

Stacey Payne

Community Relations Manager



Mike Scott

Lee County Sheriff

Many things have significantly changed since Sheriff Mike Scott took office in 2004, however one thing remains constant; and that is his commitment to provide the citizens of Lee County with a top-notch Crime Prevention Unit. While numerous agencies decreased and even eliminated their crime prevention efforts during our country's economic downturn in 2008, Sheriff Scott did not waiver in his belief that community crime prevention programs unite residents and prevent crime; choosing instead to move forward in his investment by adding resources and increasing this unit's outreach capabilities, even with a strained local budget.

Since taking office, Sheriff Scott has instituted multiple innovative programs that most agencies do not have. He has given the unit the necessary tools, including additional staff, to ensure the residents of Lee County are being properly educated on personal safety, home and business security, financial well-being; even educating new (teen) and seasoned (seniors) drivers on motor vehicle safety, as well as a special driving class for autistic and special needs licensed drivers.

With one in four residents over 65 in Lee County, Sheriff Scott is particularly concerned about our seniors. Since taking office, the Sheriff applied for the agency to take part in a very selective federal training program designed to educate area seniors about financial exploitation and abuse. This program called "Communities against Senior Exploitation (C.A.S.E.)" is made up of 23 agencies from across the United States. When the Lee County Sheriff's Office was chosen by the program to participate, we became the first and only law enforcement agency to become a part of C.A.S.E. Since then Sheriff Scott has not hesitated in helping other agencies across Florida develop a C.A.S.E. program in their communities, sending one of his employees to train those agencies who want to start a program of their own.

As part of the C.A.S.E. initiative and as a result of so many aging adults falling victim to fraudsters, Sheriff Scott maintains the agencies very own telephone "fraud" line; providing citizens throughout the United States a place to report online, door-to-door, U.S. mail and telephone frauds and scams. With a rapidly growing population and an increase in callers reporting incidents such as identity theft, online scams, fraudulent sweepstakes and lottery scams, Sheriff Scott wanted to provide education on how to avoid these schemes, and help those who had already fallen victim. This plan resulted in the hiring of a full-time Crime Prevention Specialist in 2009, followed by a full-time program coordinator in 2015 assigned specifically to answer, manage and educate fraud line callers. Through the fraud line, the Sheriff's Office has identified true victims – a majority over the age of 60 - who have lost as little as \$500 and as much as one's entire life savings. In many of these incidents, the victim receives a personal visit from a member of our Crime Prevention Unit and/or our Senior Services Unit, and if possible further assistance is provided. In addition, hundreds of residents have been educated by the Fraud Line Crime Prevention Specialist who speaks to members of community groups, businesses, churches, etc., on how they can protect themselves from those preying on society. Last year alone, nearly 7,000 calls were received through the fraud line with each one receiving



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crime prevention tips, suggestions and in some cases, the start of a criminal investigation. So far in the first six months of 2016, 4,000 complaints have been reported to the fraud line.

The Sheriff's recognition of the problems many of our older adults face did not end with the initiation of C.A.S.E. but has included bringing the Project Lifesaver Program to Lee County. This very successful program helps our residents who have Alzheimer's, Dementia, Autism or any other Related Mental Dysfunction Disorders (ARMD) that cause them to wander. The program has grown from just a handful of clients to over 60 in 2015, giving family members' peace of mind and comfort in knowing that should their loved one wander, the bracelet, which holds an activated radio chip inside, will help us locate and safely return them home.

Desiring to do even more for seniors, particularly those in need, the Sheriff established a Senior Services Unit, falling under the Community Relations/Crime Prevention Section. In order to provide help to residents whose needs are more than what a road deputy can assist with, an in-house "referral" program was established. Deputies who encounter residents – mostly the aged – living in deplorable conditions, suffering from memory impaired issues or are suspected of being a victim to a fraudulent scheme, will initiate a referral to one of the Senior Services program coordinators for follow-up. These coordinators will conduct home visits in order to assess the needs for food, health care, well-being, etc. Time and again, the assistance of these "prevention" advocates have literally provided an extension to a healthier, happier life.

In 2009, Sheriff Scott saw an opportunity to expand our Crime Prevention Unit and Community Relations Section by developing the Public Services Division. This division incorporates a Gated and Mobile Home Community Deputies Program designed to reach out to residents we seldom see due to the communities they live in. The two deputies assigned to this division are charged with getting to know these communities, sharing crime prevention information with the residents, building a trusting relationship and developing additional eyes and ears around the county. They often partner with our Crime Prevention Specialists and co-present at community events and functions. The response from community members has been exceptional.

The Public Services Division is also home to the Sheriff's Youth Activities League (SYAL), a community program designed to help local youth develop self esteem and the tools necessary to become productive law-abiding citizens. These deputies engage in year-long events that include speaking to students during school assemblies that focus on driver's education classes, drug use, social media issues and bullying. The goal is to build relationships with youth in order to help them avoid pitfalls that can lead them into criminal activity and dropping out of school.

This is also the time Sheriff Scott started the Teen Driver Challenge Program, a free 12 hour course designed to reduce the number of teen deaths due to car crashes. This hands-on class taught by our Public Service Deputies has been instrumental in educating and improving the driving behaviors of 903 teenagers who have successfully completed the program, with 210 more teens signed up to complete the class by the end of 2016.

The Sheriff then took the Teen Driver Challenge one step further and started what appears to be another first of its kind program in Florida and across the United States. Sheriff Scott started Seniors Driving Safely, modeled after the Teen Driver Challenge with a few modifications. Recognizing that older drivers have been driving for many years, Seniors Driving Safely focuses on the new and improved safety measures within our automobiles and on our roadways. Many changes have taken place in the automobile industry in the last 30 to 50 years not to mention the changes in roads (think multiple lanes), traffic speeds and congestion making some of what we

learned when we first started driving no longer the safest way to drive. Each senior who participates in this class also participates in a CarFit safety check and a series of driving challenges designed to simulate real-life driving situations. Some of these situations include emergency breaking, backing up, pulling into a parking space, emergency avoidance and many more situations.

In addition to the Seniors Driving Safely program, Sheriff Scott also implemented the nationally recognized CarFit Program in 2011, an educational program designed to improve adult driving safety by ensuring their cars are a proper fit. Statistics show that driver safety programs improve adult driving skills and increase not only the driver's safety, but the safety of other's on the road. Our Crime Prevention Specialists have been specially trained as CarFit technicians and have successfully conducted 64 events, while educating 1200 adult drivers on twelve key areas necessary to ensure safer driving. So far, 12 events are already scheduled for the winter 2016/2017 season.

As active shooter security issues continue to grow for parents, business owners, houses of worship and schools, the influx of requests from residents for educational and training seminars has greatly increased. In January of 2016, the Sheriff hired a full-time, certified law enforcement officer highly trained in safety and security measures, to assist Crime Prevention Specialists in Public Emergency Response Training. This deputy, assigned to the Public Services Division, has created a detailed prevention and response plan that has already been taught to hundreds of Lee County residents; and will play an active role in the Crime Prevention Unit's first of its kind "2016 House of Worship Security Conference" in October to coincide with Crime Prevention Awareness Month.

Under Sheriff Scott's command, dozens of new and innovating crime prevention programs have been created based on emerging crime trends. Thousands of folks have been educated on ID Theft of the Deceased, ID Theft of Children, Medical ID Theft, Workplace Violence, and a very successful series of summer programs entitled, "Senior Safety Seminars". New programs also include Autistic Safe Driving seminars and Crime Prevention for those with Special Needs. In addition, this past year has seen a remarkable change in our Social Media outreach with a full-time employee assigned to cover many of our Crime Prevention and Public Services events and workshops. In addition, Sheriff Scott decided to join forces with the social media network, Nextdoor as the first law enforcement agency in Southwest Florida to use its vast ability to reach thousands upon thousands of folks with our crime prevention messages.

While Sheriff Scott manages his 1500+ member department with great fiscal responsibility, he also believes strongly in giving back to community groups who share in his philosophy of supporting our youth, the mentally ill, victims of violent crime, those who are hungry and in educating the uneducated. These community groups are beneficiaries of his generosity: NAMI (National Association of Mental Illness), Florida Crime Prevention Association, I Will Mentor Foundation, North Fort Myers Soccer Club, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Crime Stoppers, Child Care of Southwest Florida, North Fort Myers Football Association, Act Shelter/Rape Crisis Trauma Center, Guardian Ad Litem, Nations Association, United Way, Jireh Rapha Foundation, Drug Coalition of Lee County, Harry Chapin Food Bank, Literacy Council Gulf Coast, Cape Coral Soccer Association, Cape Coral Mayors Scholarship Fund, Dunbar Rattlers, Pace Center for Girls.

As you can see, Sheriff Scott takes the safety and security of the citizens of Lee County very seriously and as such takes every opportunity to share crime prevention information with the public *before* they become a victim of a crime. He believes in helping other agencies wherever and whenever possible with their crime prevention needs, and continues to be on the forefront of establishing and implementing new and innovative programs. It is with great honor that I nominate Sheriff Mike Scott for the 2016 Florida Crime Prevention Association President's Award.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacey Payne