First Quarter Awards 2018

Law Enforcement Member of the Quarter—Detective Don Woelke

Detective Don Woelke currently serves as the Task Force Officer for the FBI. As a liaison for our agency, this first quarter of 2018 he has and continues to investigate several cases resulting in the apprehension, and arrest of offenders participating in the transmission, or orchestration of child pornography. The victims Don works to protect are our most vulnerable, children. These cases typically require time and patience to investigate, along with a strong sense of determination to get past the horrific acts these children suffer. One such case involves Brian Thomas who resided in Charlotte County. Although this case was opened in 2016, it has just recently come full circle outside of any appeals. This case began as an investigation into distribution of child pornography. He was ultimately indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for the possession of child pornography and sentenced to 30 years. Through further investigation, Det. Woelke and the investigative team were then able to substantiate additional crimes where Thomas was sexually assaulting an 11-year-old child he had contact with through a relative. Thomas was sentenced to Life in Prison on April 23rd for Lewd and Lascivious Molestation, Sexual Battery of a child less than 12 years old, and Video Voyeurism charges. This is just one example of the many cases Det. Woelke is dedicated to bringing to successful prosecution. We also applaud Assistant State Attorney Stephanie Powers who worked in conjunction with Det. Woelke, and this case resulted in prosecution and a sentencing so successful that this child victim will never have to fear facing the perpetrator again. Don works diligently on behalf of these innocent children to stop these heinous crimes.

In addition to his own caseload, Don often assists other agents and agencies by offering his investigative skills, expertise, and time. Due to his ability to manage an intense caseload, Don will also be taking on violent crime cases during the year.

Civilian Team of the Quarter—Communications Squad D

On January 29, Operator Geidy Bermudez answered a 911 call from a female in distress stating that someone was going to kill her and that she could not speak. Geidy, using phase 2 location, asked the caller if she was at a specific location in Punta Gorda, but the caller just kept saying that a male subject was going to kill her and that he was coming into the camper. Geidy quickly saved the call with the Phase 2 location, while Dispatcher Maureen Poisson dispatched units. The female could not verify the address just that she was on a specific road. At this point, other members of the squad jumped into action looking up history of the phone number and the name of the male she provided. Geidy kept reassuring the caller help was on the way. When units were getting close, Geidy obtained directions on how to get to the location of the caller and the camper she was in since both were in a remote area of the county. The call was very intense. At moments, the caller said the male was shooting, set the camper on fire, and hooked up the camper trying to drive away with her in it. When units were in the general area, Dispatcher Poisson, with the aid of the CAD mapping system was able to guide the responding units to the correct streets and verify that indeed they were headed in the correct area. After the units were on scene, the male subject fled on foot and units started a search. Geidy kept the female caller on the line even though the deputies were on scene, and stayed on the line until she was safely with a deputy. Geidy remained on the 911 call for over 45 minutes, ensuring the caller’s safety and providing calming assurance that we had help coming to her. I would like to commend the members of Squad D for the teamwork they demonstrated and especially operator Geidy Bermudez for her calming manner and reassurance to the caller.
Awards Ceremony Recipients

Lt. Jill McBee accepts the award on behalf of the Narcotics Unit from Sheriff Prummell. On January 11, the Narcotics Unit was notified of two subjects that were located within approximately a mile of each other that had overdosed on unknown narcotics. The subjects were both revived, treated, and sent to the hospitals. Members of the Narcotics Unit quickly tracked down one of the subjects and obtained the information for the source of the narcotics causing these overdoses. A search warrant was executed that same night. During initial entry, members located a suspicious powder substance leading to the belief that it was possibly Fentanyl. Contact was made with our Meth Investigation Group (MIG), requesting their assistance. Sgt. Jim Vanande and Cpl. Jacob Hawkins responded to the scene where they worked alongside the Narcotics Unit to safely remove evidence piece by piece, ensuring the safety of our members, as well as the neighborhood. This painstaking process took until the early morning hours to complete. The dedication of these members resulted in the arrest of two subjects, the recovery of multiple drugs, paraphernalia, and a firearm. This investigation most certainly saved the lives of others who may have fallen victim to an overdose. Members of the Narcotics Unit, as well as Sgt. Vanande and Cpl. Hawkins, are to be commended for their rapid and efficient response reflective of the foundation of our profession, the protection of human life. For reasons of confidentiality, the Narcotics Unit was recognized and treated to a BBQ luncheon by our Executive Command Staff earlier last month for this award. We wanted to recognize their great teamwork on this case.

Law Enforcement Team of the Quarter

Omayra Pabon started with CCSO as an Express part-time support member for HR and Risk Management in 2016. Her organizational and Microsoft skills were quickly noted, as she became an instant asset to Risk Management during the 2016 open enrollment period. By August 2017, the HR vault, which is used to store employee personnel and medical files, was reaching its maximum capacity. The goal was to move enough files to allow for additional space by the end of September. This would allow Omayra to return to working with Risk Management during the open enrollment process in October. This plan was discussed with Omayra and she willingly took it on. Within a week of starting the project, Hurricane Irma arrived which slowed the process, but the worst was yet to come. Omayra, originally from Puerto Rico, would soon be watching helpless as her family in Puerto Rico was faced with devastating Hurricane Maria. It turned out that they were not unscathed by its devastation. Although Omayra faced several situations during the month of September, she was still able to complete the project. Omayra’s dedication, hard work, and ability to stay focused even during a family crisis, illustrates the core values of CCSO. Omayra was hired on April 9 as a part-time HR/Risk Management Assistant. Hopefully full-time is in her future.
On January 30, DFC Trista Zimmerman was assisting road patrol units when an emergency call for assistance came over the radio for an infant not breathing. She was just around the corner from the call’s location. DFC Zimmerman arrived within seconds and observed the mother holding the infant who appeared to be in distress. After evaluating the situation and determining the infant was choking on an unknown object, DFC Zimmerman delivered five back blows to the infant, which appeared to dislodge the object. She reevaluated the situation and found the child to be breathing normally without straining. DFC Zimmerman held the child and monitored its breathing until EMS arrived on scene. DFC Trista Zimmerman should be commended for her quick response and her immediate reaction to evaluate the scene. She should be commended for her knowledge of the training and abilities to perform potential life saving measures and due diligence to her profession. Job well done.

On January 16, DFC Paul Cignarale was dispatched to a gas station in reference to a medical call. Multiple subjects were around the vehicle and advised the male inside was not breathing and was covered in vomit. DFC Cignarale checked for a pulse. None was found and he started CPR immediately. The man was located in North Port’s jurisdiction, this did not deter him from providing the assistance. He notified Dispatch and requested North Port be advised. The subject was removed from his vehicle and placed onto the ground. DFC Cignarale attached his agency issued AED and performed CPR until the AED indicated to clear. Cpl. Allese arrived on scene after the AED had been attached and took over chest compressions while DFC Cignarale continued with rescue breaths. At one point, the AED advise shocks were required and multiple shocks were delivered. These life-saving measures continued until North Port Fire/Rescue arrived and took over. A short time later, the subject regained a pulse and started to breathe again. Paramedics advised the subject’s vitals were good, even though he had not been breathing for over 5 minutes. Chief Kevin Vespa of the North Port Police Department contact CCSO and stated the subject had been released from the hospital and made a full recovery. He stated that without the assistance the subject may not have survived.

On January 23, Cpl. Jack Lee Collins was dispatched to the area just south of the Desoto County line in reference to a medical call. The call was that a male subject was slumped over behind the wheel of a car and the male was having difficulty breathing. Once on scene, Cpl. Collins made contact with the subject’s wife, who was trying to revive the male. It was determined that the male subject was in some form of medical distress. At that time, Cpl. Collins was attempting to maintain the subject’s airway by keeping his head upright and the airway open. DFC Jacob Patten arrived on scene and assisted in the above efforts. During this time, the subject still had a pulse and lifesaving efforts were continued. Another deputy arrived, escorting the family out of the vehicle and out of sight so that he could help them to calm down. At that time, DFC Patten was unable to locate a pulse and advised the others that the subject had stopped breathing. DFC Patten and Cpl. Collins then removed the subject from the vehicle and placed onto the ground. DFC Patten attached his agency issued AED and performed CPR until the AED indicated to clear. Cpl. Allese arrived on scene after the AED had been attached and took over chest compressions while DFC Cignarale continued with rescue breaths. At one point, the AED advised shocks were required and multiple shocks were delivered. These life-saving measures continued until Charlotte County Fire and EMS arrived and took over. A short time later, the subject regained a pulse and started to breathe again. Paramedics advised the subject’s vitals were good, even though he had not been breathing for over 5 minutes. Chief Kevin Vespa of the North Port Police Department contact CCSO and stated the subject had been released from the hospital and made a full recovery. He stated that without the assistance the subject may not have survived.
In the past few months, DFC Moore and Cpl. Eilerman have seen a rise in calls at Crossroads New Hope Academy. DFC Moore made it a priority to visit with these youth in order to address their needs and reduce the call volume District 4 was experiencing. DFC Moore and Cpl. Eilerman teamed up with Habitat for Humanity and scheduled a build with the foster children on March 3, 2018. When the build was canceled, Cpl. Eilerman and DFC Moore decided to take six juveniles to Ponce de Leon Park and clean up trash along the shore and trails for 2 hours. Cpl. Eilerman then treated the kids to lunch. In addition, they toured the wildlife sanctuary where one youth signed up to do further volunteer hours. Cpl. Eilerman stated they all had a good time, and it served as a great relationship builder for these kids that need a mentor in their lives. Cpl. Eilerman and DFC Moore are to be commended for their unique approach to resolving an issue within the community.

Not only does it help to alleviate calls, but also it builds these youths’ civic engagement and capacity for change.

On March 16, DFC Ciolino conducted a traffic stop on Duncan Rd. The vehicle made a simple stop sign violation, but after an evaluation of the situation, the driver appeared to be under the influence. DFC Ciolino asked the driver to step out of the vehicle. Once at the front of the patrol vehicle, he attempted to check the male for weapons. The subject kept trying to reach into his front pockets and was attempting to walk away back to his car. Ciolino explained the risk of him putting his hands in his pockets and walking away, but he continued to attempt to pull away, still reaching for his pockets. A struggle broke out and Ciolino placed the subject on the hood of the patrol vehicle. DFC Ciolino called for back-up on his radio, but could not continue to talk due to the struggle. He could hear the sirens in the distance, knowing his squad was coming to aid. Even though it was only a matter of minutes before help arrived, he said it felt like forever. To DFC Ciolino’s relief, a silver Dodge pickup stopped beside the patrol vehicle and offered “you need help”. Ciolino yelled “yes” and told the driver to park his vehicle. Kyle Tucker ran up asking, “What do you need me to do”. DFC Ciolino told Kyle to just apply handcuffs. Kyle was then able to apply handcuffs to the male, so that DFC Ciolino could take him into custody. The male has 14 charges, some of which are operating a motor vehicle without a valid license, possession of controlled substance without a prescription, possession of harmful new legend drug without prescription, false ID given to LEO, resisting officer with violence, and battery on LEO; along with two warrants out of Sarasota. Kyle, thank you for your assistance to DFC Ciolino, Sheriff Prummell is please to award you for your courage.

In the past few months, DFC Moore and Cpl. Eilerman have seen a rise in calls at Crossroads New Hope Academy. DFC Moore made it a priority to visit with these youth in order to address their needs and reduce the call volume District 4 was experiencing. DFC Moore and Cpl. Eilerman teamed up with Habitat for Humanity and scheduled a build with the foster children on March 3, 2018. When the build was canceled, Cpl. Eilerman and DFC Moore decided to take six juveniles to Ponce de Leon Park and clean up trash along the shore and trails for 2 hours. Cpl. Eilerman then treated the kids to lunch. In addition, they toured the wildlife sanctuary where one youth signed up to do further volunteer hours. Cpl. Eilerman stated they all had a good time, and it served as a great relationship builder for these kids that need a mentor in their lives. Cpl. Eilerman and DFC Moore are to be commended for their unique approach to resolving an issue within the community. Not only does it help to alleviate calls, but also it builds these youths’ civic engagement and capacity for change.

Continued...
LE Member of the Month, Deputy Matthew Wedgewood

Deputy Matthew Wedgewood currently works as a Road Patrol Deputy, assigned to District 2, Squad D. He grew up in Arkansas, then moving to Port Charlotte in 2014 where he currently lives with his wife and two children. Dep. Wedgewood served our country in the Navy from 2010 to 2014. On February 27, 2018, Dep. Wedgewood responded to a burglary located on Midway Blvd. The complainant reported that his 3 ½ year old, tan and white pit bull, Harley, was stolen during a burglary. Dep. Wedgewood conducted a thorough investigation, obtaining multiple statements from witnesses. On April 13, 2018 he found Harley, along with her six, two-week-old puppies. Harley and her puppies were in good health and returned home to their human family, who were ecstatic to have Harley and her puppies back. After a two-month investigation, it was revealed that two suspects were involved in the theft of Harley. They were located and charged with Burglary to an Occupied Dwelling, Grand Theft, Perjury, and Dealing in Stolen Property. The Complaint was delighted after receiving the news of the arrest and praised Dep. Wedgewood repeatedly for all he did. At this time, we would like to recognize Deputy Matthew Wedgewood as Deputy of the Month, for his constant hard work. Thank you Dep. Wedgewood for your professionalism, courteously, and hard work.

Detention Member of the Month, CDFC Lindsay Klos

On April 25th Officer Klos was conducting a security check in her housing unit when she observed an Inmate located in another inmate’s cell. As Officer Klos made her way to the cell, she watched them pass something between each other. The inmate said it was coffee but Klos could see there was more in her hand. A piece of toilet paper was dropped to the ground. Once Office Klos was able to see what was inside the toilet paper it was a clear crystal substance similar to crystal meth. Officer Klos notified her supervisor. The supervisor and a jail detective came to the pod and tested the evidence with a 923 methamphetamine kit and the results came back positive. The total amount of meth removed from the unit was 0.7 grams. The inmate in possession of the meth was charged additionally with introduction of contraband into a county detention facility, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription and possessing drug paraphernalia. Officer Klos is commended for her attention to detail and preventing a potentially deadly substance from being introduced into the jail population.

Support Services Member of the Month, Dennis Thompson

On October 16, 2017, it became necessary to appoint an Acting IT Director until a new Director could be selected. Dennis Thompson being the current IT Manager was asked to step in as the Acting IT Director until a new Director could be selected. Dennis being very gracious agreed to the assignment. Over the next several months, Dennis covered his normal duties as well as those of the Director, and performed the duties very well. Any time there is a change in leadership there is a potential for things to become disrupted, but Dennis used good leadership and people skills, gained throughout his career, and was as able to minimize concerns and disruptions during this transition. Dennis was able to meet with the IT and Records staff, reassuring them that although the change would be difficult they would get through it as a team and come out better in the end. He gave clear direction to staff as to expectations he had for them and what they could expect from him. During this time, Dennis kept Major Kenville informed on all issues and challenges the IT unit was facing. In several cases, he was able to renegotiate contracts and license fees to keep the unit within its budget requirements. He further collaborated with the County IT staff on an Inter Local Agreement to combine some work efforts, in hopes of creating efficiencies by reducing duplicate services. Throughout his tenure as the Acting IT Director, Dennis has shown strong commitment to the IT and Records units and the Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office. He has further shown great dedication by his actions as the new director transitioned into the unit. On April 23, 2018, Bryon Catlin, started as the new IT Director for the Office. Dennis has worked and continues to work with Director Catlin, to achieve a smooth transition for the unit and the Office as a whole.
On March 30th, 2018, Detective Knopick responded to a report of a stolen boat from the Placida area of Charlotte County. This area of Englewood, including Placida, Cape Haze, Grove City, and Manasota Key, has been identified as targeted areas for boat thefts and boat motor thefts. While in route to this location, radio traffic provided information that the stolen boat was located in the Inter coastal Waterway (ICW) beached on a sandbar. Patrol Units aided by Aviation Units located the stolen boat with the suspect still in the boat. The suspect was taken into custody, and due to possible hypothermia, transported to a local hospital. Due to the several crime scenes, Detective Knopick organized a team of detectives and crime scene technicians to devise a plan of attack. He requested a detective to respond to the recovered boat, a different detective to the scene of the boat theft and a detective to assist with the suspect interview. Detective Knopick also requested road patrol deputies to conduct an extensive neighborhood canvas to locate possible evidence and/or additional crime scenes. His intuition located four additional boats, which had been attempted to be stolen from nearby locations. Detective Knopick requested one more detective to assist with this crime scene. This communication proved to be imperative for the pending interview.

Continued... During the brief hospitalization of the suspect, it was established that he attempted to steal three new 2017 StarCraft Deck boats with 2017 E-Tech Engines owned by Freedom Boat Club valued at $135,000.

Deputy First Class Joella Moore was recently honored by the Florida Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) with their Law Enforcement Commendation Medal. The medal recognized her work with the youth at Crossroads New Hope Academy, as a school resource officer with the Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office, and in her personal life within the community. The Sons of the American Revolution is a patriotic, historical, and educational non-profit organization which values teaching an appreciation of American citizenship. DFC Moore has dedicated much of her career with the Sheriff’s Office to enriching student’s lives as a School Resource Officer, and consistently seeks out new and unique ways to interact with youth in our community, doing her best to build their civic engagement and capacity for change. DFC Joella Moore infuses our core values of Integrity, Professionalism, and Trust in her everyday work with our youth population. We are proud that she is a member of the Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office family!

Blog posting, Direct link to article - https://ccsoblog.org/2018/05/15/sar-commendation-moore/

As is often the case with volunteers on the water with Marine patrol or on the road with C.O. P., providing a police presence is an important part of the job. It’s been seven years since another marine member, and Richard’s current boat partner, explained to him the opportunities available as a marine volunteer. From Wisconsin, Richard has enjoyed boating “most of his life. Now he’s happy to enjoy the pleasures of being “out there on the water where people can see us.” Yet his work extends beyond his high visibility. During a shift, he might use hand signals to slow down errant boaters. Or he might stay with a disabled vessel until a commercial towboat or a Marine Deputy arrives. “I’ll be looking for stuff floating in the water—anything that might be hazard to navigation. Just recently we saw three truck tires in a canal and radioed to authorities to have them removed. Another time we saw some kids lighting a fire in a backyard. A neighbor was outside, so we told him about it. Probably nothing would have come of it, but you never know. Not all problems are as immediate as backyard flames, but Richard says people talk to him about boating and the canals. He likes to get their information and, if possible, follow up on their concerns. “I’m pleased that both citizens and deputies are appreciative of the help we offer.”

Authored By
David Trautman, volunteer
Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office Honor Guard awaiting the return to Fort Myers Airport of the Vets from the May 5th Honor Flight.

Local Author John F. Poplawski (right) stopped by the District 3 substation to donate his book on Autism. Lt. Todd Davis graciously accepted the book on behalf of the Sheriff’s Office.

Some of the administration staff got together to commemorate Law Enforcement wearing blue in honor of National Police Week starting May 14th.

A beautiful day on the water for a local jet skier turned dangerous. But our volunteers John Herndon and Al Dupree assisted him. (see below)

May 10th at the WAWA grand opening our sub building team, Bill Miller, Will Weisspfennig, Leamon Combs, Lou Henyecz and Jennifer Starowesky walked away with a check for the Homeless Coalition for $1,000.00. Cheerleaders Trista Zimmerman, Tammy Wilkie (CCSO) and Darcy Woods and Christine Varcoe from the Homeless Coalition looked on.
Corrections Appreciation Week
May 4th to May 8th

CDFC Sanders with her C.C.W class Certificate from the name draw from Admin staff envelope picks.

CDFC Zeigler with her “Pick a Number” drawing gift card from Wal-Mart.

CDFC Platz with his “Pick a Number” drawing gift card from Wal-Mart

CDFC Cody Hollingsworth, Admin Drawing winner, Sonny’s Bar-B-Q gift cards

See below Ziegler in the Craziest Socks competition.

CD Zeigler with her “Pick a Number” drawing gift card from Wal-Mart.

CD Zeigler with her “Pick a Number” drawing gift card from Wal-Mart.

CDFC Fisher and Daniels, 1st night’s Crazy Socks. Cheeze-it and Taco Socks. Tied both winning Starbucks gift cards.

CDFC Platz with his “Pick a Number” drawing gift card from Wal-Mart

Jail Tech Katrina Branscome, WINNER of the 1st BINGO

Cpl. Bartolotta donated (and arranged) 3 prize baskets for BINGO.

#CorrectionsWeek
On May 9, 2018, Christopher Koennemann, son of Tammy Koennemann, District 2 Secretary, was awarded a scholarship from Take Stock in Children of Sarasota County (TSCSC) amounting in four years free tuition to any public post-secondary institution in the state of Florida. Christopher became a member of TSCSC when he was in the seventh grade and qualified for this scholarship by maintaining good grades and remaining discipline and drug free both in and out of school. The above photo shows Christopher graduating North Port High school with his high school diploma, May 17th, 2018.

DFC Elizabeth Martinez’s daughter Samantha Martinez, graduated from Lemon Bay High School Summa Cum Laude and will be attending University of Miami this fall.

SAVE THE DATE:
SATURDAY, JUNE 23
Public Safety Appreciation Night (PSAN)
FOR TICKETS
www.thankyoucharlotte.com

Shown above at the Jennifer Lawrence Foundation gala at the Kentucky Derby. Kevin Lafley, Evidence Clerk’s family was invited to attend. Left to right, Karen Lawrence, (Jennifer’s mother) Ken Jones, Lisa Lafley, Malea Lafley, and Jennifer Lawrence. P.S. it was Malea’s 16th birthday.
Dan Libby (far left) is celebrating a lot of great occurrences in their family. Kim Libby (seated to Dan’s left) of Austin TX, graduated with a Masters of Arts in Educational Counseling from the University of Texas, Austin May 19, 2018 and is diligently on the job hunt.

Rachel Libby, (across from Dan) has finished her second year of residency in emergency medicine at Emory University at Grady Hospital in Atlanta, GA. She will enter her third and final residency year in July. Rachel has also been accepted to do a fellowship in global health medicine in Ethiopia in 2019. Michelle (next to Rachel) and Dan are celebrating 35 years of marriage, June 25th with a cruise on the Rhine River. Best wishes to the Libby family.

Marty Schmunk receiving her retirement credentials after serving the Charlotte County Sheriff’s office for over twenty years. Marty and her husband are looking forward to traveling and taking it easy. Enjoy!

Rose Manfredo started her career with CCSO in 1988. Rose was originally assigned to the Purchasing office as a secretary. During the past 28 years in Civil, Rose has worked both in the office and finally on the road. Rose looks forward to spending quality time with her family, She has no immediate plans for retirement.

Jim Lilly, Staff Inspector cuts the cake baked by Heidi Robbins for his surprise retirement party. Best wishes to Jim on his retirement.

David Phillips, MIS specialist retires from the Charlotte County Sheriff’s office with over 25 years of service. Enjoy the travels that you have planned.