



## **Pasco Sheriff's Office**

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## **Volunteers calling court attendees**

**NEW PORT RICHEY** -- Pasco Sheriff's Office volunteers are ringing up Pasco citizens who have upcoming court dates to remind them to appear. Why? Because citizens who miss their required court date will automatically have a warrant issued for their arrest. That starts a long and time-consuming process that will end up with that person in jail, all of which costs taxpayers' money.

Last year, there were 4,177 "failure to appear" arrests made by the Pasco Sheriff's Office. Of course, some of those arrests were made for people who probably never intended to show up to face the judge. But some citizens move, frequently change their address, and never receive the summons for a court date.

It is the citizen's responsibility to keep their address and phone number updated so any agency in the justice system can contact them. But if the number of people who fail to appear in court can be reduced by reminding them about their court date because they didn't receive their summons or they just plain forgot, overcrowding in our jail and the amount of money it costs to process the citizens in these arrests can also be reduced. More agencies than the Pasco Sheriff's Office are involved in such arrests, as the clerk of the court, the state attorney's office, and parole and probation might also have to eventually incur costs while processing the individual.

## **Court case volunteers**

### **2-2-2**

The Pasco Sheriff's Office started the program in May of this year, when volunteers began calling citizens the week before their scheduled court date. Since then, the hard-working volunteers average 650 contacts a month, either with defendants, a third person they lived with, or their voice mail. Hundreds more each month are eliminated from the list due to the fact that they were in jail again or in a supervised release program where they have to make regular calls to their detention supervisors.

How many of these people that volunteers contacted might have been kept out of jail since they were reminded of their court date? That is unknown since ultimately they have to be the ones who decide to attend court. **But if just 10 percent** of such contacts proved successful, that would be 65 individuals for whom the agency did not have to issue a warrant, search for and arrest; did not have to feed, clothe, and house at the jail; and did not have to have another court date added for the offense of missing a court date to begin with! That possibility could be saving Pasco taxpayer's tens of thousands of dollars!

**Special note:** There are scam artists who pretend to be government officials and call citizens threatening them with jail because they missed their court date, jury duty summons, or other such appointment. These criminals will then ask you for personal information in an attempt to steal your identity. However, PSO court case volunteers, or any true law enforcement officer, **WILL NOT** ask you for your social security number, bank account number, credit card number, or any other type of personal information that could be used to steal your identity. If you receive such a call from someone asking for your personal information, it is a scam and you should immediately hang up!