



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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

MEDIA RELEASE

From: Michael Terry
Community Relations Specialist, 352-238-4801

Re: HCSO Crisis Negotiators Take Second Place In Bay Area Negotiators Group Challenge

Date: August 29, 2019

On August 22-23, 2019, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office Crisis Response Team (CRT) competed in the Bay Area Negotiators Group (BANG) Negotiator's Challenge.

The 2-day training event hosted at the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) in Tampa brings together the elite Crisis Response/Hostage Negotiator Teams from the area and provides uncompromised training, including case studies and teaching points from negotiators across the nation.

The second day includes the pinnacle event, the Negotiator Challenge. This year marked the HCSO's second time competing in the competitive event. Last year the HCSO team took third place.

This year's team consisted of Detective Nikki Stevens (Lead Negotiator), Deputy James Devorak, Detective Jason Tippin, Detective Earnest Johnson, Detention Deputy Franki Rodriguez, Deputy George Cloversettle, Detective Chris Vascellaro, and Sgt. Scott Reak.

After an intensive, 5-to-6-hour negotiation, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office was able to resolve the complex training scenario peacefully. Once the day was concluded, it was announced that the Hernando County Sheriff's Office Crisis Response Team placed second in this prestigious event. We are proud of our team's efforts, representing our agency, and ultimately Hernando County.

Among the agencies in attendance were the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Polk County Sheriff's Office, Pasco Sheriff's Office, City of St. Petersburg Police Department, Clearwater Police Department, Largo Police Department, Temple Terrace Police Department and the Pinellas Park Police Department.

This challenge represents an excellent opportunity to meet other agencies, compare procedures and tactics, and independently test our Crisis Response Team's effectiveness.

On-going, training such as this, ensures the citizens of Hernando County the best service available when a crisis occurs.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and remains accountable to them.