



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

A STATE ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

### Media Release

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**From:** Cecilia Patella  
Emergency Management Director (352) 754-4083, Ext. 55840

**Re:** Sheriff's Traffic Aides Will Enhance Service at Little to No Cost to Tax Payers

**Date:** August 31, 2011

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Hernando County Sheriff Al Nienhuis is pleased to announce that his office has established a new volunteer branch to be known as the Sheriff's Traffic Aides (STA). The STA unit is a part of the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) program. VIPS is a national Citizen Corps program that provides support and resources for law enforcement agencies interested in developing or enhancing a volunteer program and for community members who wish to volunteer their time and skills with a community law enforcement agency.

With the impending transition of Spring Hill Fire Rescue operations and the planned dissolution of its volunteer Fire Police unit, Sheriff Nienhuis immediately recognized that there would be a gap in services. Shortly thereafter, he initiated an exploratory team to assess the viability of creating a new volunteer program.

"These tough economic times call for outside-of-the box thinking," said Sheriff Al Nienhuis. "Anytime we can enhance service at little or no cost to the tax payers, we are going to jump at the chance. I am looking forward to getting the Sheriff's Traffic Aides fully operational throughout the entire county."

**Program Details:**

The Sheriff's Traffic Aide (STA) unit is intended to augment the sworn force of the Sheriff's Office by performing service and police functions that do not require law enforcement or regulatory authority, including traffic direction and control, scene safety, and logistics.

The program will officially launch on Thursday, September 1, 2011 in District 2 (Spring Hill) with an eight member team, all of which were recruited for their prior affiliation with Spring Hill's Fire Police. The team members were recently trained at the Sheriff's Office by Deputy Kelly Brown and Deputy Bill Boettger of the HCSO Training Unit. Safety equipment, partially funded by Citizen Corps grant funds, has also been issued to the team.

Leading the District 2 STA Team is Mr. Tom Stash, who has five years of volunteer service in this capacity. It is noteworthy that members of the new team have an average of 10 years of volunteer service. According to Mr. Stash, he is eager to "... continue operating with the goal of providing safety for the public and first responders."

STA unit volunteers will be under the administrative supervision of the Emergency Management Section and will be on call 24 x 7. While in the field, the STA is directly accountable to, and will follow the direction provided by, the shift supervisor or the Incident Commander on a scene.

While the first team will primarily focus on services in the Spring Hill area, the Sheriff's Office is seeking to recruit members for a second team that can provide services to the remainder of Hernando County. Individuals interested in applying for a volunteer position with the STA program may contact Emergency Management at (352) 754-4083.