

PRESIDENT'S AWARD
SHERIFF TOM KNIGHT, SARASOTA SHERIFF'S COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Tom Knight's love of Sarasota is evident in his passion to reduce crime, community advocacy and serving the residents of Sarasota. In 1973 his family moved to Sarasota and then after graduating college he joined the Florida Highway Patrol where he served his community for 20 years leaving as a Troop Commander to run for Sheriff of Sarasota County where in 2009 he began serving as the 10th Sheriff of Sarasota.

Since Sheriff Knight took office in 2009 crime has decreased 48% in Sarasota in large part to a new program he started called Procedural Justice and Intelligence 2 Action or I2A which incorporates analyzing historical and current crime data with proactive policing and crime prevention. Several proactive initiatives were developed based on information learned from I2A such as:

- Operation Booster Buster – where law enforcement partnered with local loss prevention to combat retail theft.
- Operation Bueller – to prevent juvenile truancy thereby reducing juvenile crimes.
- Operation Impact – preventing specific crimes in targeted areas.
- Operation Freelancer – combating unlicensed contractors.
- Operation Spring Cleaning – designed to reduce the manufacturing, delivery or trafficking of controlled substances.
- Juvenile Alcohol Task Force – where underage compliance checks were conducted for sale of alcohol to minors.

Realizing that many of the crimes taking place stemmed from a growing drug problem Sheriff Knight launched an opiate addiction treatment program in the jail where inmates who suffer from opioid addiction can receive treatment using VIVITROL, a monthly injectable medication that treats opioid dependency. This is coupled with extensive drug therapy and counseling. Upon release, the care continues as they fall under the supervision of Drug Court. The goal of this program is to prevent recidivism and future crime.

Sheriff Knight understands that with all that is taking place across the country it is more important than ever to build community trust and he is working on this through his crime prevention unit and through a workshop entitled "Rightful Policing Strategy Workshops. These workshops consist of teens and community members "walking in the shoes" of Sarasota deputies by putting them through mock scenarios with a goal of developing an appreciation for how law enforcement works while strengthening relationships between deputies and the community.

Sheriff Knight believes in empowering Sarasota's citizens with knowledge to help reduce crimes of opportunity. His crime prevention unit conducted over 365 speaking engagements during the past year on a variety of topics from home security, to credit card fraud, identity theft, workplace violence and everything in between. He also hosted 50 Citizen Law Enforcement Academies where for 11-weeks citizens get an inside look at the operations of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Tom Knight has made an incredible impact on reducing and preventing crime in Sarasota. It is evident that Sheriff Knight is an outstanding leader in the area of crime prevention and community outreach which is why it is my great honor to recognize Sheriff Tom Knight as the recipient of the 2018 Florida Crime Prevention Association's Presidents Award.