The saying “time flies when you’re having fun,” is especially true when I look back over the past year and the experiences I’ve had as your sheriff. 2017 was an exceptionally productive year for our agency, and I wanted to share with you some of our many accomplishments as well as tell you some things we have planned for 2018.

Of course, there are way too many things to mention here, but 2017 was a year of achievements for us, such as:

- The largest heroin bust in the agency’s history.
- The largest meth bust in the agency’s history.
- The outstanding emergency management support we delivered before, during, and after the very unpredictable Hurricane Irma.
- The promotion of the agency’s highest ranking female sworn officer to Major.
- The rollout of the agency’s first car that looks like a patrol car and a taxi cab; the initiative was to promote safe driving and discourage drinking and driving.
- The introduction of the agency’s first Safe Exchange Zone at the Emergency Operations Center in Lecanto where people can meet to safely exchange internet purchases.
- The first Business Roundtable was held with local small business owners to determine how the Sheriff’s Office can help area businesses.
- The agency’s aviation unit experienced an overhaul, which had not been done in twenty years, that resulted in a savings to the agency of nearly $200,000.
- Deputies received a pay adjustment (which was the third and final phase of our pay plan) that will hopefully help us retain our highly trained law enforcement officers.
- Roll out of the #JustDriveCitrus campaign to reduce traffic fatalities.
- Implementation of the Special Persons Registry form for those with Autism/Dementia/Alzheimer’s.
- Restructuring of the agency into two major divisions for enhanced leadership and budget efficiencies.

I could go on and on, but I’m quite proud of the many things we accomplished last year, including developing new Mission, Vision and Values statements to guide us for the next five years.

Mission: Excellence in public safety
Vision: Citrus County is the safest community in Florida
Values:  Integrity
                       Service above self
                       Loyalty above all

See MESSAGE page 2
I also expect huge things in 2018, some of which we’ve already accomplished, like the first ever Annual Volunteer Expo in which over 300 people attended to learn about and apply to become volunteers to support our mission. In that single, four-hour timeframe, we handed out 244 applications and processed 66 applications on site. Our volunteer program is booming thanks to Senior Services Coordinator Lee Alexander and members of our Community Relations team.

We also plan to:
- Hold our first ever Church Leaders Roundtable to discuss how we can better serve our churches.
- Review traffic signal timing for large-scale evacuations (like Hurricane Irma).
- Hold the first ever Law Enforcement Summit to Protect Seniors.
- Revamp patrol shifts to obtain better efficiency, effectiveness and meet the needs of our growing community with better response and coverage.
- Digitalize our Filtering Out Crime United with Students (FOCUS) booklets for the tech savvy generation of youth.
- Continue to engage our residents and visitors utilizing a variety of social media outlets.

And much, much more.

As you can tell, there are very exciting things happening at your Sheriff’s Office and we want you to know all about it. So, why not sign up for one of our free Citizens’ Academy classes that we hold several times a year? To learn more, visit sheriffcitrus.org.

This year, we will forge ahead and continue to make improvements to our procedures and policies all for your enhanced safety. Thank you for supporting us as we continue to serve you, and stay safe out there!

Yours in Service,
Mike Prendergast
Sheriff

Organizational behavior is vital to the function of the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO). Transitioning in the new 2018 year, the agency has made some significant changes other than having Sheriff Mike Prendergast head the agency. CCSO’s mission, vision, and values have evolved for the betterment of the community. Can you recall the agency’s old mission, vision, or values? Probably not, because they were too long, overzealous and did not properly convey the services of the agency to you, the citizen.

Why is this so important? Residents of our county need to understand what CCSO’s mission, visions, and values are so they can understand the agency’s direction and the service that the community will receive under this new course. A mission statement declares the purpose of an organization or agency. This purpose breaks down the complete existence of the organization, its objectives and its function. CCSO’s new mission is simple, “Excellence in Public Safety.”

What this means for you is that new high-energy drive you have witnessed first-hand with CCSO over the past year is not going to fade or wear off. It’s going forward in full force. As Major Linhart declared, “We are going into 2018 with new goals, one of which is to revamp our patrol shifts. We want to increase our efficiency in this capacity so our residents get a better response from our men and women in uniform.”

A new haul in county wide patrol coverage in conjunction with Sheriff Prendergast’s continuing drug crack down will surely put the agency in a prolific position to achieve this new mission.

But a mission cannot stand alone. In order to realign the objectives of CCSO moving forward, the agency has developed a new vision statement, “Citrus County is the safest community in Florida.” Now, you may be thinking, how on earth is this a vision statement? Well for one, this vision boldly lays out what the agency aspires for. If you noticed the repeated use of the term “safe”, then you have detected the focus of the agency. And secondly, the vision provides the path for the agency to operate to further its success. “It’s our long-term view for our county,” Major Vitt explains, “we want to nurture and protect our peaceful environment to make our community the safest it can be for future generations.”

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Because at the end of the day, the only thing that should truly matter is what CCSO does, how they do it, and for whom they do it for; you, the resident and you, the visitor.
HOW SENIORS VS. CRIME CAN HELP YOU

LEON ALEXANDER
Senior Services Coordinator

I often get asked what it is like to deal with all of the different problems brought to the Seniors vs. Crime (SVC) Office. My answer is simple: it is amazing. Of course, that is easy for me to say because I see what is occurring I am not the one handling the cases. However, the volunteers of the SVC Office truly enjoy helping those in need.

Quite often, the people they deal with have tried all their other options and SVC is their last resort. Now we are not able to resolve every problem, but we give it our best. The clients that come to SVC are from all walks of life and are very diverse, but they all have one thing in common—they feel victimized. With that in mind, realize that not every person who comes to our office to complain about a business or some other circumstance has been done wrong.

While the volunteers of the SVC Office are involved in a wide variety of cases, the most common type of case is that of car theft. SVC volunteers are able to help victims get their vehicles back, and sometimes they just need to help in a different way, such as providing emotional support or helping a victim to move on with their life.

Lock Your Doors

Did you know in 2017—91% of vehicle burglaries occurred to cars that were unlocked. While this is not all about dumb drivers, it is a good reminder to keep your doors locked when you are not using your vehicle. It is also important to keep your windows rolled up and not to leave any items in your car that are easily visible.

Limit Distractions While Driving

Driving while distracted is a major cause of accidents. In Citrus County, drivers spend a lot of time in their vehicles, often while engaged in various activities such as talking on the phone, using the GPS, or eating. These distractions can reduce their reaction time and increase the risk of an accident.

Limit Distractions While Driving

It is important to keep your mind focused on the road at all times. If you need to use your phone, stop and park your car in a safe area before making any calls. Similarly, if you need to use your GPS, consider using a hands-free device or wait until you are parked.

SVC Staff

The life of an SVC volunteer can go from quiet to crazy in a split second and they never know what to expect from one day to the next. We are always here to help!

The volunteers of the SVC Office truly enjoy helping those in need. Quite often, the people they deal with have tried all their other options and SVC is their last resort. Now we are not able to resolve every problem, but we give it our best. The clients that come to SVC are from all walks of life and are very diverse, but they all have one thing in common—they feel victimized. With that in mind, realize that not every person who comes to our office to complain about a business or some other circumstance has been done wrong.

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NEW YEAR, NEW PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON

LEE ALEXANDER
Senior Services Coordinator

It’s a New Year and our New Year’s resolution here at the CCSO Senior Services Section is to strive to consistently provide new services that are beneficial to the seniors in our community. Now that may seem like it’s a monumental task, and it is! But the volunteer staff here at the Senior Services Center is up for the challenge and looking forward to serving their fellow citizens.

Now on the horizon we have the STAIR Program. This acronym stands for the Sheriff’s Telephone Assistance and Information Resource. This program is designed to be a link with those individuals that are homebound or have limited outside contact. Individuals in this category will be able to register to receive weekly phone calls (as a minimum) from a CCSO STAIR volunteer who will talk about the topics of interest to the program participant. This allows the homebound individual to have regular contact with someone outside the home who is familiar with the participant’s situation. This program will help homebound individuals to better manage their circumstance while remaining in control of their lives.

Another program to kick-off soon is the Seniors Academy. Based on our highly successful CCSO “Citizens’ Academy”, the concept of the Seniors Academy will be an 8-week class designed to be a link for those looking to volunteer their time. The other is a service provided to the community to enhance their quality of life. This is a simple example of the diversity of the Senior Services Section put into place by Sheriff Prendergast. Therefore, whether you are interested in volunteering your time or learning how not to fall prey to those nasty scammers, the Senior Services Section is the place for you. We look forward to hearing from you!

KIM HELMS
Records Supervisor, Custodian of Records for Citrus County Sheriff’s Office

NEED A RECORD? HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

- The Citrus County Sheriff’s Office has two locations for citizens to be able to obtain copies of offense reports, crash reports, and arrest affidavits.

  - Locations:
    - Citrus County Sheriff’s Office Headquarters
      1 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue
      Inverness, FL 34450-496
    - Citrus County Sheriff’s Office Substation
      Crystal River City Hall
      123 NE Highway 19, Crystal River

- Crash reports are exempt from public record for the first 60 days. Only the parties involved, insurance companies, media, and their legal counsels can obtain a copy. Effective July 2015, FSS 316.066(2)(d) requires the involved party to present a valid driver’s license (or other photographic identification) and complete a written sworn statement (affidavit) prior to obtaining a copy of the crash report during the exemption period. This affidavit states that the involved party will not use any of the information contained in the crash report for commercial solicitation during the exemption period. We have this affidavit available at both records locations.

- Specific victim information for victims of domestic violence, aggravated stalking, aggravated battery, and harassment, is exempt from public record. The exemption only applies to the victim’s addresses, telephone numbers, or personal assets. The information is only exempt for 5 years and then becomes public record.

- Exempt vs Confidential – What is the difference? Information that is exempt has an expiration date, meaning the exempt information is exempt for a defined timeframe. Confidential information is exempt without expiration.

  a) Per FSS 365.171(12)(a), the identity of a 911 caller is exempt AND confidential.

  b) Per FSS 119.071(2)(e) – Confessions: Any information revealing the substance of a confession of a person arrested is exempt from public record, until such time as the criminal case is finally determined by adjudication, dismissal, or other final disposition.

The state has also created statutes for agencies/entities to use if they choose to, to exempt information. One example is FSS 119.071(2)(c)(1), “Open/Active Criminal Investigation Information”. This is Information that can be exempt shall the agency choose to cite the statute. This statute is there for agencies to use to protect and maintain the integrity of their cases for investigation and/or prosecution. The Open/Active Criminal Investigation Information will at some point become public record.