Wow! As you read this, I've been your Sheriff for 47 days – and each day has been packed with action, action and more action. After being sworn in on January 3rd, and then swearing in every outstanding employee of your Sheriff’s Office, I’ve spent my time strategizing with staff members, executing tactical plans to fight this County’s drug problem, and meeting with members of the community to share my vision for the agency.

In the month of January alone, I spoke to more than 1,500 residents across the county about the mission of your Sheriff’s Office. I explained our priorities – leadership development of an already highly experienced force, attacking the drug problem in our community, growing our volunteer base from 800 to 1,000 by the end of the year, and the safety concerns I have for our firefighters.

Did you know most of our retail thefts, residential and vehicular burglaries and robberies to a person stem from drug use? Our Tactical Impact Unit (TIU), detectives and patrol deputies have been ferocious this month in fighting our community’s ever increasing drug problems. In January, we arrested 47 individuals on 67 drug-related charges. TIU executed six search warrants, recovering a multitude of marijuana, heroin, illegal prescription pills, guns, cash and more. We will continue to update you each month regarding our aggressive attack on this epidemic.

As I’ve visited a multitude of community groups last month, I’ve stressed to them the critical shortfalls we have in Fire Rescue. The national personnel standard for responding to a fire is four firefighters. Our budget constraints have restricted us to having two-person crews. This is not only a safety hazard, but can impact your property insurance rates! For this reason alone, we’re not able to seek national accreditation in fire rescue because we’re below minimum staffing levels. In the coming months I’ll be asking for your support as I discuss this mission essential need with our county commissioners.

See MESSAGE page 2
Finally, have you considered volunteering with this great institution that was created in 1887 and is celebrating its 130th year? Our volunteer force is near 800, and I’m challenging our newly formed Community Relations Division to reach 1,000 volunteers before the end of the year. Will you help? Visit our website at sheriffcitrus.org, download an application and send it to us. WE WANT YOU! There are many areas you can plug into here to become part of the CCSO family and contribute to our community.

I look forward to seeing you in the coming months. We are here for you.

Yours in Service,
Mike Prendergast
Sheriff

NUMBER OF DRUG-RELATED ARRESTS: 45
(by patrol, detectives and Tactical Impact Unit (TIU))

ARREST STATISTICS:
36 males, 9 females
City of Crystal River: 5
City of Inverness: 6
East side of county: 18
West side of county: 16

CHARGES:
• Possession of a Controlled Substance
• Possession Cannabis (Less than 20 Grams)
• Drug Paraphernalia - To inject/ingest/inhale/introduce
• Sell/Manufacture/Deliver or Possess w/Intent to Sell/Manufacture/Deliver Controlled Substance
• Sell/Manufacture/Deliver or Possess w/Intent within 1000 feet of a Place of Worship
• Theft of Controlled Substance defined in 893.02
• Deliver/Possess/Manufacture Drug Paraphernalia Knowing it Will Be Used To inject/ingest/inhale A Controlled Substance
• Trafficking in Methamphetamine
• Possession of Schedule I,II, or III Drugs w/Intent to Sell/Manufacture/Deliver
• Introduction of Contraband into a Detention Facility
(Drugs/Narcotics)

NUMBER OF SEARCH WARRANTS: 6 (by TIU)

OTHER ITEMS SEIZED:
• Ruger AR-15 rifle
• Rossi 357 Magnum (Serial Number Defaced)
• $10,786.00 in U.S. currency

“Everyone in the agency knows that fighting the drug problem in our community is a top priority. From our Tactical Impact Unit to our patrol deputies, everyone is focused on a strategic attack to arrest those who are selling drugs, using drugs and promoting a culture of illegal drugs in Citrus County,” said Sheriff Prendergast on Friday. “I wasn’t kidding when I said we are going to hit this issue hard and we will not give up.”

A variety of other pills were seized by patrol deputies throughout the month in addition to those collected by TIU. Also, 154.3 pounds of unused or unwanted medications were turned into the Sheriff’s Office for disposal.

“If you’re dealing or using, get out of Citrus. If not, we’re coming for you,” Sheriff Prendergast concluded.
In the world of scammers, seniors are the prey of preference. This happens for several reasons of which some make sense and others not so much. First of all, seniors tend to be easier to contact and thus makes them an available target. In addition, that since seniors are often retired that they must have available disposable funds.

Scammers seem to believe that since seniors are often retired that they must have available disposable funds. Issues such as these mean that a large portion of scam victims are indeed seniors. So because of this situation in July 2002, the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO), under Sheriff Dawsy, joined with the Florida Attorney General’s Office (OAG) to bring the Seniors vs. Crime Project to Citrus County. Our office was only the second office opened in the state and the first to be a joint project between a local law enforcement agency and the OAG. Since the birth of that program here in Citrus County, we have recovered over $2.5 million for local residents. Last year alone we recovered over $125,000 or $196.18 per hour our office was open. That is a substantial benefit to the community considering that this result is not available anywhere else in government.

In recent months, our county has experienced a higher than normal volume of vehicle burglaries. What do they all have in common? You guessed it; the doors were unlocked. Occasionally, we all forget to lock our car, but to continue to believe that we live in a quiet little county where nothing bad happens, unfortunately sets us up for disaster. We will never completely stop crime from occurring, but there are steps we can take to make it harder or less desirable for the criminals to target our vehicles.

Remove valuables from view. Secure valuable items in the trunk or hidden from view. Things that you may not even consider valuable, like a pack of cigarettes or loose change, can be a target for a criminal. Although we remember to secure purses and electronics sometimes other, less valuable items are over looked.

Park in areas with good lighting. Ample lighting after dark does help to deter crime. Try to park your vehicle close to the lights in parking lots and avoid the shadowy areas. At home, park in the garage if possible and lock the car doors. If garage parking is not available park near available light, or add lights near the area where you park.

Always take your keys. Remember, we want to make the criminal’s job harder, so always remove your keys from the vehicle. Even vehicles parked in the garage should not have a key left inside.

As simple as these suggestions are, they can be very important in helping to keep your vehicle and property safe. So please, remember to lock up when you leave!
One of the phrases Sheriff Prendergast has been saying to his employees repeatedly since taking office is “If you see something, say something.” This is quite right—say something. The “If You See Something, Say Something” campaign is a Homeland Security mantra which encourages people to call their local law enforcement agencies and report suspicious activity. The funny thing is when you hear someone say something not being done or you see law enforcement being blasted or social media for something not being taken care of, you might ask, “Did you let them know there was a problem?” More often than not, some people would rather complain about things not being done than take a positive step themselves to report it. Suspicious activity is any observed behavior that could indicate crime. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Unusual items or situations: A vehicle is parked in an odd location, a package/ luggage is unattended, a window/ door is open that usually is closed, or other out-of-the-ordinary situations occur.
- Eliciting information: A person questions individuals at a level beyond curiosity about a building’s purpose, operations, security procedures and/or personnel, shift changes, etc.
- Observation/surveillance: Someone pays unusual attention to facilities or buildings beyond a casual or professional interest. This includes extending loitering without explanation (particularly in concealed locations), unusual, repeated, and/or prolonged observation of a building (e.g., with binoculars or video camera), taking notes or measurements; counting paces; sketching floor plans, etc.

Some of these activities could be innocent—it’s up to law enforcement to determine whether the behavior warrants investigation. This is very important here in your own backyard as well as if you are traveling out of town or on vacation. As you know by now, law enforcement can’t be everywhere at all times but with your help we can make our community safe. Officials encourage anyone who sees suspicious activity to call 911 or 1-855-FLA-SAFE (1-855-352-7733). This can also be reported online through FDLE’s website at www.fdle.state.fl.us.

Again—my challenge for 2017 is to always be on the lookout for ways to stay alert and protect your family’s security as well as keeping your valuables secure. And remember—if you see something…say something. Together, we can keep Citrus County a great place to work, play and live.

GIVE BACK: BECOME A VOLUNTEER!

Do you know Citrus Sheriff Fire Rescue’s hazmat team is one of the regional response team for the entire state of Florida? This is all thanks to a 2016 State Homeland Security Grant (SHSGP) issued to support a regional response team for the entire state of Florida? This is all thanks to a 2016 State Homeland Security Grant (SHSGP) issued to recognize teams that are part of the emergency response framework within the state. The grant plays an important role in the implementation of the National Preparedness System (NPS) by supporting the building, sustainment and delivery of core capabilities to local governments. The SHSGP grant was created after our nation was attacked on September 11, 2001. President Bush enacted the grant realizing that some of the first responders did not have the right equipment in place when they rushed towards the twin towers in New York City. President Bush wanted to make sure from then on, that our men and women responding to terrorist situations are properly trained and have the right equipment in place. This grant is now endowed to every hazmat team in our nation.

The piece of equipment that Fire Rescue procured with the SHSGP grant is the Gas ID, which is a vapor and gas analyzer. This replaced an old equipment that was out of date. So what exactly is a Gas ID? It is a device that identifies vapor products that are unknown and sometimes can’t be seen with the naked eye. By law, the rapid response teams need this device in order to identify a vapor product.

This funding is used to support a regional exercise testing the deployment of State Teams within a region responding to a single incident. The testing of equipment at last year’s Fire Rescue exercise acquired with the SHSGP grant is the Gas ID, which is a vapor and gas analyzer. This replaced an old equipment that was out of date. So what exactly is a Gas ID? In simpler terms, it’s piece of equipment that is a hazmat responder’s best friend and identifies vapor products that are unknown and sometimes can’t be seen with the naked eye. By law, the rapid response teams need this device in order to identify a vapor product.

The team and equipment needs. The first requirement of this year’s grant was that part of the funding had to be for one single item, which is the rapid response team and equipment needs. The first requirement of this year’s grant was that part of the funding had to be for one single item, which is the rapid response team and equipment needs. The first requirement of this year’s grant was that part of the funding had to be for one single item, which is the rapid response team and equipment needs. The first requirement of this year’s grant was that part of the funding had to be for one single item, which is the rapid response team and equipment needs. The first requirement of this year’s grant was that part of the funding had to be for one single item, which is the rapid response team and equipment needs. The first requirement of this year’s grant was that part of the funding had to be for one single item, which is the rapid response team and equipment needs. The first requirement of this year’s grant was that part of the funding had to be for one single item, which is the rapid response team and equipment needs.

Regional Response Team Securities Grant

WESTERN TERRORISM AND OTHER CATASTROPHIC EVENTS. The grant was awarded this year, which is worth $114,643.00, had certain specifications that we needed to meet. Although the total value of this grant changes every year it assists CSFR with maintaining the

DEPUTY ANDY MCEWEN
Volunteer Coordinator

I would like to take a moment to tell you about what it’s like to be the volunteer coordinator for the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office. I’ve been in law enforcement for almost fifteen years and the majority of my career I’ve had the privilege of being the volunteer coordinator. Eighty-five percent of our volunteers are over the age of sixty-five. Taking that into consideration, look back into our history and think about the folks who have literally made history. We have people from all walks of life. From doctors, lawyers, engineers, retired military, retired law enforcement, retail management, and housewives. We even have an olympian.

They have already worked throughout their life, have retired then decided to try to make their community a better place by giving of their time and experience. We have volunteers that donate anywhere from two hours a week up to thirty or forty hours a week. Sometimes the number of volunteers is limited but these dedicated individuals come from a generation where a handshake and your word were all they needed to trust you which is very different from today.

So what do the volunteers do at the Sheriff’s Office? The tasks that they do vary, however, we have positions for people in clerical, fingerprinting, dispatch, crimewatch, fire, records, and that’s just to name a few. Right now, we have nearly 850 volunteers who give their time for our agency. Sheriff Prendergast wants that number to be at 1,000 by the end of 2017.