

Sheriff Vent Crawford



Hardee County

Sheriff's Office

Annual



Report



2023

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Message from the Sheriff

Dear Citizens of Hardee County:

It is my pleasure to present the 2023 Hardee County Sheriff's Office Annual Report, showcasing the remarkable accomplishments of our agency throughout the year. In achieving official accreditation in corrections and making significant strides toward securing law enforcement accreditation, we have demonstrated our unwavering commitment to excellence.

Our dedication to public safety is evident through the successful acquisition of funding for a new administrative building thanks to the State of Florida Congressional appropriation. Additionally, support from congressional appropriations for compression pay has allowed us to provide competitive salaries for our deputies, contributing to the overall strength of our team by assisting in the recruitment and retention of our sworn personnel.

In our proactive approach to ensuring public safety, we are grateful for the Department of Transportation Highway Safety grants, enabling us to focus on critical areas such as teen driving education and occupant safety. Additionally, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Safe Grant has further empowered us to offer citizen firearms training and enhance situational shooting training by acquiring a firearms training grant through a shooting simulator.

Securing a \$247,000 FDLE grant has enabled the initiation of a new records management system, benefiting all public safety agencies in the county by replacing an outdated system. Our successful integration of Animal Services over the past year, coupled with the establishment of the Sheriff's Office Foundation and Animal Services Foundation, reflects our commitment to the welfare of our community and its animal residents.

As a lifelong resident, I am deeply invested in the safety and future of Hardee County. The progress outlined in this report is a testament to the dedication of our exceptional team. I am honored to serve as the Hardee County Sheriff and immensely proud to work alongside our office's dedicated men and women, who tirelessly strive to provide safety and service to our residents.

Our primary goals remain transparency, professionalism, and continual improvement through accreditation, enhanced training opportunities, and securing adequate funding. The 2023 Annual Report encapsulates our commitment to our guiding principle: Duty to Protect - Honor to Serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vincent 'Vent' Crawford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Vincent" and the last name "Crawford" clearly visible.

Vincent "Vent" Crawford
Sheriff - Hardee County



Mission, Vision, and Values

"Duty to Protect - Honor to Serve"



MISSION

The mission of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office is to serve our community with professionalism, honor, and dignity.

VISION

Our shared vision is to enhance the quality of life within our community by fostering partnerships, providing training, and ensuring the viability of the Sheriff's Office by identifying and meeting new challenges.

VALUES

WE ARE COMMITTED
TO...

PROFESSIONALISM
RESPECT
INTEGRITY
DIVERSITY
EQUITY





Administration



Vincent "Vent" Crawford
Sheriff



Colonel James "Chip"
Roberts, EdD
Undersheriff



Captain David Drake
Law Enforcement
Bureau Commander



Captain Sylvia DeLaTorre
Detention Bureau
Commander



Lt. Tom Andrews
Administrative Services
Division Commander



Lt. Will Cartwright
Detention Division
Commander



Lt. Jim Hall
Uniform Patrol
Division Commander



Lt. Clay Nicholson
Investigative Services
Division Commander



Lt. Nathan Woody
Support Services
Division Commander

Agency Demographics

55%
Male

45%
Female

78
Total
Sworn

34
Total
Civilian



78 Sworn Deputies

1 Sheriff 5 Lieutenants
1 Colonel 12 Sergeants
2 Captains 8 Corporals

49 Deputies
(Law Enforcement & Detention)

34 Civilian Employees

Records Finance
Accreditation
911 Telecommunications
Public Safety Aids
Human Resources



Additional Demographics



70% - Caucasian



7% - African American



20% - Hispanic



3% - Other



Volunteers

10
Posse
Members





2023-24 Budget

The Financial Office of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office consists of two full-time employees who are responsible for providing support to manage ad-valorem tax dollars provided by the county for the total operations of the agency.

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office's fiscal year 2023-24 budget was \$14,294,168. This amount breaks down to \$9,397,785 for law enforcement expenditures (66%), \$3,981,146 for detention expenditures (28%), \$600,091 for court service expenditures (4%), and \$397,639.69 for animal services expenditures (2%).

Law Enforcement:
\$9,397,785

Personnel: \$7,834,765
Operating: \$1,563,020

Detention:
\$3,981,146

Personnel:
\$2,984,150
Operating: \$996,996

Court Services (Civil):
\$600,091

Personnel: \$477,662
Operating: \$122,429

Animal Services:
\$397,639.69

Personnel:
\$338,039.69
Operating: \$59,600

Revenues: \$1,883,113.34

Miscellaneous Revenue: \$136,345.13
Grant Revenue: \$707,918.62
Charges for Services: \$851,706.69
Sale of Automobiles: \$43,600.00
Interest on Account: \$3,455.44
Interest & Inmate Trust Fund: \$128,461.12
Impounded Livestock: \$3,999.28
Animal Services Revenue: \$11,082.50



Grants Awarded - \$707,918.62



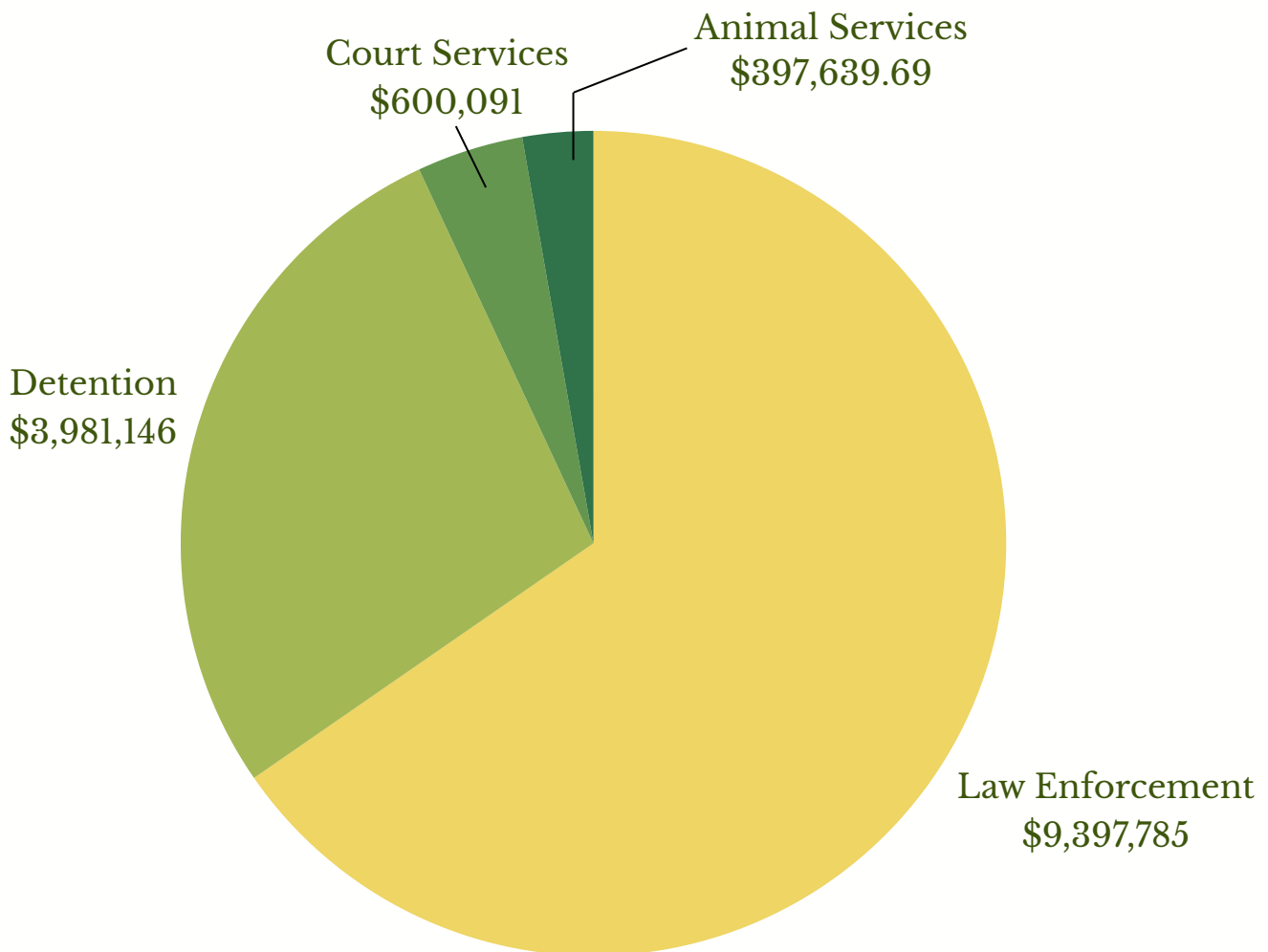
Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding - \$62,200
Byrnes (JAG-C) License Plate Readers - \$34,432
Florida Sheriff's Association Vest Grant - \$7,155
Meth Residual Initiative Grant - \$35,044
Taser Grant: \$5,713
Law Enforcement Supplemental Salary Grant - \$296,564.75
Somaglobal Grant - \$217,500
FDLE Drone Buy Back Grant - \$15,029.97
HIDTA Grant Reimbursement - \$24,439.30
FEMA Reimbursement (Hurricane Ian) - \$9,839.80

Monies Returned to the County:
\$1,600,987.40

Revenue: \$1,472,526.28
Budget Funds: \$128,461.12



2023 Budget





2023 Crime Data

According to the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), there were 53 fewer Part I Crimes reported in 2023 than in 2022 under the jurisdiction of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office. UCR data is reported semi-annually and annually to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) by law enforcement agencies across Florida.

According to UCR data, there were 36 violent crimes reported in 2023, as compared to 52 in 2022, a total *decrease* in reported violent crimes of 31%. Additionally, there were 187 property crimes reported in 2023, compared to 218 in 2022, with a total *decrease* of reported crimes of 14%.

In summary, the crime rate in Hardee County *decreased* of 19% in 2023.



Type of Crime	2022	2023	+/- Rate %
Homicide	0	2	+200%
Sex Crimes	10	8	-20%
Robbery	3	3	0%
Aggravated Assault	45	23	-49%
Burglary	52	32	-38%
Larceny	143	137	-4%
Motor Vehicle Theft	23	18	-22%
TOTAL PART I CRIMES	276	223	-19%



Law Enforcement Bureau

The Law Enforcement Bureau is a crucial component of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, overseeing four distinct divisions:

1. Uniform Patrol Division:

- This division comprises several units: Patrol, K9, SWAT, and Community-Oriented Policing (COP).
- It is the largest component of the Law Enforcement Bureau, consisting of 45 sworn personnel and two civilian Public Safety Aides.
- The Uniform Patrol Division operates with four patrol squads, ensuring 24-hour public safety services for the citizens of Hardee County.

1. Investigative Services Division:

- Focused on criminal investigations, this division works to solve crimes, gather evidence, and bring offenders to justice.

2. Support Services Division:

- Responsible for various support functions, including communications, evidence, and property management.

3. Administrative Services Division:

- Tasked with administrative functions, personnel records, and other essential administrative tasks.

Town of Zolfo Springs Contract:

- The Hardee County Sheriff's Office contracts with the town of Zolfo Springs to provide law enforcement services to their community.

Zones for Enhanced Services:

- We have divided the county's 638 square miles into seven zones, including the town of Zolfo Springs, to serve our community better.
- This approach allows for more effective law enforcement services throughout the entire county.

Patrol Operations:

- In the Uniform Patrol Division, we conducted approximately 654,618 miles of patrol throughout Hardee County in the 2023 calendar year. This reflects a 4.8% increase in miles driven compared to the previous year.





Law Enforcement Bureau

In 2023, the Hardee County Sheriff's Office received –



38,540 Calls for Service
(2,309 written reports)



This is a *increase* of
4.6%
from 2022 (36,850)



In 2023, the Hardee County Sheriff's Office investigated –



277 traffic crashes



321 traffic crashes in 2022, a total *decrease* of 16%



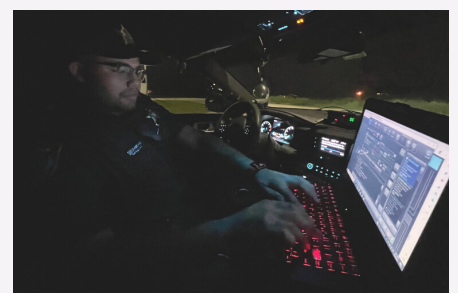
The 16% reduction in traffic crash investigations can be attributed to the 56% increase in traffic citations issued and community education in 2023.



The members of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office issued 3,391 traffic citations (a 48% *increase* from 2022) and 1,764 warnings in 2023.



Law Enforcement Bureau





Law Enforcement Bureau

Computer-Aided Dispatch Reporting

Patrol Deputies are dispatched to many types of calls for service through a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. Calls for service are received by our Communications Section and then dispatched to a Patrol Deputy. Calls for service are entered into CAD based on two types of responses: reactive and proactive. Reactive responses are calls for service that are generated by a citizen telephoning the Hardee County Sheriff's Office regarding a specific issue. Proactive responses are generated by a law enforcement officer actively patrolling for criminal activity. The following chart represents both types of calls for service.

911 Calls 2645

Alarms 321

Livestock Complaints 1204

Disturbance 1241

Missing Persons 54

Assist Other Agency 1013

Criminal Investigations 2603

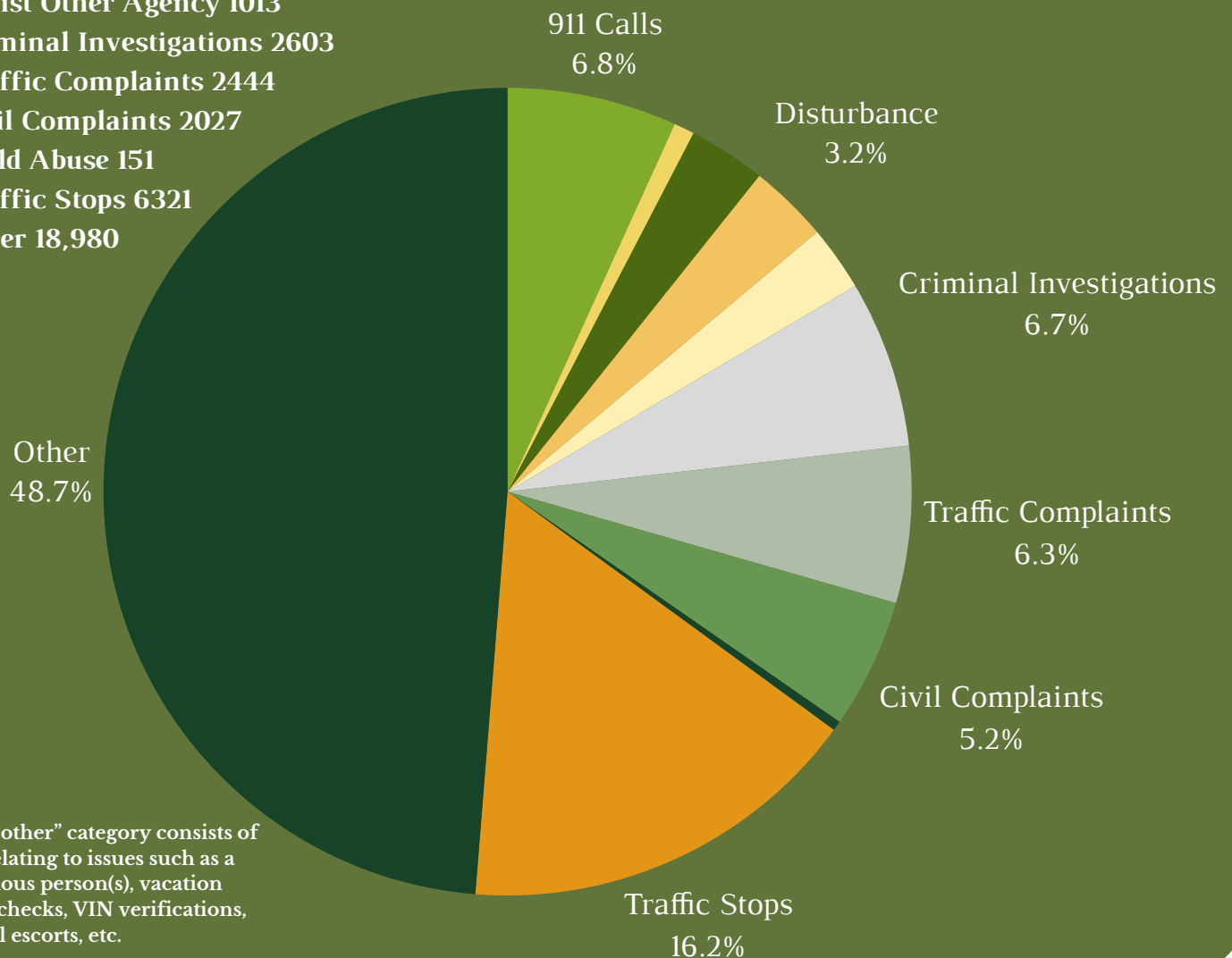
Traffic Complaints 2444

Civil Complaints 2027

Child Abuse 151

Traffic Stops 6321

Other 18,980



* The "other" category consists of calls relating to issues such as a suspicious person(s), vacation house checks, VIN verifications, funeral escorts, etc.



Criminal Investigations Division

The Investigative Services Division encompasses six different components of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office – Criminal Investigations, Street Crimes Unit, Forensic Services Unit, Animal Services Unit, Victim Services Unit, and the Posse.

Criminal Investigations/Street Crimes Unit

The Criminal Investigations Division and Street Crimes Unit are responsible for investigating all violent crimes, property crimes, sex crimes, general crimes, and drug offenses. There are six detectives assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division.

There are 51 registered sex offenders and five sexual predators residing in Hardee County. Based on the nature of their crime(s), these individuals must report to the Hardee County Sheriff's Office throughout the year and update their information, such as address, employment, vehicle information, etc. Hardee County Sheriff's Office members randomly visit their homes throughout the year to provide verification based on the Florida State Statute.

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office Posse continues to provide an excellent service to the organization and community. The Sheriff's Posse comprises 10 volunteers who serve as an extension of our sworn personnel. The Sheriff's Posse assists with large-scale events (i.e., Hardee County Fair, Pioneer Festival), livestock complaints, and an extra set of "eyes and ears" in our rural community.

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office received 221 Department of Children and Family (DCF) referrals in 2023. Members of the Criminal Investigations Division investigated 30 of these referrals, while the Uniform Patrol Division addressed the remaining.





Criminal Investigations Division

Forensic Services Unit

A dedicated civilian Evidence Custodian staffs our Forensic Services Unit. This crucial role involves the meticulous processing and collection of evidence related to crimes and the categorization and storage of items not considered evidence, such as found property.

Key Achievements: In 2023, the Forensic Services Unit achieved notable success in evidence management:

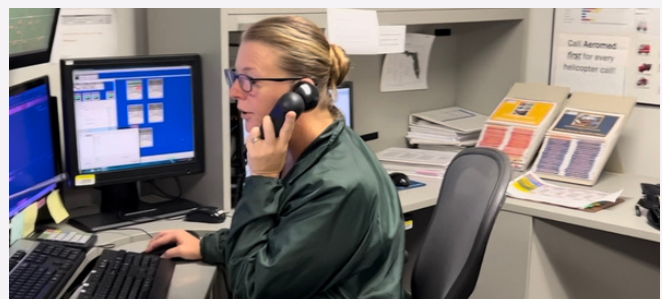
- Total Pieces of Evidence or Property Collected/Received:
 - In 2023, the unit collected or received an impressive total of 4,734 pieces of evidence or other property.
 - This reflects a significant *increase* of 28% compared to the previous year, with 3,408 pieces in 2022.
 - The Hardee County Sheriff's Office conducts a quarterly and annual audit of all property and evidence, and we are pleased to announce that we have a *100% compliance rate*.

This substantial increase in our compliance with evidence speaks to the dedication and efficiency of our Forensic Services Unit. Our commitment to maintaining the integrity of our investigations through meticulous evidence management is commendable.

Communications

The Public Safety Emergency Communications Center continues to be the first point of contact with the citizens of Hardee County. The Hardee County Sheriff's Office Emergency Communications Specialists service the Bowling Green Police Department, Wauchula Police Department, Hardee County Fire Rescue, and the Hardee County Sheriff's Office.

The average *daily* 9-1-1 calls *increased* by 5% in 2023 compared to 2022 (36 vs. 38). We are pleased to announce that the national performance standard to answer 90% of all 9-1-1 calls in less than 15 seconds was achieved in 2023. The daily average administrative phone calls (non-emergency lines) *increased* by 2.4% in 2023 as compared to 2022 (82 vs. 84).





Criminal Investigations Division

Posse

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office utilizes Civilian Posse members to assist the agency when using horses or other specialized transportation methods, which is advantageous for functions such as search and rescue, large-scale events, and community functions. Civilian Posse members are an asset to Hardee County. Civilian Posse members are required to volunteer four hours per month. Additionally, the Sheriff's Posse hosts an annual clay shoot fundraiser to fund their scholarship program for local law enforcement and agriculture field of study college students. In 2023, the Sheriff's Posse awarded \$9,000 in college scholarships for High School Seniors and established their Beyond Scholarship for law enforcement academy students.



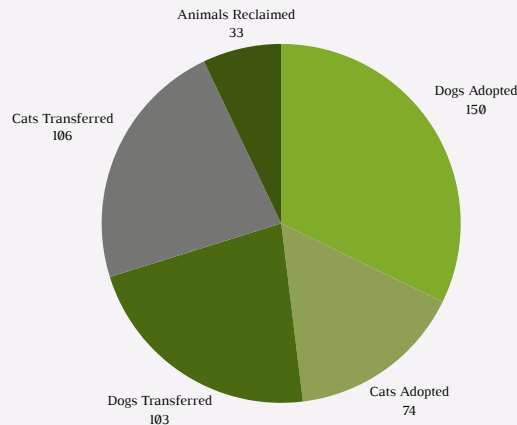


Criminal Investigations Division

Animal Services Unit

The year 2023 was big for the Hardee County Sheriff's Office Animal Services Unit (ASU). This was the first full year of operation since acquiring it from Hardee County BoCC in October 2022. The Animal Services Unit is under the direction of one Sergeant, three certified Animal Control Officers, and one kennel attendant. The Animal Services Unit handles calls for service regarding animals at large, animal bites, nuisance, and neglect.

The Animal Services Unit (ASU) prioritized efficient re-homing to prevent long-term care costs and unnecessary euthanizations. Successful community and international partnerships facilitated this goal. In 2023, ASU housed an average of 50 animals daily and adopted or transferred 433 animals while investigating 59 animal bites, showcasing their commitment to responsible animal care and community safety.



Victim Advocate

The dedicated Victim Advocate at the Hardee County Sheriff's Office consistently provides assistance to citizens who have fallen victim to crimes within the HCSO's jurisdiction. Available around the clock, 365 days a year, our Victim Advocate offers unwavering support and guidance to crime victims. Serving as a vital liaison, she fosters communication between the victim, referring Deputy, and attorney. The Victim Advocate prioritizes maintaining cooperative relationships with individuals encountered during work activities, always upholding confidentiality standards. Moreover, she plays a crucial role in educating each victim about the legal process, ensuring they are well informed about their rights under the law. The relentless commitment of our Victim Advocate underscores the HCSO's dedication to providing comprehensive support to those affected by crime within our community.





Criminal Investigations Division

Cases
Investigated

477

Death
Investigations

19

Complaint
Affidavits

55

Violent
Crimes

36

Search
Warrants

53

Homicides

2

Cold Case
Reviews

2

Property Recovered
in Dollars

\$159,523

Officer Involved
Shootings

0

Sexual Offenders/
Predators

51/5



Support Services Division

The Support Services Division is comprised of several essential divisions of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office that are mandated by law in most cases: Safe Schools Unit, Civil, Court Security, Training, and School Crossing Guards.

Safe Schools Unit

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office contracts with the Hardee County School District to provide law enforcement services for the Hardee High School, Hardee Junior High School, Bowling Green Elementary School, North Wauchula Elementary School, and Zolfo Springs Elementary School. The Safe Schools Unit has seven deputies and is supervised by one sergeant. In addition to prioritizing student safety, School Resource Deputies mentor and interact with students at school sites to foster positive relationships with law enforcement at an early age.



Explorers

The Hardee County Sheriff's Explorer Program is an organization open to youth 14 to 19 years of age who are interested in law enforcement. The local program offers cadets the opportunity to learn almost every aspect of law enforcement, such as investigations, fingerprinting, patrol procedures, communications, firearm safety, and crime scene analysis. Explorers are instrumental in assisting with the Sheriff's Christmas Wishes event and other community service projects such as the Hardee County Fair, Pioneer Park, and parades. This program provides youth an opportunity to develop leadership skills while also developing relationships with law enforcement.





Support Services Division

Training Unit

The Training Unit at the Hardee County Sheriff's Office plays a crucial role in the professional growth and readiness of both sworn and civilian staff. In 2023, the unit orchestrated an impressive 8,595 hours of training, emphasizing the agency's commitment to meeting the standards set by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The extensive training covered a diverse range of topics, demonstrating the unit's dedication to addressing the dynamic needs of its members and enhancing their overall training experience.

The Training Unit's commitment to continuous improvement is evident in its varied training mediums, accommodating diverse preferences and learning styles, ranging from face-to-face instruction to live webinars. Leveraging three primary virtual training platforms—Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA), Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and the FBI Webinar Series—has broadened training opportunities and ensured cost-effectiveness, maximizing resource utilization.

Improvement is evident in its varied training mediums, accommodating diverse preferences and learning styles, ranging from face-to-face instruction to live webinars. Leveraging three primary virtual training platforms—Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA), Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and the FBI Webinar Series—has broadened training opportunities and ensured cost-effectiveness, maximizing resource utilization.

In a strategic move to enhance leadership within the organization, two Command Staff members were sent to the Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA) Commander's Academy in 2023. This investment in leadership training at the command level directly benefits the entire agency, fostering a culture of excellence and innovation. Additionally, three members attended the National Innovative Academy (NIA) at Polk State College, a prestigious program providing cutting-edge leadership training and empowering participants with the tools and insights necessary for success in their roles.

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office continues to prioritize the development and preparedness of its personnel through comprehensive and innovative training initiatives, reflecting its commitment to maintaining high levels of competency and readiness within the agency.



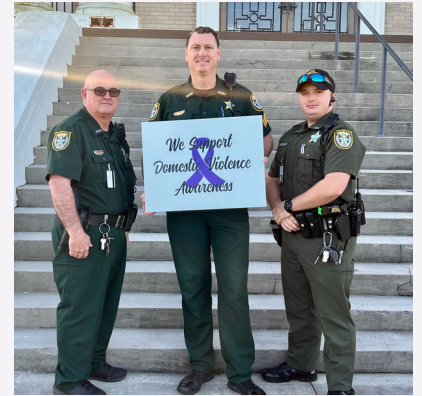


Support Services Division

Judicial Services Unit

The Civil/Court Security Section comprises five sworn deputies. In 2022, we contracted with Allied Security to provide security for the Hardee County Courthouse. Each day, our members conduct security sweeps around the perimeter of the complex. Our Court Security personnel also provides security inside the courtroom during all hearings.

The members of the Civil Division perform services of enforceable and non-enforceable civil process, enforce Writs of Possession, deliver tax warnings, enforce child custody orders, enforce Writs of Execution, enforce Writs of Replevin, and serve other court-related documents. In 2023, we received 2,122 intakes and served 1,673 civil process orders. In 2022, a total of 1,852 (9% *decrease* from 2022) civil orders were served.



School Crossing Guards

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office utilizes four part-time Crossing Guards to assist school children crossing busy intersections and streets. Additionally, our Crossing Guards instruct children in basic safety procedures for crossing streets. Our Crossing Guards also assist the general public in crossing streets as needed.





Administrative Services Division



Records



The Records Section handles numerous requests from private citizens, media, law enforcement, military, attorneys, insurance companies, the State Attorney's Office, the Clerk of the Court, and the Department of Children and Families. Additionally, our Records Section compiles crime data that is distributed to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). Each request is handled with the utmost professionalism and efficiency. In 2023, the Records Section fulfilled 1,838 public records requests, which reflects an *increase* of 12% compared to 2022.



Warrants



The Warrants Specialist at our agency holds a pivotal role in the thorough review, verification, and processing of warrants and writs. This involves the generation of reports, data input, document preparation, warrant recalls, and verification of system removals. An essential responsibility includes verifying the custody statutes of inmates. In 2023, the Warrants Specialist demonstrated exceptional efficiency by processing 482 arrest warrants, showcasing their dedication to meticulous warrant management and operational excellence within the agency.



E911



The E911 Coordinator serves multiple roles within the organization. The E911 Coordinator ensures all 911 systems are current and working at the Hardee County Sheriff's Office main facility and the back-up site. The E911 Coordinator acts as the Communications Section Training Coordinator and is responsible for ensuring all new Dispatchers become state certified as a 911 Telecommunicator. Additionally, the E911 Coordinator maintains all training records of Telecommunicators and is responsible for ensuring they recertify every two years. The E911 Coordinator also ensures that the Hardee County Sheriff's Office remains in compliance with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's requirements.



Office of the Sheriff

Information Technology (IT)

The IT Section, under the leadership of our dedicated IT Manager, plays a vital role in upholding the infrastructure of the Sheriff's Office, encompassing three sites and a mobile command center. With a focus on maintaining the functionality of desktop and laptop computers, especially those in field operations, the IT Manager oversees critical operations.

Notably, our IT operations extend support to the Wauchula Police Department, Bowling Green Police Department, and the Hardee County Fire Rescue. The IT Manager ensures the smooth operation of Computer Information Systems (CIS) used by these agencies, reinforcing our commitment to efficient interagency communication and data sharing.

Our agency initiated the "KnowBe4" cybersecurity monthly training in 2022 to address the contemporary concern of cyber threats. This ongoing program aims to enhance awareness among personnel, mitigating the risk of falling victim to cyber threats. Active participation in these training sessions is essential for collective cybersecurity resilience.

Our vigilant IT Manager is dedicated to fortifying our defenses against potential cyber threats, ensuring the Hardee County Sheriff's Office remains resilient. Through proactive measures, we strive to eliminate vulnerabilities and uphold the security and integrity of our agency's data, underscoring our commitment to staying ahead in the ever-evolving landscape of cybersecurity.



Executive Assistant to the Sheriff

In this multifaceted position, our Executive Assistant takes on the responsibility of managing the Sheriff's calendar, providing invaluable assistance with emails, and diligently typing memos on behalf of the Sheriff. Her dedication to making travel arrangements and handling various clerical tasks significantly contributes to the smooth functioning of our daily operations.

Beyond administrative duties, the Executive Assistant undertakes agency-wide responsibilities, ensuring the accurate maintenance of records for newly purchased property and property transfers within the Sheriff's Office. This includes a diverse range of items such as vehicles, body cameras, vests, computers, and more. Their meticulous attention to detail ensures that our property database remains accurate and up-to-date.



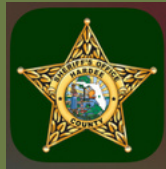
Office of the Sheriff

Public Relations

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office believes quality public relations is a large part of a successful law enforcement agency. Engaging the community in calls to action, providing easily accessible information and displaying the positive interactions with law enforcement are just a few of the many initiatives of our public relations division. Our agency maximizes this opportunity through our website, mobile application, and social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Threads, and YouTube.

HCSO App

Average Daily Uses - 50,000



Social Media Followers

Facebook - 18,900

Twitter - 2,694

Instagram - 975

Threads - 70



New Followers for 2023 - 3,500

Page Visits - 617,300

Social Media Reach - 3.5 million+

PARENTS: Don't forget to change these settings after the update on your children's phones to help keep them safe as well!

#iPhone #iPhoneUpdate #Security
#SafeCommunity #HardeeCountySheriff



hardeecountysheriffsoffice

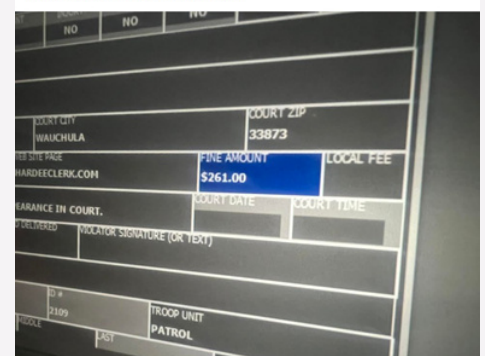
View insights Boost post

82 views

hardeecountysheriffsoffice Join us tonight for a Virtual Ride-A-Long with Sheriff Vent Crawford. Starting at 6pm we'll be updating our social media feeds with calls for service and an inside look at a Deputy's 12 hour shift.

Running a red light will cost you \$261.00, but it could cost you someone's life. In this case, it only cost \$261.00, which seems fair.

#newyearseve #onpatrol





Detention Bureau

The Detention Bureau is comprised of sworn detention deputies and civilian staff. The Detention Bureau is responsible for the care, custody, and control of individuals who have been sentenced to jail or prison or are awaiting trial. Some of the other responsibilities include the in-processing and out-processing of individuals arrested by members of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, Bowling Green Police Department, Wauchula Police Department, Florida Highway Patrol, Florida Wildlife Commission, or other state and federal law enforcement agencies.

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office formed a partnership with AdventHealth Wauchula to service detainee medical needs. This partnership allowed us to provide 24-hour healthcare and allowed detention deputies to be free of any medical responsibilities, such as dispensing medication.

Included in the care of inmates is the Hardee County Sheriff's Office's contract with Trinity Services Group to provide meals for the inmates. Trinity Services Group serves over 220,000 inmates in 38 states and Puerto Rico. Trinity Services Group serves approximately 260 million meals per year.

Based on the average inmate population for the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, the cost of an inmate's meal is approximately \$2.32 per meal. The Hardee County Sheriff's Office has provided approximately 129,9385 meals to inmates, which reflects a 29% *increase* as compared to 2022.

Arrests Processed

Hardee County Sheriff's Office - 721
Bowling Green Police Department- 34
Wauchula Police Department - 153
Other Agencies - 11

Release Processed

Pretrial Release - 27
Department of Corrections - 50
HCSO - 129
Total Released - 1,395

Average Daily Population

Daily Average - 123

Transports

Medical - 60
Medical Mileage - 3,340
DOC - 28
DOC Mileage - 8,413
General - 147
General Mileage- 11,937
Total Detainees Transported - 235
Total Miles Driven - 23,925



Detention Bureau





Fleet & Facilities

Fleet:

60 Marked Vehicles
27 Unmarked Vehicles
2 ATVs/UTVs
1 Airboat
3 Utility Trailers
1 Semi Truck
1 Stock Trailer
1 Crime Prevention Bus
1 Mobile Command Center
1 Mine-Resistant Protected Vehicle (MRAP)



Replaced
3 non-compliant drones
Purchased
5 new drones





Background Investigations and Recruitment

Recruitment and retention are critical components in sustaining the effectiveness and vitality of law enforcement agencies. In recent years, the Hardee County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) has strongly emphasized strategic recruitment efforts and employee retention strategies to ensure a skilled and dedicated workforce.

Recruitment efforts at HCSO are focused on identifying and attracting highly qualified individuals to join the ranks of the agency. Partnerships with local educational institutions, including Polk State College's Kenneth C. Thompson Institute of Public Safety and South Florida State College in Avon Park, have been instrumental in sourcing promising candidates. The agency's Human Resources Manager and selected members actively engage with these institutions to identify and recruit talent, reducing the staffing deficit by approximately 29% in 2023.

In a broader context, the commitment to retention is reinforced by the statewide initiatives led by Governor Ron DeSantis. The Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Program, which has been in place for the past three years, underscores the importance of retaining active law enforcement officers. Governor DeSantis' recent presentation of the 4,000th bonus at the Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA) Winter Conference further highlights the success and popularity of this retention initiative.

The program not only incentivizes Floridians to join the law enforcement profession but also attracts experienced officers from out of state to relocate to Florida. This bolsters the expertise within the state's law enforcement agencies and addresses the broader nationwide challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified officers.





Accreditation

Accreditation, as many of you know, is the certification by an independent reviewing authority that an entity has met specific requirements and prescribed standards. It involves an in-depth review of every facet of our agency, including organization, management, operations, and administration. Achieving accreditation is a remarkable milestone, and it places us among organizations such as schools, universities, and hospitals that are recognized for their commitment to excellence.

On February 22, 2023, we were honored to receive the FCAC Accreditation certification, and I want to extend my deepest appreciation to the men and women in the Detention Bureau. Their dedicated work and commitment to maintaining the highest standards in our detention facility made this achievement possible.

With the attainment of FCAC accreditation, we now embark on a three-year cycle to become reaccredited. Our dedicated staff actively evaluates policies and obtains proofs to demonstrate compliance with best practices. This ongoing commitment to excellence ensures that we continue to meet and exceed the standards set forth by accrediting bodies.

I am pleased to share that I have accepted a position as an FCAC Commissioner, reinforcing our commitment to promoting and maintaining high standards in detention facilities. As a Commissioner, one of my responsibilities is to ensure that detention facilities across the state are in compliance with FCAC standards.

Additionally, We anticipate signing a contract with the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFLA) in June 2024. Our dedicated staff is working diligently to obtain this certification by December 2024, further solidifying our commitment to excellence.

I am immensely proud of the collective efforts that have led to these achievements. I am confident that we will continue to raise the bar for professionalism and service in law enforcement.





Strategic Plan

In 2021, a cross-section of employees from the Hardee County Sheriff's Office met with representatives from the Florida Sheriff's Association and developed a four-year strategic plan.

Highlights of the Strategic Plan

Goal 1: To ensure efficient and effective criminal justice operations

- ☑ Strategy 1.1 - Prevent crime and apprehend offenders
- ☑ Strategy 1.2 - Deploy resources
- ☑ Strategy 1.3 - Develop Street Crimes Unit
- ☑ Strategy 1.4 - Organize E-911 operations
- ☑ Strategy 1.5 - Ensure effective and efficient jail operations
- ☑ Strategy 1.6 - Develop and implement traffic safety

Goal 2: To ensure efficient and effective administrative functions

- ☑ Strategy 2.1 - Recruit and retain qualified personnel
- ☑ Strategy 2.2 - Ensure responsible fiscal administration

Goal 3: Support of Industry

- ☑ Strategy 3.1 - Interact with Large Business
- ☑ Strategy 3.2 - Interact with farming, Cattle, Dairy, and Citrus Industries
- ☑ Strategy 3.3 - Maintain a relationship with the local Health Industry
- ☑ Strategy 3.4 - Maintain a relationship with Community Support Groups

Goal 4: Support of Government Organizations

- ☑ Strategy 4.1 - Support of County Government
- ☑ Strategy 4.2 - Interact with state law enforcement agencies
- ☑ Strategy 4.3 - Maintain a networking relationship with Hardee Correctional Institute
- ☑ Strategy 4.4 - Maintain a relationship with the Hardee County Fire & Rescue
- ☑ Strategy 4.5 - Develop and maintain a relationship with Children & Family Services
- ☑ Strategy 4.6 - Maintain a relationship with local police departments



Strategic Plan

Goal 5: Achieve Law Enforcement Accreditation

- ☒ Strategy 5.1 - Prepare for Accreditation
 - ☒ Strategy 5.2 - Plan and development Accreditation
 - ☐ Strategy 5.3 - Achieve Accreditation
 - ☐ Strategy 5.4 - Maintain Accreditation
-

Strategic Plan Committee

The following members of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, along with David Brand from the Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA) comprised the committee that developed the strategic plan:



Pictured L to R: Capt. David Drake, Det. Shane Ward, Lt. Ronnie Muse, David Brand (FSA), Colonel James "Chip" Roberts, Latiesha Allen, Sgt. Manny Zuniga, Lilibeth Castro, Dep. Maria Hall, and Sara Townsel (Not Pictured)



Building Partnerships

During this strategic period, we have actively engaged with a variety of stakeholders, including public safety organizations, local and state elected officials, healthcare administrations, and educational institutions at both local and statewide levels. This unwavering commitment is paramount in positioning the Hardee County Sheriff's Office as a dynamic, forward-thinking law enforcement agency.

A notable avenue through which we have demonstrated active involvement is the Florida Sheriff's Association, where I serve on the Florida Sheriff's Association Training Accreditation Commission. By actively participating in discussions and collaborations within this association, we ensure that Hardee County remains integral to crucial conversations concerning grants, programs, and state appropriations.

Our engagement in Florida legislation has proven instrumental in advocating for our community. Through active participation in legislative matters, we create opportunities for the Hardee County Sheriff's Office to secure grants, programs, and state appropriations. These valuable resources, in turn, empower us to continue implementing progressive law enforcement initiatives in Hardee County, fostering a safer and more resilient community.





2023 Highlights

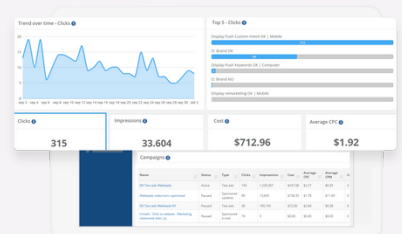
Florida Sheriff's Association

The Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA) has been a wonderful partner in providing executive-level training for our command staff. Colonel James "Chip" Roberts, Captain David Drake, and Captain Sylvia De La Torre successfully completed the FSA Commander's Academy in 2023. Additionally, FSA provided a firearms simulator to the Hardee County Sheriff's Office for a three-week period to allow our members to train indoors while experiencing hundreds of different scenarios.



Performance Evaluations

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office continues implementing an annual performance evaluation process utilizing *Agency 360*. All Hardee County Sheriff's Office employees have been evaluated by their supervisor and reviewed with each member. The *Agency 360* software also allows supervisors to document commendations, discipline, and supervisor notes to track and evaluate performance throughout the year effectively. All employee merit increases are tied to performance evaluations.





2023 Highlights

Body Cameras

All Hardee County Sheriff's Office Deputies, including the Detention Division, continue to wear issued body-worn cameras during their shift. With transparency being more critical than ever before, our deputies will have their cameras recording the entire time they are investigating a call for service. Body-worn cameras will record deputies' on-duty encounters, safeguarding and storing potentially critical evidence, providing after-action video for training, and ultimately fostering community trust.



License Plate Readers

In 2023, we purchased six Motorola License Plate Readers and are currently waiting on the delivery of six more to place at various locations around the county. These cameras capture images of vehicle license plates as they travel down the road. The tag numbers are automatically compared to a state database of stolen vehicles, wanted persons, and sexual offenders. Investigators are also able to search these images for vehicles matching a description of a suspect seen in the area of a recent crime. These cameras have proven to be very beneficial in the investigation of several major crimes. As we move forward in 2024, we will seek grant funding to increase the number of license plate readers.

MILO Firearms Simulator

Real-life scenario training is often the best training, but officer safety is at risk. In seeing the need for additional training avenues, Sheriff Crawford sought grant funding to purchase a MILO Firearms Simulator. This simulation allows for officers to participate virtually in real-life scenarios to perfect responses. Officers receive scoring and feedback for exercises which allows them to improve their precision.





2023 Highlights

Citizen Surveys

In 2023, the Hardee County Sheriff's Office began mailing random citizen surveys to individuals who interacted with a member(s) of the organization. Law enforcement surveys enable agencies to collect very specific information from local residents that can be acted upon based on citizens' responses. Some of the specifics that can aid in strategic planning and assessing police performance include:

- Confidence in the local law enforcement
- Performance of local law enforcement
- Satisfaction with member contacts
- Racial/ethnic differences in attitudes toward the police
- Awareness of police services and crime control efforts
- Concerns about community crime

Inmate Work Crew

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office contracts with the Board of County Commissioners to provide services to the Road & Bridge and Landfill Departments. In FY2022-23, we added a third contract with the Parks & Recreation Department. The Inmate Work Crew provides inmates with opportunities to develop work-related skills to assist them during their transition back into the community upon their release.

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office saved the Board of County Commissioners and the residents of Hardee County approximately \$311,000 by utilizing inmates to work in these areas of the county.





2023 Highlights

SAFE Program

The SAFE Program is a means of better communication between all Hardee County first responders and residents with special needs before an emergency occurs. When residents enroll in the program, our dispatchers input critical information into the emergency system, and families place SAFE decals on their homes and vehicles. Should an emergency arise, first responders see the sticker, and know to approach with extra care. The Sheriff's Office, EMS, Police, and Fire can access the information provided by the family, helping to ensure a positive, safe experience for all involved. In just one year we have had 39 individuals registered with this program and anticipate many more as it becomes more familiar to our community.

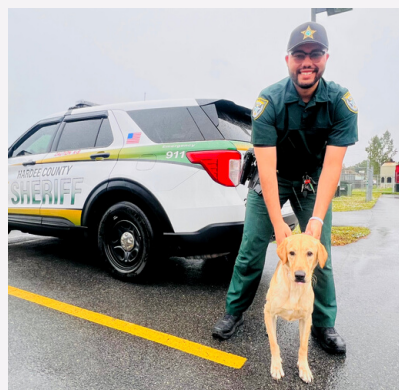


K9 Mingo

K9 Mingo is a yellow Labrador Retriever who was born in Columbia, South America, on 5/14/22. He arrived in Florida at Southern Coast K9 in New Smyrna Beach on July 6, 2023, where he underwent extensive training and narcotic imprinting before joining our team the following September.

After K9 Mingo was assigned his handler, they began training together with the Lakeland Police Department, where they spent around 30 hours learning from each other and preparing for the three-step certification process with United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) Drug Detection K-9 Certification.

On November 15, 2023, K-9 Mingo and his partner, Corporal Darius Johnson, successfully passed their certification test. Deputy Johnson and his partner, K-9 Mingo, train on a regular basis and have made several arrests since his certification.





2023 Highlights

Employee Recognition & Awards

We recognize employees' hard work yearly by hosting an Awards and Recognition Dinner. Additionally, members are recognized for milestones in their career including promotions, specific acts of service, and longevity.



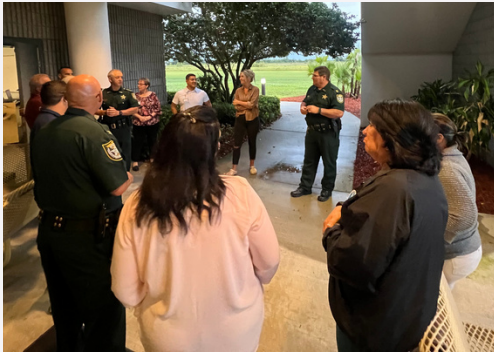
"Duty to Protect - Honor to Serve"



2023 Highlights

Citizen's Law Enforcement Academy

In May 2023, the Hardee County Sheriff's Office hosted its third Citizen's Law Enforcement Academy (CLEA). The CLEA is a 14-week "academy" that provides students with valuable information regarding the operations of the Sheriff's Office. Presentations are given each week from members of the agency representing their assigned work areas. Topics include patrol, detention, criminal investigations, crime scene investigations, communications, and more. Additionally, students were invited to the Range to test their skills with some of the weapons that are currently being utilized during the course of duty. Our SWAT team and K9 Unit provided demonstrations of their work. Finally, our State Attorney, Mr. Brian Haas, also gave a presentation on the role of the State Attorney's Office.

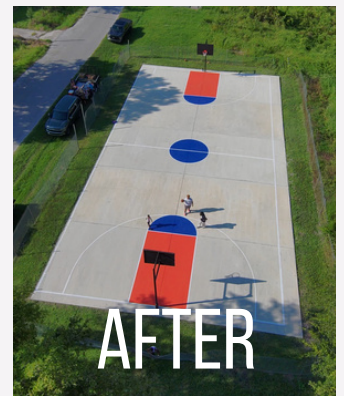
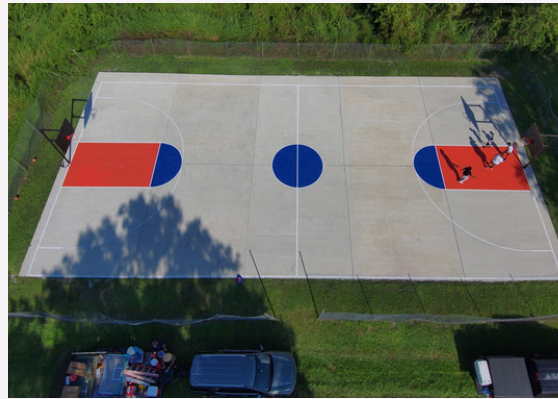
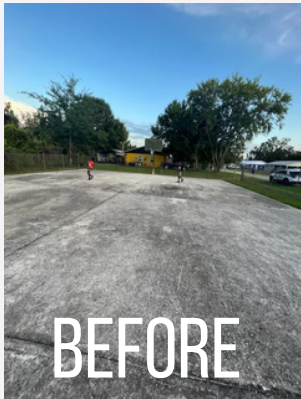




2023 Highlights

Ten 99 Program

I am excited to share an update on the success of the Ten 99 Program, a collaborative initiative launched in 2023 with the support of HCSO COPS officers. This program operates in conjunction with the Hardee County Sheriff's Foundation, focusing on enhancing community facilities and equipment. Our inaugural project under the Ten 99 Program was the revitalization of the Magnolia Manor basketball court. With the dedicated efforts of our deputies, who volunteered their time and skills, we successfully transformed the basketball court into a vibrant and inviting space for the youth in our community. The project involved thorough cleaning, a fresh coat of paint, and the installation of new basketball goals. The revitalized Magnolia Manor basketball court now stands as a testament to the positive impact that collaborative community initiatives can have. It is now a safe and enjoyable space where youth can come together, engage in physical activity, and build positive connections. The success of this project has inspired us, and we eagerly anticipate engaging in more projects throughout the coming year. These initiatives contribute to the betterment of our community and strengthen the bond between the Hardee County Sheriff's Office and the residents we are honored to serve.



Hardee County Sheriff's Foundation & Animal Services Foundation

In seeing the need for community outreach, education, and relationship building, Sheriff Crawford took the initiative to form two not-for-profit organizations to work in conjunction with the efforts of the Sheriff's Office. Both organizations are made up of volunteer board members who maintain the business affairs, facilitate fundraising projects, and execute events to better serve the citizens of Hardee County and promote positive community relations with law enforcement. Sheriff Crawford is excited to see how these two organizations will continue the progress made over the last 3 years.



2023 Highlights

2023 Hardee County Sheriff's Office Copz & Kidz Summer Camp

In the summer of 2023, the Hardee County Sheriff's Office held the 3rd Annual Copz and Kidz Camp. This empowering initiative aimed to build bridges between law enforcement and the youth community, welcomed children aged 6 to 12. Over three days, the camp unfolded as a celebration of community spirit, featuring collaborative efforts from various agencies to include Hardee Correctional, Florida Highway Patrol, Fire Rescue, and the Red Cross. The captivating theme, "Where in the world is Carmen San Diego," became the backdrop for exploring treasures and opportunities with Hardee County. Florida Highway Patrol took the lead in promoting safety by conducting a demonstration on seatbelt safety. Their interactive session equipped the young minds with essential knowledge, fostering a culture of responsible practices on the road. Meanwhile, the Hardee Correctional Facility brought an exciting dimension to the camp by showcasing their bloodhounds. The youth were enthralled as these skilled canines demonstrated their tracking abilities. Adding a unique twist, the correctional team organized a thrilling track run with the youth pastor participating as a "fugitive." This captivating experience not only showcased the impressive skills of the bloodhounds but also created an unforgettable, hands-on lesson in teamwork, cooperation, and the remarkable capabilities of law enforcement assets. The fusion of these activities enriched the camp's offerings, leaving a lasting impact on both the youth and the community.

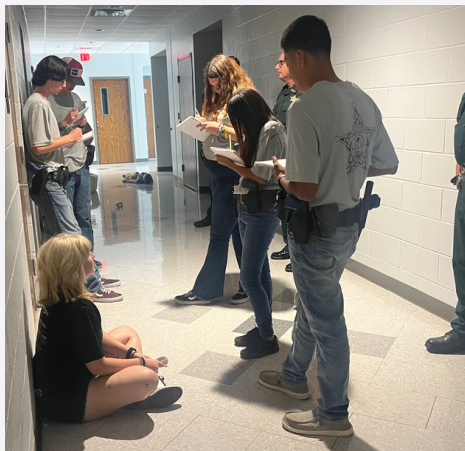
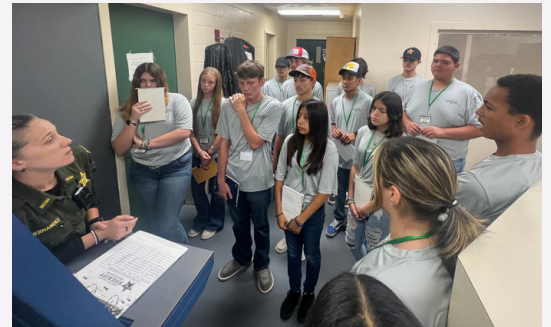




2023 Highlights

2023 High School Law Enforcement Academy

The second installment of the High School Academy, hosted by the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, provided a unique opportunity for 9th to 12th-grade students to gain insights into the workings of law enforcement and detention. Over the course of a week, students engaged with HCSO personnel across various departments. They embarked on a jail tour, attended a talk by Judge David Horton, applied lessons learned to solve a simulated crime, and received a presentation from Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Stephen Nelson, shedding light on the role of his office in death investigations.





We Love Our Community

Community involvement is a priority for Sheriff Vent Crawford and the Hardee County Sheriff's Office. We believe being invested in the community we serve is the best way to build relationships between citizens and law enforcement and prevent crime before it occurs. This year our agency participated in roughly 100 community events. From parades and festivals to school open houses, we are proud to be an active part in the community we have the honor to serve.





We Love Our Community





We Love Our Community





What's Next for HCSO?

Continue working towards CFA Accreditation

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office is committed to achieving accreditation through the Florida Accreditation Commission (FAC). Staff is currently reviewing General Orders to achieve FAC accreditation. Accreditation increases the law enforcement agency's ability to prevent and control crime through more effective and efficient delivery of law enforcement services to the community it serves.

Accreditation enhances community understanding of the law enforcement agency, its role in the community, and its goals and objectives. Citizen confidence in the policies and practices of the agency is increased.

Accreditation, in conjunction with the philosophy of community policing, commits the agency to a broad range of programs (such as crime prevention) that directly benefit the public.

Accreditation creates a forum where police and citizens work together to control and prevent crime. This partnership will help citizens to understand the challenges that confront law enforcement. Law enforcement will, in turn, receive clear direction from the community about its expectations. Thus, a common set of goals and objectives will be arrived at and implemented.

In February 2024, the Florida Sheriff's Association awarded Sheriff Crawford with a plaque for achieving Level I status for Law Enforcement Accreditation. We expect to complete full agency accreditation this year.

High School Law Enforcement Academy

In June 2024, the Hardee County Sheriff's Office will host its third High School Law Enforcement Academy. This one-week "Academy" will give students a glimpse of what it is like to work in law enforcement. The Academy is highly interactive and will give students an opportunity to work through a crime from beginning to end. Students will learn interview techniques, develop crime bulletins, process a crime scene, learn DUI field sobriety testing, and more. On the last day of the class, students will be able to put their skills to the test by working through a crime scenario and placing handcuffs on the suspect. The class size is limited to 25 students, and seats are filling quickly. Please get in touch with the Hardee County Sheriff's Office for more information on the class and to submit an application.



What's Next for HCSO?

Citizen's Advisory Board

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office identified eight members to sit on its Citizen's Advisory Board (CAB). Our first meeting was held in February 2023, and we discussed the vision of the Sheriff's Office and what role the CAB would play in helping move the Sheriff's Office forward. The CAB consists of graduating Citizen's Law Enforcement Academy members and represents various geographical areas of Hardee County. The CAB will serve as a voice in the community and have an opportunity to provide feedback on current policies and procedures within the organization. The CAB will not have any investigatory authority or decision-making authority on internal investigations.

Citizen's Law Enforcement Academy

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office will host its 4th Annual Citizen's Law Enforcement Academy (CLEA) from May 23, 2024 - August 22, 2024. The class size is limited to 25 students, and seats fill quickly. Please get in touch with the Hardee County Sheriff's Office for more information on the class and to submit an application.

Expansion of Sheriff's Administrative Offices

Hurricane Ian has heavily damaged the administrative offices of the Hardee County Sheriff's Office, and the repairs have been completed. Our offices have limited opportunities for meeting current staffing needs, growth in staff, and training facilities, and our HVAC system badly needs updating. Sheriff Crawford submitted a request to the BoCC for a 16.5 million dollar legislative ask for a new administrative office and land for future expansion. This request was approved by the BoCC and is currently moving through the legislative process.

Grants

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office is seeking external dollars as an additional funding source for capital items such as driving simulators and electronic message boards, as well as a source of funding for overtime efforts in traffic enforcement. We currently have five FDOT grants in review seeking over \$300,000 dollars, and we are exploring other federal and state grant opportunities.