Our future successes can never be achieved without first looking back at the major accomplishments we had the year prior and reviewing the many initiatives we committed ourselves to. As we continue our drive for Excellence in Public Safety by making Citrus County the safest community in Florida, we must say that 2018 allowed us to gain a lot of traction in achieving our mission and vision. During the 2018 year, we experienced some good times, some bad times, and some times that were just all-around groundbreaking experiences.

Last year our personnel really kicked it into high gear, answering your calls for service and upholding their promise to place service above self. Personnel responded to 175,353 total calls for service, ranging from domestic disputes to barricaded wanted subjects. Putting this number into perspective, that’s nearly 500 calls for service per day. Not one of those calls were left unanswered. Moving forward, not one will ever be unanswered.

Despite this enormous volume of calls, our deputy sheriffs still made 6,058 arrests and issued a grand total of 24,692 traffic citations. This is not a feat that was accomplished without the help of our community. Through our collaborative efforts, our office was able to open two additional “Sheriff’s Work Stations,” one located at the Homosassa Civic Association and the other at the Ozello Civic Association. These no-cost locations provide office space for deputies to meet residents, work on reports, and complete paperwork. Nonetheless, our accomplishments are not just limited to the exertions of our Patrol Division but are a collection of efforts from every division here at the Sheriff’s Office. For instance, our Judicial and Juvenile Services Division played a crucial role in the aftermath of the tragedy that occurred in Parkland on February 14, 2018. Without being mandated, we immediately assigned additional sworn personnel to Citrus County’s Public Schools. We also strategically placed marked patrol units at schools as an added safety precaution. After Governor Scott signed Senate Bill 7026 into law, commencing on the first day of the new school year, we added 9 new permanent School Resource Deputy (SRD)
Following the execution of these search warrants, detectives made 106 arrests that carried 130 felony charges and 70 misdemeanor charges.

Likewise, we cannot forget the dedication of our Emergency Operations personnel during Hurricane Michael, where our county experienced heavy rainfall, preparing for a potential life-threatening storm surge, and devastating hurricane conditions. While our emergency operations team was effective in warning residents to prepare for the oncoming storm, and then preparing to have residents take action to evacuate, our county was truly spared the destruction of Hurricane Michael. This was not the case for Bay County and other counties up in the Panhandle of Florida. Knowing the struggles associated with recovery efforts after a major disaster, let alone one of the worst disasters to hit the state in recent memory, the dedicated men and women of CCSO did not shy away from lending a hand to our neighbors up north. Through significant danger, hazardous conditions, and hours of utter darkness, members of our Sheriff’s Mutual Aid Response Team (S.M.A.R.T.) worked tirelessly to ensure the residents of Bay County were safe as they labored through recovery and started the rebuilding process.

It is the incredible achievements from 2018 that push us forward and encourages us to strive for excellence every day. The significant accomplishments by the many dedicated, unsung heroes found throughout the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office help make the mission come together seamlessly. From Special Operations, Financial Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, and our Education and Professional Standards divisions, this world-class team enthusiastically embraces the broad ranging challenges we encounter every day. This year, we will continue ahead, making improvements to our operations and branching out to see how we can better serve our community. Stay safe out there, Citrus, and we look forward to serving you!

Thank you for your support.

Yours in Service,
Sheriff, Citrus County Sheriff’s Office

On February 2, 2019, we hosted our Second Annual Volunteer Recruitment Expo, at the Realtors Association in Lecanto. We had a variety of tables set up for potential volunteers to browse and see what area within the Sheriff’s Office they would like to volunteer in, ranging from our community patrol units to receptionist positions, and even volunteer dispatchers. During our expo, we had approximately 108 visitors and received 32 applications on the spot!

We rely heavily on the generosity of our volunteers and thank them for what they do every day to serve the great residents of Citrus County. In 2018 alone, our volunteers donated 80,384 hours of their time to help our mission. That’s an estimated value of $1.98 million dollars!

Have some free time on your hands? Volunteer with us! With a large variety of positions available, we are sure to have something for everyone’s skill set! Visit our website at sheriffcitrus.org and click on the quick link ‘Volunteer Services’ to learn more about what you can do for your community! Or contact Senior Services Coordinator, Lee Alexander at (352) 527-3701 or via email at lalexander@sheriffcitrus.org for more information.

**Cannabis $43,473.21**
**Cannabis Wax $2,367.86**
**Cannabis Plants $100,875.00**
**Cocaine $76,607.14**
**Crack Cocaine $14,717.86**
**Heroin $11,293.75**
**Methamphetamine $17,570.00**
**Pharmaceutical Tablets $12,270.00**

Total Street Value $283,786.07
This past January at our Citrus County Sheriff’s Office award’s ceremony, we recognized some of our amazing, hardworking employees. These employees are dedicated to making Citrus County the safest community in Florida. There were upwards of 60 awards presented, however, we wanted to highlight a handful of our award recipients to show how immensely proud we are of their level of commitment to keeping the citizens of Citrus County safe.

We presented our Forensics Unit with a Unit Citation award as special recognition for their dedication and steadfast commitment in the performance of their duties. On September 28, 2018, in extreme weather and unwarrantable conditions, our Forensics Unit showed resilient determination, dependability, as well as superior performance while documenting and processing a crime scene which included a shallow grave.

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Our SWAT Team also received a Unit Citation award in recognition of their commitment to excellence in public safety, specifically on September 18, 23, and 27 in 2018. Their willingness to be called upon in dangerous situations involving an elderly man with Alzheimer’s who shot at his wife, an armed suicidal man refusing assistance, and even apprehending a hidden, felony subject. Their persistent dedication to the citizens of Citrus County’s safety will never be forgotten and we truly cannot thank you enough for your selfless service.

The Medal of Distinction Award was proudly presented to Deputy Matthew Steelfox. He was given this award in recognition of his leadership displayed on October 19, 2017, after arriving on scene to an armed, suicidal subject. Steelfox exemplified quick actions to defuse the situation at hand and ensure the safety of his fellow deputy.

Lastly, we honored Deputy Robert Ferguson with our Medal of Valor Award; the highest award one can receive. This award was presented in recognition of his performance on, October 19, 2017, in the face of imminent danger. Ferguson had the strength of mind to sacrifice his own well-being to protect a fellow deputy from an armed suspect, who was trying to kill him. His courage and performance in the face of danger is remarkable.

We truly are proud of each and every individual for all of the accomplishments they’ve made. We have no doubt they will continue to keep the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office’s mission and vision to selflessly serve the citizens of Citrus County with honor and dedication.

In addition to our own awards, former Florida Governor Rick Scott included a letter to say THANK YOU to all of our deputies and CCSO personnel for their humanitarian service before, during, and after Hurricane Michael. Governor Scott was grateful for our dedication to keeping Florida safe.

A PROUD PARTNER OF HEALTHY KIDS DAY

On Saturday, April 27, 2019, the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office will be partnering with the YMCA of the Suncoast to host a FREE community event called Healthy Kids Day. The YMCA’s Healthy Kids Day is a national initiative to improve families’ health and well-being, a mission we are proud to be a part of.

This community event features games, healthy cooking demonstrations, arts and crafts and more to motivate and teach families how to develop a healthy routine at home. Members of the Sheriff’s Office will be present to teach some tips on bicycle safety, pedestrian safety, boating safety, and much more!

Comments from citizens-

Paula Budge said, “I was so happy to see my granddaughter (age 5) having this memorable experience with her daddy. They had a great time. Thank you for hosting such a wonderful day for them.”

Anne Morrison Campbell said, “So glad my granddaughter and her beloved daddy got to share this special time together. It is in the Army and plans are so uncertain a memory for both of them to treasure for always. Your kindness made a difference in many lives. Thank you.”

Dawn Citrus said, “Absolutely wonderful this will be a memory that none of them will ever forget, how precious!”

Put Away Your Dancing Shoes until Next Year’s Dance

The Citrus County Sheriff’s Office’s first annual ‘My First Dance’ event was a complete success!

‘My First Dance’ was a community driven effort to raise funds to send local children to the Citrus Springs Community Center. Tickets for the dance were only $10, with all of the proceeds benefitting our local children’s advocacy center, Jessie’s Place. Jessie’s Place is a warm and welcoming place for children who are victims of abuse/neglect begin their road to recovery.

The dance had a fantastic turnout with 204 people in attendance, where we were able to raise $3,351.55 for Jessie’s Place. Aside from raising money for this great cause, ‘My First Dance’ was an amazing opportunity for fathers and daughters to experience a once in a lifetime, bonding moment; creating a beautiful memory which will surely resonate with them forever.

The dance included a live DJ, photo booth, light refreshments, and much more! An enormous thank you to ALL of our sponsors and everyone who dedicated their time to put in the hard work necessary to make this event the success it was. A huge thank you to everyone who came out! If you missed My First Dance this year, do not worry! My First Dance will be a part of every Summer Break. Our office will be hosting the dance again next year. You definitely don’t want to miss out on this wonderful experience with your daughter!

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Visit our website, sherifficitrus.org or follow us on Facebook @ SheriffCitrus to stay up-to-date on news and upcoming events.

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During this event, we hope to inspire kids to keep their families healthy and well-being, a mission we are proud to be a part of.

While there will be plenty of toys and giveaway prizes to go around, the most important thing that will be given during this event is information that can save lives. Our aim is to get more kids moving and learning, so they can keep up these habits during the upcoming summer break. Working together, we can help keep our community safe.

You don’t have to be a member of the YMCA to join us for Healthy Kids Day. We welcome all ages of abundances to partake in this day of fun and safety!
The 2019 Atlantic basin hurricane season is fast approaching and the time to prepare is now. I cannot emphasize enough; the time to prepare is now. An important part of that preparation is to register for our mass notification service, Alert Citrus. You may receive severe weather warnings and safety hazards through voice, text, or email. It is easy to sign up and the cost is free.

To further prepare you for the 2019 hurricane season, the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office, Division of Emergency Operations, will be hosting our 16th Annual All Hazards and Hurricane Expo at the Crystal River Armory on May 11, 2019 from 9am-1pm. We will have vendors available who can help you prepare your home for the upcoming season. Re-entry tags will be available and provided by Citrus County Sheriff’s Office Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT) members. We will have prizes, CCSO emergency response equipment, and safety demonstrations. We have collaborated with the Citrus County Department of Health and the Center for Independent Living for a special presentation on hurricane preparedness for the vulnerable and disabled population. This special presentation will begin at 11:30. You will not want to miss this!

As we move closer to the beginning of hurricane season and during Hurricane Preparedness Week, May 5-11, look for articles that will cover a number of topics to help you be prepared. Topics that include how to determine your homes risk for damage; developing an evacuation plan for yourself, your family and your business; what type of disaster supplies should be on hand; securing an insurance checkout; what steps to take to strengthen your home; and completing a written hurricane plan. The time to prepare for a hurricane season is BEFORE the season begins. This is the optimal time to get things in order. For more information, please visit sheriffcitrus.org and click on the Emergency Management tab. Be Alert Citrus! #PlanAheadCitrus