffic flow plan early-on and he saw the need to alter the city's pre-established barricade plan for the intersection to increase the safety of pedestrians and improve traffic flow. The New Port Richey Police officers on the scene agreed with Maas' assessment and his traffic plan was immediately implemented. CSU Maas was on his feet actively engaged in intersection control for a period of 6 hours. The day

ended without incident at this major intersection. Parade floats safely crossed the busy street, pedestrians were safely guided across, and motorists were efficiently routed through the event thanks to Maas' expertise.

Some of the more notable cases that Bob has been personally involved with in the past year include:

- A recovered stolen car during a self-initiated abandoned automobile investigation;
- Locating a hit-and-run suspect for the Florida Highway Patrol which resulted in an arrest;
- Processing a crime scene for busy patrol deputies one weekday afternoon on Ridge Road;

• Investigating misdemeanor cases to alleviate some of the call load from road patrol deputies;

• Picking up large items of evidentiary value, e.g. a safe, for our detectives;

• Transporting goods seized in a search warrant from the scene to Property Evidence for processing and inventory.

Volunteer of the Year with Most Hours Served in 2007

CSU Louis Rossi led all other volunteers with 1,498 hours of his time spent assisting citizens of Pasco County.