

TO PROTECT AND SERVE

Our monthly recognition for the best of the best



Corrections Officer of the Month

VERICKA BROOKINS

Vericka Brookins is a 23-year veteran of the JSO, currently assigned as the Public Reception Officer for Watch One at the Pre-Trial Detention Facility. Many times she is the first contact we have with citizens who have business at the jail. She is well trained and has the experience to handle any situation that is presented to her.

In the early morning hours of August 1, 2009, an unidentified man entered the public reception area of the PTDF, covered in what appeared to be blood, and told Brookins that he had just killed his wife. She immediately took action, questioned him to see if he was armed (which he was not) and had the entrance to the PTDF sealed so that he could not leave. Then she notified her supervisors to send officers to the site and ten minutes later, the man was taken into custody.

Sheriff Rutherford applauded her quick thinking and calm demeanor that kept this volatile situation under control and said, "I am proud of you and your actions."



Police Supervisor of the Month

TROY RHODES

Since Sgt. Troy Rhodes assumed command of the Auto Theft Unit in April 2009 he has distinguished himself as a strong and effective leader. Beginning in May, his Unit investigated a rash of auto dealership vehicle burglaries - nine in a two-week period. Twenty vehicles were stolen, each worth at least \$20,000. Rhodes and his team quickly cleared eight of the burglaries by arrest.

Rhodes is also very good at properly managing information received from an informant. His team was told about possible stolen construction equipment and given information about a potential suspect. Officers researched the tip and quickly (in four hours) put together a plan of action that recovered two 2006 dump trucks, one 2005 John Deere bulldozer, one 2005 Caterpillar excavator and one 1997 Chaparral boat and trailer.

The initial suspect was arrested and is now cooperating with police. The equipment recovered had a combined value of \$700,000.

Under Rhodes' leadership members of the Auto Theft Unit have recovered more than \$1 million worth of stolen equipment. That is outstanding work - job well done.



Certificate of Commendation

DENNIS BLANKINCHIP AND MIKE SANDERS

From June to August last year several robberies of pizza delivery drivers occurred in the University Blvd. and Justina Road area. In most cases the victims could not identify the suspects, and there were very few leads for Robbery Unit Detectives Dennis Blankinchip and Mike Sanders to investigate. Coming in early and staying late, using various databases and records, the detectives researched more than 100 phone numbers trying to reach all the owners of cell phones used to order pizzas. Using this tactic, they found several "persons of interest" in the cases.

The first person they interviewed did not cooperate, but the two detectives got a break when they interviewed another person who had called for a pizza and the delivery driver was subsequently robbed at the River Bend Apartments on University Blvd. After interviewing the woman, they realized her son matched the description of one of the suspected robbers. She eventually admitted that she

had found a BB gun and unaccounted for money in her home, and she told them her son had called a pizza delivery service on the day of one of the armed robberies.

With the parent's permission, the detectives interviewed the young man, who initially denied any involvement but eventually confessed to six unsolved robberies in the area. In some of the incidents he wore a mask and would never have been charged had they not gotten a confession from him. And his statement led to another suspect who confessed to two additional robberies in the same area.

Blankinchip and Sanders cleared eight armed robbery cases through excellent interviewing and investigative skills. Their work also led to an additional suspect - an 18-year-old male who was not only recruiting juveniles to rob individuals in the area, but was also providing the handgun for them to use in the robberies.



Corrections Supervisor of the Month

CHRISTOPHER E. KELSEY

Until June 2009 Sergeant Christopher Kelsey was in charge of the Lower Level Housing Unit on Watch 3 at the Pre-Trial Detention Facility where inmates who are involved in the Trustee Labor program are housed. Part of his responsibility is to keep contraband from entering the PTDF as the trustees return from work.

Kelsey recruited well-trained, innovative personnel, and they were instrumental in discovering numerous hiding places for contraband. Last April the team conducted a routine search inside the ceiling of the kitchen in the PTDF. They found cases of stolen food items from the kitchen and commissary (including paraphernalia to brew homemade alcoholic beverages), trustee clothing, plastic crates, old condiments, smoking paraphernalia, and other items called "nuisance contraband." They even found a trustee who was hiding in the area.

In April, Kelsey and his crew discovered an area behind equipment in the laundry room where trustees were "fishing" through vents on the outside wall of the facility to try to bring in contraband. They created long "strings" of shredded sheets or other materials hooked to a stick, or other similar item. Then they ran the string out a small aperture where another person, in this case on the outside, attached contraband, and the inmate "reeled" it in.

This is why corrections professionals' vigilance and dedication to the job are so important. There is nothing routine about these "routine" searches. Drugs, weapons, even cigarettes, can pose a safety issue for the inmates and officers. Kelsey has streamlined procedures to ensure that his areas of responsibility run as smoothly and effectively as possible. He worked on the trustee visitation policy and improved the process to move, classify, and manage the trustee work force.

Throughout his career Kelsey has developed a reputation for being able to manage any crisis and improve processes. In his nomination Lt. Gaston Carlton wrote, "...Sgt. Kelsey is more than deserving of...[being] Supervisor of the Month. His work is vital to maintaining a safe environment for everyone who enters the PTDF and to run the jail's trustee program effectively."

He has recently been transferred to Watch One at the PTDF.



Police Officer of the Month

MICHAEL D. PETERSON

On Sept. 19, 2009, at 10:56 p.m., Michael Peterson was dispatched to Morsch Marine Equipment Storage Yard on the Westside regarding a suspicious person and possible theft. The caller was driving on Lewis Street when he almost hit three men pushing a grocery cart containing several large rolls of copper wire.

Peterson drove to the site, found the cart and coils of wire left at the rear of the property and searched

the business, but did not find suspects or employees. He did, however, see a large hole in the perimeter fencing that surrounded the property that is being used by several construction companies to store wire.

Peterson couldn't reach the owners that night, but the next morning he continued to gather information from citizens in the neighborhood regarding possible suspects and a location where they believed wire was being burned at an abandoned house. He checked the house twice, but did not find the suspects. From there he walked to the construction yard and observed two suspects burglarizing the business. He called for backup and arrested the two suspects without incident - and recovered approximately \$8,000 of cable.

On Sept. 21, Peterson again checked the business and again observed two more suspects removing cable and stacking it outside the fence. He called for backup, the business was quietly surrounded and the suspects were taken into custody without incident. The thieves only had time to remove about \$800 worth of cable (which was recovered) and one of the suspects' vehicles was seized. Later another \$4,000 worth of cable was recovered in the abandoned house.

Even with four arrests for two separate incidents, Peterson did not stop his investigation. On Sept. 28, he again checked the property and observed ANOTHER burglary in progress involving three suspects. He coordinated with responding units who quickly set up a perimeter around the business and those three suspects were arrested. Because of his determination to stop these crimes and protect the business property, approximately \$13,000 worth of cable was recovered, two vehicles were seized for forfeiture, a total of 10 suspects were taken into custody, and the abandoned house was DARTed (shuttered by the City of Jacksonville's Code Enforcement Office as an unsafe structure where drug or other illegal activities were occurring).



Civilian Employee of the Month

CELBRICA TENAH

Public Safety Analyst Celbrica Tenah has been with the JSO for less than a year. Since last April she has become a valued member of the Crime Analysis Unit supporting Zone 5 and the JSO Department of Corrections.

Because most of her work is investigative in nature, specific information cannot be shared; however, her excellent analysis of intelligence gathered bridges the gap between the Corrections, Patrol and Investigations environments. Her work has resulted in additional charges being filed against suspects already in jail, associations between gang members identified, and she has provided investigators with possible suspect information for an unsolved homicide investigation.

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