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JUSTICE COALITION'S VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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Why Benchmarking Matters



By Sheriff John Rutherford

Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.
 —Benjamin Franklin

One of the topics of greatest concerns to our citizens is how the budget cuts, past and impending, impact our agency. As I walk the streets with our ShAdCo members and citizens in the neighborhoods, when I am taking calls during my monthly call in show on First Coast Connect on WJCT, or when I talk to reporters throughout the week and at our monthly Awards Ceremony – the one thing people want to discuss is “how is the city’s financial crisis affecting your organization?”

Let me take a few minutes and share some thoughts with you on this critical matter. To the public we serve, and for me, our ability to respond to calls for service in a timely manner and solve crime is the #1 priority and remains so. And with a three-year solid downward trend in both murder and violent crime incidents (our lowest numbers of overall crime in 40 years), sustaining those declines and having the money to keep “working smart” on this critical issue is what keeps me up at night.

The privilege of being your elected Sheriff also brings with it the obligation every responsible leader has – making tough choices. In this last round of cuts (totaling more than \$17 million dollars) I was forced to eliminate 71 police positions, which included laying off 48 sworn officers and many civilians. This was not an easy decision, but we are an organization of “people” and that’s where our greatest expenses are.

In the reorganization of our operation, caused by this sad, historic event, we eliminated some programs – such as our Mounted Unit – and “backfilled” EVERY PATROL POSITION with a sworn officer from somewhere else in the organization. I cannot afford to let our response time be impacted, and as our #1 goal, I must do everything in my power to make sure citizens are not adversely impacted by any reduction in force.

I don’t know what the future holds, with respect to what cuts are coming next.

Benchmarking... Continued on page 4

“People have the government they deserve” – A. Lincoln Elected officials must be held accountable

By Ted Hires

Reprinted from *Victims' Advocate*, January 2005

In February the Justice Coalition will be ten years old.

I’ve seen a lot of things happen in those ten years, a lot of improvements in the criminal justice system, but we’re not where we need to be. On a scale of one to ten, we may have come from a two to a five or six.

After ten years, I am convinced that the biggest fault in this lack of improvement lies with the citizens. We have taken an attitude of “I don’t want to be involved.” But we can’t afford not to be involved, because the government, the criminal justice system, will not work without accountability.

Accountability can only come when law-abiding citizens become involved, and I’m not talking about just going to the polls. We have to



Holding officials accountable... Continued on page 13

State Attorney's Office

On call 24/7 to ensure justice is served



Mark Borello
 Asst. State Attorney

When I was requested to write this column for the *Victim's Advocate* on behalf of the State Attorney's Office, it reminded me that my association with, and affinity for, the Justice Coalition goes back to its roots in the 1990s when Ted Hires and his employees were victimized by a band of armed robbers at their Sonny's business office. Ted was understandably frustrated with what he saw in the court system and, as a Division Chief in the State Attorney's office at the time, I was tasked

with trying to correct some issues that had arisen.

We were able to do that, I think, and thus began a long friendship with Ted of which I am very proud. I guest hosted many times on the Justice Coalition's radio and TV programs, and I often quote something Ted said to me early in our relationship that has stayed with me to this day and that I try to remember when I deal with crime victims as the Director of Circuit Court in Ms. Corey's office.

I asked Ted to tell me what problems he had been having in the court system and what questions could I answer to help him. He said “Mark, I don’t know what questions to ask; that’s what I need you for.” The point being that victims are going

into an unfamiliar world and often don’t even know what they don’t know, so the job of a prosecutor is to try to anticipate and address victims’ issues and concerns, because they may not even be able to articulate those concerns themselves. (As it turned out, of course, an inability to articulate his concerns was definitely NOT a problem for Ted!)

Assistant State Attorneys, victim advocates and the rest of the dedicated employees at the State Attorney's Office often see people at the worst times in their lives. Those crime victims may have lost a loved one due to the intentional act or criminal negligence of another, or they themselves may have been the victim of a violent act. It is the ASA's

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The Justice Coalition is a grass roots, non-profit (501(c)3), non-partisan organization that operates solely on contributions, proceeds from fundraising events and newspaper advertisements. Please help us continue our advocacy for innocent victims of violent crime in NE Florida. Visit our website at www.justicecoalition.org, or call (904)783-6312 to see how you can be a part of this vital service.