

CAT. C – CRIME PREVENTION UNIT OF THE YEAR (LG. AGENCY)
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES UNIT, SEMINOLE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The men and women of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office Neighborhood Services Unit are known as the ambassadors of the Sheriff's Office the Neighborhood Services Unit takes this to heart as they develop crime prevention and community relations programs to reduce crime and the fear of crime and build relationships throughout Seminole County.

The Neighborhood Services Unit serves over 300,000 citizens with programs that cover three main areas:

- General Community Outreach and Community Relations programs
- Issue specific crime prevention initiatives that target prevention of specific crimes or community concerns
- Child focused programs that build relationships with kids to assist in mentoring them to become successful adults

They accomplish this by attending community events where they set up static crime prevention displays that focus on the needs of the audience attending the event. These events allow them to connect with the public, address their concerns and provide educational materials.

With the help of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram, Flickr, and Nextdoor they have expanded their outreach. The use of social media allows them to share crime prevention information in real-time and with the help of Nextdoor they are able to direct their messages to a specific neighborhood, district or area.

Recognizing the wide reach social media has they began working with their Public Information Unit to create public service announcements to aid in the spread of their crime prevention message. These PSA's will be posted on their social media platforms, shown during previews at their local movie theaters and information feeds at the local tax collectors offices as well as at other area businesses.

Three times a year the Neighborhood Services Unit offers a Community Law Enforcement Academy where citizens have an opportunity to take an inside look at the operations of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office. During this 15-week course citizens have an opportunity to learn about vehicle operations, defensive tactics, firearms training and participate in a tour of the jail and courthouse and much more.

The Neighborhood Services Unit also reaches out to their area youth through their Color a Cop Car program where children paint their hands with washable paint then places a handprint on a marked Sheriff's Office vehicle. The end result is a marked vehicle covered in multicolor child handprints. This is a great opportunity that provides positive interaction between kids and law enforcement.

One of their most popular outreaches is their Snow Patrol, Snow Cone Trailer. In June, they rolled out the Snow Patrol at their youth Summer Camp serving over 138 children. After its initial deployment they received multiple requests for an appearance at other community events. Not only does the trailer beckon children to interact with law enforcement, but their parents and other adults as well.

In addition to all of their pro-active outreach the Neighborhood Services Unit also looks at every burglary reported to the Seminole County Sheriff's Office. In addition to using social media, such as Nextdoor when they see a trend developing in a specific neighborhood they may deploy one of their

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message boards with a crime prevention message for residents to read or go door-to-door with crime prevention information. And, in an effort to help victims of home and business burglaries the NSU contacts each victim offering them a free security assessment.

They expanded their neighborhood watch outreach by enlisting the help of service providers who work in the neighborhoods during the day such as school bus drivers, sanitation workers, and package delivery services. This increased the eyes and ears in every community further reduced the opportunities thieves have to operate undetected.

I could continue on with other programs they offer, but I think you get the idea. It is my honor to recognize the Neighborhood Services Unit of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office as the Florida Crime Prevention Association's Crime Prevention Unit of the Year from a large agency winner.