TALLAHASSEE STATE COLLEGE
HEROES IN PUBLIC SAFETY

THE 7TH ANNUAL HEROES IN PUBLIC SAFETY BANQUET

MAY 13, 2026

PRESENTED BY

LOYALTY
CREDIT UNION
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AMERICA 250 FLORIDA

Welcome to the seventh annual Heroes in Public Safety Awards Banquet.

This evening reflects Tallahassee State College's enduring commitment to honoring the men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities. Tonight, we recognize individuals whose leadership, courage, and service have made a significant impact on the public safety profession.

This program celebrates heroes who studied at Tallahassee State College, trained at the Florida Public Safety Institute, including the Pat Thomas Law Enforcement Academy, or prepared for careers in healthcare at the Ghazvini Center for Healthcare Education. Many began their journeys at institutions that are now part of TSC, and we proudly recognize them as members of our alumni family.

Throughout the evening, we will induct new members into the Heroes in Public Safety Hall of Fame, present the Lifetime Achievement Award, recognize recipients of the Chris Connell Merit Award, and honor the valued partners who support the vital work of our public safety professionals.

2026 HEROES IN PUBLIC SAFETY BANQUET PROGRAM

Opening.....**Chris Edwards**
President, TSC Foundation

Invocation

Remarks from the Title Sponsor ..... **Loyalty Credit Union**

Remarks from the College ..... **Dr. Jim Murdaugh**
President, Tallahassee State College

Student Scholarship Recipient Remarks

Presentation of Awards

Closing

CHRIS CONNELL MERIT AWARDS



The Chris Connell Merit Awards honor the legacy of a leader who believed deeply in recognizing the dedication and bravery of public safety professionals at every level. Chris Connell served as Director of the Florida Capitol Police following a distinguished 28-year career with the Tallahassee Police Department. He was also a valued member of the Steering Committee for the Heroes in Public Safety Program until his passing in October 2019.

Chris was a passionate advocate for ensuring that rank and file public safety personnel were seen, valued, and celebrated. In recognition of his unwavering commitment to those who quietly and courageously serve our community, these awards proudly bear his name. Recipients of the Chris Connell Merit Award exemplify exceptional service, professionalism, and courage in the line of duty.

Awards are presented in the following categories:

Incident Awards: Presented to individuals who demonstrated exemplary performance or acts of bravery within the past year.

Unsung Heroes: Honoring individuals whose outstanding contributions over the past year may not always be seen, but whose impact is deeply felt.

Young Professionals: Recognizing those early in their careers who demonstrate extraordinary commitment, professionalism, and service beyond what is typically expected of someone new to the field.

INCIDENT AWARD HONOREES

William "Bucky" Buckhalt,

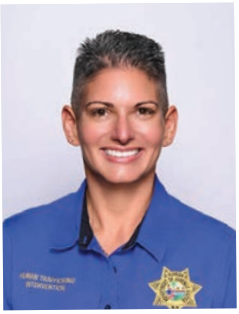
Liberty County Sheriff's Office



A dedicated North Florida law enforcement professional, William "Bucky" Buckhalt built his career on a professional dedication to service and community safety. He began as a dispatcher in 2016 before moving into corrections and later completing law enforcement training at the Florida Public Safety Institute. Since joining the Liberty County Sheriff's Office in 2020, he has advanced to the rank of Lieutenant, where he oversees personnel and daily operations with a focus on professionalism and proactive policing. Known for steady leadership and effective incident management, he prioritizes community trust and public safety. Outside of work, he is a devoted husband to Sam and father to their son, Will.

Katherine Gomez,

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice



With nearly two decades of statewide leadership experience, Katherine C. Gomez, PhD, serves as Director of Human Trafficking Intervention for the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. Since joining the agency in 2006, she has advanced through roles including Juvenile Probation Officer, trainer, analyst, researcher, and senior administrator. Gomez holds degrees from the University of Florida and the University of South Florida, as well as a PhD in Public Affairs from the University of Central Florida. A graduate of the FDLE Senior Leadership Program, she specializes in human trafficking response, juvenile sexual behavior cases, and trauma-informed, evidence-based youth interventions.

Ryan Livingston,

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



With a strong record of service since joining the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in 2017, K-9 Officer Ryan Livingston serves the communities of Polk, Hardee, and DeSoto counties with dedication. For the past five years, he has excelled as a K-9 handler, deploying his partner for tracking, wildlife detection, and evidence recovery in support of critical investigations and search-and-rescue missions. His commitment extends beyond routine duty, including multiple hurricane deployments and service along the U.S.–Mexico border as part of Operation Lone Star. Guided by professionalism and a strong sense of duty, he continues to make a meaningful impact on the communities he serves.

Garret McLemore,

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



Serving with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Garret McLemore brings professionalism, integrity, and a strong commitment to public service to every assignment. Throughout his career, he has worked to protect Florida's natural resources while ensuring the safety of the communities he serves. Known for steady leadership and a strong work ethic, he supports a wide range of conservation and law enforcement efforts, from resource protection to public outreach. He remains committed to continued growth and service, making a meaningful impact within FWC and across Florida's diverse outdoor landscapes.

Bryson Mohr,

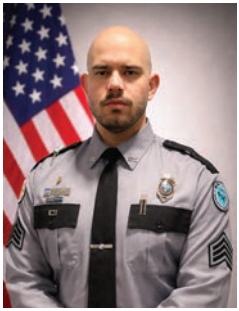
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



A Tallahassee native, Charles Bryson Mohr graduated from Lawton Chiles High School and Tallahassee Community College before pursuing his passion for the outdoors through a career with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. He joined FWC as a Law Enforcement Dispatcher in 2022 and was recently recognized as the 2026 Statewide Duty Officer of the Year. Outside of work, Bryson enjoys spending time in the woods and on the water, and he volunteers with underprivileged youth camps and wounded warrior hunts, helping ensure outdoor traditions are passed on in a safe and ethical manner.

Wyatt Murray,

Florida Department of Corrections



Serving with the Florida Department of Corrections since 2015, Sergeant Wyatt Murray is a committed law enforcement professional known for his discipline, leadership, and dedication to public safety. A Homestead native, he built his career on responsibility and service, including serving as a backup K-9 Sergeant at the South Florida Reception Center from 2018 to 2025, where he supported multi-agency operations and responded to specialized needs at all hours. In February 2025, he became the Primary K-9 Sergeant at Dade Correctional Institution, where he leads specialized K-9 units and oversees critical security functions. Known for steady leadership and a calm presence under pressure, Sergeant Murray continues to serve with integrity and dedication.

Benjamin Norbrothen,

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



With more than a decade of service to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Officer Benjamin Norbrothen is a dedicated law enforcement professional with extensive experience in both maritime and inland operations. He began his career conducting offshore patrols out of Jupiter, focusing on maritime enforcement, boating safety, and coastal resource protection, before transitioning to inland patrol in Palm Beach County, where he expanded his expertise to wildlife enforcement and wilderness operations. Now serving on Lake Okeechobee, he continues to uphold FWC's conservation mission. An avid outdoorsman, he enjoys hunting and fishing across North America and values time spent on the water and traveling with his wife and family.

Cody Poppell,

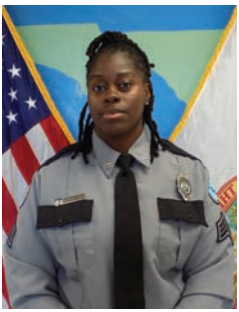
Florida State University Police Department



Officer Cody Poppell is a highly dedicated member of the Florida State University Police Department, recognized for his courage, professionalism, and commitment to protecting the FSU community. With years of service in campus law enforcement, he has demonstrated exceptional bravery, most notably during the 2025 FSU shooting, where he confronted the gunman while advancing toward danger on his police motorcycle, an action credited with saving lives. Known for his steady judgment and strong sense of duty, Officer Poppell continues to serve the university with integrity, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to public safety.

Safiya Richards,

Florida Department of Corrections



A resilient and driven professional, Sergeant Safiya Richards has built her career on determination, leadership, and a commitment to growth. As the first in her family to attend and graduate from college, she earned her associate degree, laying the foundation for her future success. She began her career as a correctional officer at Martin Correctional Institution in January 2022 and quickly distinguished herself through her dedication and strength. Through perseverance and a willingness to learn, she advanced to Reentry Sergeant, where she oversees two housing units and mentors both staff and inmates. Known for her discipline, empathy, and passion for helping others, Sergeant Richards continues to lead with purpose and integrity.

Aubrey Stanley,

Florida Department of Corrections



A former United States Marine, Aubrey Stanley served from 2017 to 2020 as an Amphibious Assault Vehicle Mechanic at Camp Lejeune, rising to the rank of Corporal and serving as Maintenance Chief for Bravo Company, 2nd Platoon. After completing his military service, he returned to Florida, working as an equipment transporter for Ag-Pro, gaining experience in structural concrete construction, and later excelling in customer service as a Lead Associate at Wawa in Gainesville. In September 2023, he joined the Reception and Medical Center, where his strong work ethic and commitment to growth led to his promotion to Environmental Health and Safety Officer.

Julio Torres,

Florida Highway Patrol



With a career spanning more than a decade, Sergeant Julio F. Torres has served with the Florida Highway Patrol since 2013, beginning as a State Trooper in Troop F in Sarasota County. He holds an associate degree in business administration from Broward Community College, reflecting his commitment to professional growth. In 2015, he became a Traffic Homicide Investigator, serving in Charlotte County and later in the Davie District for five years. Promoted to Sergeant in 2021, he now serves in Troop L in Fort Pierce. Known for his courage, mentorship, and meticulous investigative skills, Sergeant Torres exemplifies the highest standards of the Florida Highway Patrol.

UNSUNG HERO AWARD HONOREES

Robert Clary,

Tallahassee Fire Department



Inspired by the events of 9/11, Fire Captain Robert Clary began his career in public safety after completing the inaugural Tallahassee Community College Fire Academy and joining the Tallahassee Fire Department in 2008. Now serving as Captain of Public Education, he has led recruitment efforts, developed the department's mentoring program, and advanced community risk reduction through school outreach, senior center education, and initiatives like "Lunch Buddies." He also founded the Juvenile Fire Setter Program and leads the department's car seat installation team. A Tallahassee native and Leon High School graduate, he holds a bachelor's degree in fire administration and fire investigation from Columbia Southern University. Through his leadership and commitment to prevention and education, Captain Clary continues to make a meaningful impact on the community he serves.

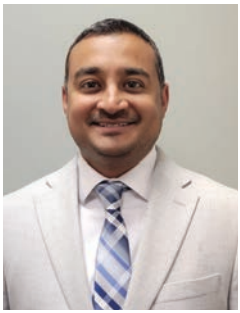
Jerry Cooper,

Florida Department of Corrections

With more than a decade of service at the Florida Department of Corrections' Northwest Florida Reception Center, Jerry "Kelt" Cooper has built a career grounded in discipline, responsibility, and service. Since joining the agency in 2008, he has earned a reputation for professionalism, resilience, and steady leadership, consistently demonstrating sound judgment and calm under pressure. He approaches each day as an opportunity to support his team, maintain secure operations, and lead by example. Kelt credits much of his growth to the dedicated colleagues who have shaped his career and remains deeply grateful for the unwavering support of his family, which keeps him grounded and motivated.

Aby George,

Florida Department of Law Enforcement



Special Agent Aby George began his law enforcement career in 2011 with the University of Florida Police Department, serving in patrol, the Critical Incident Response Team, and the Criminal Investigations Division, where he investigated felony crimes on university property. In 2015, he joined FDLE's Tampa Bay Regional Operations Center, where he conducted long-term, multi-jurisdictional organized crime investigations. In 2020, he transitioned to the Cyber High Tech Crimes Squad, focusing on Internet Crimes Against Children and leading a major undercover case that uncovered a global CSAM network. In 2025, SA George was selected for the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, where he now investigates terrorism-related threats.

Lakiela Johnson-Barnes,

Florida Department of Corrections

Serving with the Florida Department of Corrections, Lakiela Johnson-Barnes is known for her strong work ethic, leadership, and commitment to public service. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated professionalism, integrity, and the ability to navigate the demanding corrections environment with confidence and compassion. She is respected for her reliability, her willingness to support her team, and her focus on maintaining safety and accountability. Approaching each day with purpose, she strives to make a positive impact on both staff and inmates while continuing to grow in service to the department's mission.

Kyle Jones,

Florida Department of Law Enforcement



With nearly 15 years of law enforcement experience, including a decade with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Inspector Kyle Jones has built a career defined by service and specialized expertise. He began his career in 2012 with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office before joining FDLE in 2016, where he served on the Governor's Protection Detail for Governors Rick Scott and Ron DeSantis. He later worked in the Protective Intelligence Unit, conducting threat assessments, and, in 2022, transferred to the Enforcement and Investigative Support Unit, where he developed a passion for enforcing Florida's registration laws. A graduate of Florida State University, he is a devoted husband and father who enjoys spending time with his family, golfing, and collecting challenge coins.

Elizabeth Kamerick,

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



Serving as Accreditation Manager for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Elizabeth Kamerick brings deep expertise in law enforcement accreditation, property and evidence operations, and organizational compliance. She oversees agency compliance with CFA and NAWLEA standards and provides statewide guidance on accreditation practices. Her career includes service as an Internal Auditor with FDLE's Office of Inspector General and more than a decade in property and evidence management across multiple agencies. She holds an associate degree in applied science degrees in criminal justice technology and crime scene investigations, as well as a bachelor's degree in anthropology.

Tony Long,

Florida Department of Corrections



Tony Long has served at Apalachee Correctional Institution since 1990, dedicating 35 years to the field of corrections. His career has been shaped by countless real-world challenges that strengthened his judgment, resilience, and commitment to safety and fairness. In 2023, he received the Legacy Award, recognizing decades of unwavering service and professionalism. Tony credits his growth to the colleagues who have stood beside him and the family whose support keeps him grounded. Honored to receive the Chris Conell Merit Award, he remains fully committed to his duties and looks forward to continuing his service with pride and dedication.

Joshua Martin,

Tallahassee Leon County Dispatch Agency



Following service in the United States Navy from 2008 to 2012 and in the Navy Reserve through 2015, Joshua Martin built a strong foundation in technical expertise and discipline as an Aviation Electronics Technician with VFA-213 and VR-58, serving as a final checker aboard the USS George H. W. Bush. After earning an associate degree from Tallahassee State College and completing training at the Florida Public Safety Institute, he joined the Tallahassee-Leon County Consolidated Dispatch Agency in 2016. Since then, he has served as a Communications Training Officer, Professional Development Coordinator, and Shift Supervisor, contributing to the agency's DFR program. He holds a bachelor's degree in homeland security and, outside of work, enjoys time with his wife and two children while remaining active in CrossFit and youth sports.

Tammy Pinkerton,

Tallahassee Police Department



Specializing in financial crimes, Detective Tammy Pinkerton serves in the Criminal Investigations Bureau at the Tallahassee Police Department, where she is known for her analytical skill, strong work ethic, and commitment to community service. After earning her associate's degree from Tallahassee Community College in 2018, she graduated from the Florida Public Safety Institute in 2019 as a Tallahassee Police Department–sponsored recruit and served in patrol before becoming a detective.
Drawing on more than 20 years of experience in banking, investigations, data analytics, and fraud detection, she has twice been named Property Crimes Detective of the Year. She also holds multiple professional certifications. Outside of work, she values family, faith, and time spent outdoors.

Collier Stephens,

Florida Highway Patrol



Beginning his career in July 2024 as a State Law Enforcement Dispatcher at the Florida Highway Patrol's Jacksonville Regional Communications Center, Collier Stephens quickly became a vital link between the public and eight state law enforcement agencies. He was nominated multiple times for Dispatcher of the Quarter, earning the award in the third quarter of 2025. Now pursuing his goal of becoming a Florida Highway Patrol State Trooper, he entered the FHP Academy in January 2026 and will serve in Duval County upon graduation. A second-generation trooper, Collier embodies courtesy, service, and protection and, outside of work, enjoys fitness, golfing, fishing, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.

Roger Thomas,

Florida Highway Patrol



Beginning his career with the Florida Highway Patrol in 2002 as a member of the 100th Recruit Class, Sergeant Roger Thomas Jr. first served in Troop D in Orlando before transferring to Troop G. After seven years as a Trooper, he was promoted to Sergeant in 2009, where he led the Troop G Motors Unit in Special Operations. Known for his professionalism, humility, and passion for FHP Motors, he has built strong relationships across the state. He holds an Associate of Arts in Biblical Studies and currently serves as the statewide motor unit commander, instructor, and coordinator of major escorts, including the return of fallen Trooper Michael Diego.

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD HONOREES

Ra'Sheema Benjamin,

FDLE Capitol Police

A member of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Capitol Police, Ra'Sheema Benjamin is known for her professionalism, strong work ethic, and commitment to public safety. She plays a vital role in protecting Florida's Capitol Complex, ensuring the safety of state employees, visitors, and elected officials. Respected for her calm presence and sound judgment, she navigates high-pressure situations with confidence and integrity while remaining a dependable and supportive member of her team. Her reliability and service-oriented mindset reflect a deep commitment to the mission of Capitol Police.

Carmen Finn,

Tallahassee Leon County Dispatch Agency



Carmen Finn has served with the Consolidated Dispatch Agency since 2016, where she quickly distinguished herself as a leader. She became a Communications Training Officer in 2018, advanced to Shift Supervisor in 2024, and was promoted to Shift Commander in 2025. Now serving as CTO Commander, she oversees agency-wide training and ensures consistent, high-quality instruction. Passionate about professional development, she is committed to structured coaching and continuous improvement. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, traveling, and spending meaningful time with family and friends.

Patrick Fleming,

Florida Department of Law Enforcement



Patrick Fleming is recognized for his integrity, strong work ethic, and steady commitment to public safety. Throughout his career at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, he has supported the agency's mission through meticulous investigative work, dependable leadership, and a focus on service to Florida's citizens. Known for his professionalism and collaborative approach, he navigates complex situations with sound judgment and composure. His focus on continuous improvement and high operational standards reflects the core values of FDLE and his dedication to protecting communities across the state.

Deonte Hutchinson,

Tallahassee Police Department



Rooted in Wakulla County for more than 30 years, Deonte Hutchinson has dedicated 13 years to a career in law enforcement built on community trust, mentorship, and service. Raised in a family deeply connected to public service, he developed a strong sense of duty early in life. He is passionate about youth development, having coached football at Wakulla Recreation Park and mentored young athletes both on and off the field. A devoted husband and father of three, he has contributed more than 700 volunteer hours and remains committed to strengthening the community he calls home.

Lee Kendall,

Leon County EMS



Lee Kendall's career began as a Patient Care Assistant before discovering his passion for pre-hospital medicine. After joining Leon County EMS in 2017 as an EMT, he earned the Community Service Award in 2020 and was named Florida's EMT of the Year in 2021. He completed Paramedic training at Tallahassee State College, and advanced into roles as a Field Training Officer, Paramedic Preceptor, Systems Controller, and Peer Support Team Leader. Lee has trained more than 1,000 citizens in CPR and remains deeply committed to operational excellence, mental wellness, and community service.

Michael Kope,

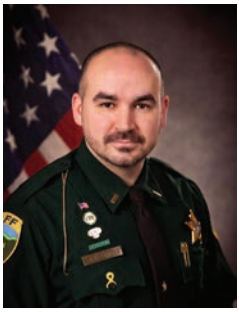
Florida Highway Patrol



Relocating from Pittsburgh to pursue a career in law enforcement, Trooper Michael Kope joined the Florida Highway Patrol in 2019. A graduate of Slippery Rock University with a degree in criminal justice, he was a collegiate football letterman, two-year starter, PSAC Scholar Athlete, and contributor to multiple conference championships. Since joining FHP, he has focused on removing impaired drivers from Florida's roadways and is certified as an SFST Instructor, Drug Recognition Expert, and Field Training Officer. Selected for the Troop F Elite DUI Squad in 2024, he also coaches high school football and lives with his wife, Kacie, and their two Rottweilers.

James Pittman,

Leon County Sheriff's Office



Serving with the Leon County Sheriff's Office, Captain James Pittman has built a career defined by leadership, innovation, and a commitment to professional excellence. Rising through the ranks from patrol, he has developed expertise in critical incident management, operational planning, and agency-wide program development. He is widely recognized for advancing modern policing practices, particularly through his partnership with Florida State University on de-escalation research and training. His work has strengthened transparency, accountability, and evidence-based strategies. Known for his collaborative leadership and dedication to mentorship, Captain Pittman remains committed to developing future law enforcement leaders and shaping the evolving landscape of policing.

Christopher Wilson,

Florida Department of Corrections



A native of Sneads, Florida, Christopher Wilson earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Florida A&M University in 2014 and began his career with the Florida Department of Corrections in 2015 as a Correctional Officer at Apalachee Correctional Institution, where he served as President of his Basic Recruit Class. After completing his crossover in 2017, he advanced into probation, serving as a Sergeant, Mental Health Probation Officer, and now as a Correctional Probation Specialist and Court Officer in Franklin County. A certified Defensive Tactics, Firearms, and First Aid/CPR Instructor, he also teaches at the Florida Public Safety Institute. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with family, fitness, and traveling.

PUBLIC SAFETY PARTNER AWARD

The Public Safety Partner Award recognizes outstanding private sector partners who work alongside public safety agencies to address community needs and strengthen public safety efforts. This award honors individuals or organizations whose collaboration, support, and commitment make a meaningful and lasting impact on local public safety agencies and the communities they serve.

Recipients exemplify the power of partnership—demonstrating how collaboration beyond the badge plays a vital role in protecting, supporting, and enhancing the well being of our community.

PUBLIC SAFETY PARTNER AWARD HONOREES

Mr. and Mrs. Barbree,

Bar 5 C Farms



A family-owned farm in Wakulla County, Bar 5 C Farms is recognized for its generous partnership and steadfast support of local public safety agencies. Through ongoing collaboration, Mr. and Mrs. Barbree have strengthened community engagement, wellness initiatives, and outreach efforts that benefit both first responders and the communities they serve. Their commitment reflects the vital role of private sector partners in advancing public safety and building stronger, more connected communities.

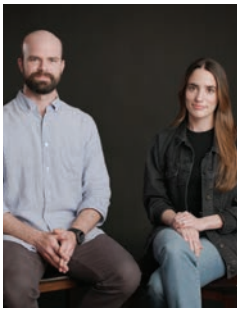
Gail Dunmyer,

HCA Capital Hospital (RETIRED)



Gail Dunmyer has dedicated 46 years to healthcare and emergency services, including pioneering roles that helped shape paramedic integration into hospital emergency departments in Florida. As HCA Florida Capital Hospital's EMS Outreach and Relations leader, she strengthened the connection between pre-hospital care and hospital systems, advancing patient care through innovation, education, and collaboration. In 2020, she received HCA's prestigious Frist Humanitarian Award for her extraordinary service during the COVID-19 pandemic and her lifelong commitment to community, EMS, and veterans' causes.

Level Up Digital Media



Through impactful storytelling and creative collaboration, Level Up Digital Media has played a key role in supporting public safety initiatives across the community. Through strategic media partnerships, the company has amplified public awareness, supported critical safety campaigns, and strengthened connections between agencies and the citizens they serve. Their work highlights the power of communication and creativity in advancing public safety and fostering stronger community relationships.

Danette McBride,

GO L.I.V.E.



Through her leadership with GO L.I.V.E., Danette McBride is recognized for her commitment to community mentorship and public safety partnerships. Her work empowers youth, supports prevention efforts, and strengthens collaboration between community organizations and public safety agencies. Her dedication continues to build stronger connections and create meaningful opportunities for the communities she serves.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving Northwest Florida

MADD
IMPAIRED DRIVING ENDS HERE.

A longstanding partner in the effort to reduce impaired driving, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Northwest Florida is recognized for its collaboration with local law enforcement and its support of victims. Through education, outreach, and joint enforcement efforts, MADD has played a vital role in advancing roadway safety and increasing community awareness. Their continued commitment reflects the powerful impact of partnership in protecting lives and strengthening public safety.

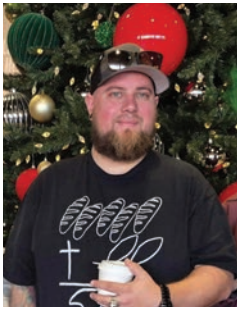
Christy Phillips,

Country Feed Store



A dedicated member of the Leon County Sheriff's Office Livestock Team, Christy Phillips is recognized for her strong partnership with local public safety agencies. Her advocacy and support strengthen agricultural safety, enhance emergency response efforts, and expand outreach in rural communities. Her commitment reflects the important role community partners play in protecting both public safety and the region's agricultural resources.

Mark Stevens



Providing compassionate chaplaincy and pastoral care, Mark Stevens is recognized for his partnership with public safety agencies and his support of those in need. His work offers critical emotional and spiritual guidance to individuals in crisis, as well as to those serving in correctional and community settings. His presence and dedication bring comfort, strength, and connection to both first responders and the communities they serve.

Father Gene Willis

For decades, Father Gene Willis has partnered with corrections and public safety agencies to provide pastoral care, guidance, and support within correctional facilities. His service brings dignity, hope, and stability to individuals and communities impacted by the justice system. Through his steady presence and compassionate leadership, he continues to offer comfort and connection to those in need.

PUBLIC SAFETY HALL OF FAME

Induction into the Public Safety Hall of Fame honors individuals whose service and leadership have meaningfully advanced the field of public safety. This distinction recognizes those whose careers reflect sustained excellence, dedication, and a deep commitment to strengthening the communities they serve.

Hall of Fame inductees have made significant contributions through their leadership, innovation, and service at the local, state, or national level. Their impact has helped shape the public safety profession and set a standard of integrity and professionalism for those who follow in their footsteps.

PUBLIC SAFETY HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES CLASS OF 2026

Janet Hartman,

Tallahassee State College, Florida Public Safety Institute



Janet Hartman has made a lasting impact on law enforcement and training across Florida. Rising to the rank of Chief with the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco, she led statewide enforcement operations and regulatory initiatives. In 2023, she was appointed Executive Director of the Florida Public Safety Institute, becoming the first woman to serve in the role. She now oversees critical training programs that serve thousands of public safety professionals, continuing to shape the future of law enforcement and criminal justice education statewide.

Mary Nicholson,

Tallahassee Leon County Dispatch Agency



In her role with the Tallahassee–Leon County Consolidated Dispatch Agency, Mary Patricia Nicholson has provided steady leadership and operational expertise across public safety and higher education. As Employee Services Administrator, she oversees human resources and finance for mission-critical emergency communications. Her career spans senior administrative roles with the Leon County Sheriff's Office and multiple colleges, where she strengthened organizational systems, supported public safety operations, and advanced overall effectiveness through service-driven leadership.

Marty West,

U.S. Marshals Service



Marty West has served more than three decades with the U.S. Marshals Service, specializing in violent fugitive apprehension and multi agency operations. A founding member of the Northern Florida Violent Fugitive Task Force, he advanced to senior leadership and now serves as Deputy Commander of the Florida–Caribbean Regional Fugitive Task Force. He oversees large scale operations coordinating federal, state, and local partners to enhance regional and national public safety.

Mark Wheeler,

Tallahassee Police Department (RETIRED)



A longtime leader in law enforcement and training, Mark Wheeler dedicated more than 40 years to advancing public safety. A 30-year veteran of the Tallahassee Police Department, he served as a lieutenant and held leadership roles in tactical operations, homeland security, training, and special investigations. Following his retirement, he has trained thousands of officers statewide, earning recognition for advancing firearms instruction, officer survivability, and professional policing standards.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Lifetime Achievement Award represents the highest honor of the Heroes in Public Safety Program. This award is reserved for individuals whose distinguished careers reflect a lifetime of leadership, service, and unwavering dedication to the public safety profession.

Lifetime Achievement honorees have made extraordinary contributions through a body of work marked by integrity, sacrifice, and impact. Their leadership has strengthened their organizations, shaped their communities, and advanced the field of public safety, leaving a legacy that will inspire generations to come.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD HONOREES

Robie "Janet" Carter,

Florida Department of Corrections



Few careers reflect the depth of commitment and service exemplified by Robie "Janet" Carter, who dedicated more than 60 years to the Florida Department of Corrections, all at Union Correctional Institution. Throughout her tenure, she held numerous clerical roles and served for decades as a clerical supervisor, earning widespread respect for her institutional knowledge, reliability, and professionalism. Her unwavering dedication across generations of change made her a trusted leader and a steady presence within the institution. Her legacy stands as a remarkable example of lifelong public service and enduring impact.

James Coker,

Florida Department of Corrections



A distinguished leader in corrections, James Coker has built a career spanning more than three decades with the Florida Department of Corrections. Rising through the ranks to serve as Warden and, most recently, Assistant Regional Director of Operations for Region I, he has overseen 19 state and privately operated institutions. His leadership has guided complex operations across close management and mental health facilities while fostering collaboration with more than 35 partner agencies. His career reflects sustained leadership, operational excellence, and an enduring commitment to institutional safety and accountability.

George Creamer, Jr.,

Tallahassee Police Department



George E. Creamer Jr. devoted 30 years to the Tallahassee Police Department, building a career marked by innovation, leadership, and regional collaboration. He served in investigative, supervisory, and executive roles, including leading homicide and persons crimes units, developing the Juvenile Services Unit, and overseeing intelligence, crime analysis, and real-time crime operations. He concluded his service as Co-Director of the Capital Region Real Time Crime Center and Director of the North Florida Fusion Exchange, leaving a lasting impact on public safety collaboration.

Brian Dunmyer,

Tallahassee State College (RETIRED)



A pioneer in Florida's emergency medical services education, Brian Dunmyer dedicated more than five decades to advancing the field as an educator, clinician, and advocate. A U.S. Navy veteran and early paramedic leader, he developed and led one of Florida's first accredited Paramedic Technology programs at then Tallahassee Community College, educating generations of EMTs and paramedics. His enduring legacy is defined by instructional excellence, clinical innovation, and a lifelong commitment to community health and public safety.

Joel "Lee" Majors,

Leon County Sheriff's Office



Advancing aviation and special operations within the Leon County Sheriff's Office, Chief Joel "Lee" Majors has built a career defined by technical expertise and strategic leadership. Rising through the ranks, he commanded the Aviation Bureau and later led the Special Operations Division, overseeing highly specialized teams that support law enforcement across the region. A nationally recognized aviation professional, his career reflects sustained excellence and a deep commitment to public safety.

Robert Swearingen,

Leon County Sheriff's Office (RETIRED)



Robert Swearingen served the Leon County Sheriff's Office with distinction for 33 years, advancing through every rank of the agency and ultimately serving as Sheriff. His career included extensive leadership in vice and narcotics enforcement, SWAT, hostage negotiations, and agency-wide command during some of the most complex periods in modern law enforcement. A graduate of the FBI National Academy, Sheriff Swearingen is recognized for a career defined by integrity, steady leadership, and an enduring commitment to public service.

Troy Thompson,

Florida Highway Patrol (RETIRED)



Shaping public safety operations at both the state and national levels, Chief Troy L. Thompson has built a career defined by leadership and influence. Rising to Chief of Commercial Vehicle Enforcement and Deputy Director of the Florida Highway Patrol, he led complex statewide operations and helped guide policy development. A nationally recognized expert in commercial motor vehicle and hazardous materials enforcement, his career reflects innovation, strategic leadership, and a lifelong commitment to public safety.

HONORING OUR FALLEN PUBLIC SAFETY HEROES

We honor the memory of the public safety professionals we have lost this past year, paying tribute to lives defined by service, dedication, and a steadfast commitment to protecting and serving our community.

Deputy Sheriff Steven Bruner



Calhoun County Sheriff's Office

End of Watch: March 21, 2026

Deputy Bruner suffered a fatal medical emergency after assisting with the evacuation of residents during the Mossy Pond Fire. The fire covered more than 500 acres, forced widespread evacuations, and displaced dozens of residents. His service during this emergency reflects his dedication to protecting his community.

Deputy Sheriff Jeremy H. Cassady



Escambia County Sheriff's Office

End of Watch: July 15, 2025

Deputy Cassady was seriously injured in 2010 when he was shot while responding to a domestic violence call, an incident that ultimately led to his medical retirement. Following the shooting, he underwent a kidney and pancreas transplant, and later developed cancer linked to the anti-rejection medications required for his treatment. Deputy Cassady served his community for six years with courage and dedication.

Trooper Michael Diego



Florida Highway Patrol

End of Watch: February 18, 2026

Trooper Diego died in the line of duty after suffering a medical emergency while participating in a training exercise at the Florida Highway Patrol Training Academy. He served the Florida Highway Patrol and the citizens of Florida for more than four years, with assignments in Troop L and Troop F, and was a member of the 149th Recruit Class.

Trooper Craig Gaines



Florida Highway Patrol

End of Watch: September 19, 2025

Trooper Craig Gaines passed due to medical complications from a duty-related injury. He served the citizens of Florida with the Florida Highway Patrol for more than 17 years and was a member of the 115th Recruit Class in Tallahassee. Trooper Gaines previously served with the Havana Police Department, the Gadsden County Sheriff's Office, and the U.S. Navy.

Officer James Alexander Jackson



Florida Department of Corrections

End of Watch: August 15, 2025

Officer Jackson passed away at just 31 years old. A resident of Winter Haven, he dedicated his career to serving at Hardee Correctional Institution, where his professionalism, strength, and good nature left a lasting impact on those around him.

Deputy Sheriff Devin Jaramillo



Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office

End of Watch: November 7, 2025

Deputy Jaramillo was fatally shot while responding to a traffic crash, where he was attacked upon arrival. He served his community with the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office for five years and seven months.

Deputy Sheriff Andres Julian "Andy" Lahera



Citrus County Sheriff's Office

End of Watch: September 11, 2025

Deputy Lahera succumbed to injuries sustained on May 23, 2023, when he was struck by a vehicle while directing traffic. He served his community with the Citrus County Sheriff's Office for 14 years.

Sergeant Terri Jean Sweeting-Mashkow



Indian River County Sheriff's Office

End of Watch: November 21, 2025

Sergeant Sweeting-Mashkow was fatally shot while serving an eviction notice when a subject approached and opened fire. She served her community with the Indian River County Sheriff's Office for 25 years.

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