

# Rick Beseler...

From front page

media interaction with CCSO, most of the time officers actually involved in the crime or incident relate details of the case.

"Mary is wonderful, is doing an excellent job," Beseler said. "We just changed her public persona a bit, allowing police officers at the scene with first-hand knowledge to address the media. We have some tremendous officers doing great work and it's good for them, a real morale booster, to get public recognition, be on TV explaining how they captured a suspect or solved a "whodunit." And it's working very well."

## "People perceive they are safe here"

Clay County, Jacksonville's neighbor to the south, is rapidly filling up with families seeking less-crowded schools and safer neighborhoods. The total crime rate per capita in Clay is half that of Duval County, and the murder rate (per 100,000) is more than ten times higher in Duval.

Beseler says, "Perception is as important as reality, is all that really matters, and I think people perceive that they are safe here. I feel safer here in Clay County than in many other places. You can walk at night and feel comfortable, and we want to keep it that way."

When asked to what he attributed this safe environment, Beseler said there are a lot of reasons. "We have good law enforcement, but that's not the only reason. We're not a transient community, we don't have tourism here, and tourism

brings in a lot of crime. We're a bedroom community – people live here and work somewhere else. Our per capita income is higher, we don't have big businesses,

industrialized areas, we don't have a lot of economic things going on which attract crime.

"People come here; they eat, sleep and go back to work. This contributes to a low crime rate, which is good in one way but bad in another in that we don't have a big tax base. All the money to run our services – fire, police, rescue – is derived from property taxes, which are very high.

"So we don't have big businesses we can tax or other revenue streams, but the flip side is that we don't have the crime those sources would bring in. We have a very stable community."

Mary Justino offered another reason for the stability of Clay County communities. "From year to year, the Chamber of Commerce or economic development committees who are working to import new business consult with the CCSO because they want a joint, informed decision on the sort of business to bring here, because some definitely bring crime."

Beseler agreed. "A business providing high-paying jobs, well-paid and well-trained employees, is not going to

produce a criminal element. To the Chamber's credit it evaluates that aspect when making its decisions. The first time you let an x-rated book store or peep show come into

Several of his operations were featured on national television: Prime Time Live, Unsolved Mysteries and other shows. I asked if he planned to continue this type of

catching the people who are going to commit these crimes, getting them off the street before they have a chance to victimize us. This will further reduce the crime rate.

"We have already been using some proactive tactics, working around the mall where a lot of car thefts, carjackings, motorcycle thefts and robberies take place. When we have some successes like that to talk about, we'll bring the information forward. I anticipate that we'll be successful; some of the people who worked with me in the State Attorney's Office are down here working with the CCSO."

The sheriff clearly enjoys his new job and several times warmly expressed his appreciation for the fine officers, and other employees, under his command. "I'm just as pleased as I can be to be at the helm of this organization," he said as we concluded the interview.

He and his wife, Joan, lifelong residents of Green Cove Springs, have four adult children and four grandchildren.

*Clay County's 500-bed jail facility, housing male and female county inmates and INS detainees, is at or near capacity on most days. As more county inmates are booked, INS detainees are transferred back to the federal government then to other facilities while they await deportation. Juvenile offenders are processed through Jacksonville's juvenile detention center.*

your area, the neighborhoods start to deteriorate. You get prostitution, drug-related robberies, all the crimes that go together, so if you stop it, keep it from getting a foothold, you won't have that problem."

## Impressive resumé

Sheriff Beseler's years of experience in law enforcement, and as the State Attorney's Chief Investigator, include many notable accomplishments, among them multiple sting operations netting hundreds of arrests and the recovery of several hundred thousands of dollars in stolen property.

operation in his current job.

"I want to make this department more proactive, which is my area of expertise," he responded. "The CCSO has always traditionally done a really good job of being reactive, solving crimes, and has one of the highest clearance rates in the state. I've been so impressed in the weeks I've been here with what the detectives have already been doing, clearing cases, arresting people involved – it's tremendous. But I want to 'marry' the success rate of reactive investigative efforts with a proactive stance that is preemptive in some way,

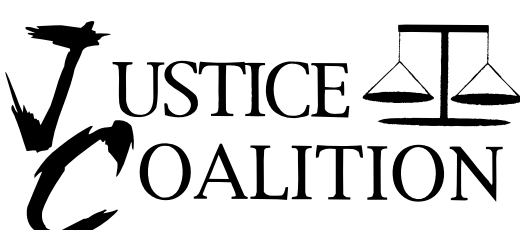
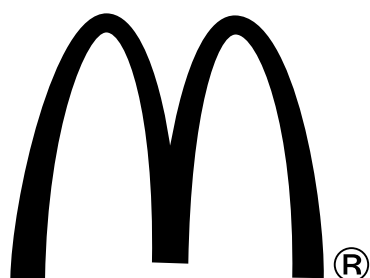
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Gainesville, Florida  
on Sunday, January 30  
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**Please come forward with any information you have. Call the Gainesville Police Department at 352-334-2489. You may remain anonymous. McDonald's® customers and employees deserve a safe environment.**

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## NASSAU COUNTY'S WANTED

Sheriff Thomas Seagraves and the Nassau County Sheriff's Office endorse the efforts of the Justice Coalition to capture wanted criminals. We rely greatly on the public's participation in locating wanted persons and deeply appreciate their efforts.



**SIRDARIUS  
MIGEL MILLER**

Race: Black	Sex: Male
DOB: 5/6/78	Ht.: 6'2"
Wt.: 220	Hair: Black
Eyes: Brown	

Charge: Uttering Counterfeit Instrument

IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE INDIVIDUALS, PLEASE CONTACT NASSAU COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Call the NCSO at (904) 353-7072 today!