

Officer Schiefer Buckles

**Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services,
Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement**

He was Nominated by two organizations: His employer, the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement and by the State Law Enforcement Chiefs' Association

- Officer Buckles started his career with the Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement (OALE) in June 2015. Since completing the Field Training Officer Program Officer Buckles immediately started making an impact on the shift, where he sets the mood and tempo with his excellent attitude and superior work ethic.
- Since winning the OALE Officer of the Year in 2017, 2018, and 2019 and the State Law Enforcement Chiefs' Association of the Year Award in 2017, Officer Buckles has once again raised the bar.
- Over the past year, Officer Buckles has conducted 2,350 visual inspections and 249 traffic stops resulting in 82 administrative violations and 128 criminal arrests.
- He had 13% of the arrests for all of Uniform Services and 16.4% of the arrests in Region 2. He had 46 felony cases, 36 of which were

felony drug charges, which is 20% of the felonies in Uniform Services.

- Officer Buckles also had 2 DUI arrests and 82 other misdemeanor arrests, 58 of which were drug related.
- He is an active member of OALE's Domestic Marijuana Eradication Team, the Anti-Human Trafficking Team, and the Recon Team. Speaking of the Recon Team: He and his team were deployed to the Panhandle due to the damage inflicted by Hurricane Michael. There, he provided urban search and rescue as well as security for the residences and businesses devastated by the storm.
- One administrative violation that stands out was a mixed load of meat and produce entering from California that was pulled over for inspection. During the inspection, Officer Buckles discovered 24 crates of Lychee fruit from China that are prohibited from entering Florida.
- The Lychee were confiscated for destruction, however officer Buckles collected a slug/snail and several beetles that were sent to the Division of Plant Industry for identification. One of the beetles was found to be a new invasive species that has not been identified in Florida.
- During the same inspection, he also discovered approximately 13,000 pounds of fresh meat that was 10 degrees above the safe

temperature for refrigerated foods to be transported. The Division of Food Safety was notified, and the trailer was instantly sealed. The Food Safety Inspectors met the trailer at its destination where the meat products were ultimately destroyed as they were unsafe for human consumption.

- Officer Buckles is always willing to help the public and other law enforcement agencies, which is proven by his 67 assists. Whether it is changing a tire in the extreme heat or pouring rain, assisting his fellow officers with an arrest or violation, helping the Florida Highway Patrol with a traffic crash, or just as routine back-up, he is always up for the task with a smile on his face.
- The attitude, dedication, and passion that Officer Buckles displays and brings to work every day is unmatched and highlights his commitment to the State of Florida.

Detective Andrew Goodlet

Polk County Sheriff's Office

Nominated by the Florida Retail Federation

- Detective Andrew Goodlet has worked for the Polk County Sheriff's Office for nine years. This includes working as a Detention Deputy, Patrol Deputy, member of the Crime Suppression Team, and a member of the General Crimes Unit before being assigned to the Organized Retail Crime Unit. He has also served on the Polk County

Sheriff's Office Honor Guard and as a gang liaison. In 2016 Detective Goodlet was enlisted to help advance Polk County's Organized Retail Crime (ORC) Unit to an industry leading position. Since his appointment, he has taken the lead in his duties as an ORC detective. His colleagues call him a leader, motivator, and the unit's "go-to" member who is always willing to assist and support his fellow detectives.

- Detective Goodlet has worked hard to build strong relationships with a large network of retailers throughout Florida. Through these partnerships, he promotes intelligence sharing and best practices in dismantling organized retail crime groups who target retailers. Over the past year, he partnered with some of the nation's largest retailers to stop two ORC rings responsible for over \$2.2 million in stolen merchandise and store credit. Detective Goodlet has made a total of 134 arrests related to retail theft resulting in over \$145,000 in recovered property. Over the past year Detective Goodlet has consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty. He has been recognized for his professionalism, work ethic, tireless dedication and commitment to excellence while representing the State of Florida.

Sergeant Jeff Hewitt and Deputy Jared Hewitt (father and son)

Franklin County Sheriff's Office

Nominated by the Florida Sheriffs Association

- Sergeant Jeff Hewitt has worked with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office for 17 years and was promoted to Sergeant in 2017. His son, Deputy Jared Hewitt has worked there for the past 3 years.
- During Sgt. Hewitt's career with FCSO he has responded to several life-saving calls. In 2007, he rescued a man attempting to commit suicide in Lanark by swimming out to sea. He was able to dive into the water and rescue the man just before he drowned.
- In 2017, he helped rescue an elderly woman who fell off her house boat into the water during the winter. In 2018, he and his son, Deputy Jared Hewitt responded to a call during the Eastpoint Fire. The response to the Eastpoint Fire was also a life-saving event which prompted their nomination.
- On June 24, 2018, the small, coastal town of Eastpoint, Florida experienced one of the most horrific fires in history. The fire destroyed 36 homes, damaged two others and consumed over 950 acres of land.
- Over 200 people were displaced after this devastating, catastrophic fire roared through the rural area. There is no doubt, the men and women of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office will remember this event as one of the most prolific fires of their career. Due to the brave and selfless actions by these two law enforcement officers, Sgt. Jeff Hewitt and Deputy Jared Hewitt, there were no casualties during this tragedy.

- Deputy Jared Hewitt heard the order for all deputies to pull back, get to safer ground, due to zero visibility and the approaching flames. This was right before the call came for anyone in the area of Buck Street to attempt to locate and save a family of three whose truck had run off the road into a ditch. The three occupants were trapped inside, surrounded by smoke and fire
- Sgt. Jeff Hewitt received the same warning to pull out, but he also thought since he was already on Buck Street, he would drive a little further in hopes of seeing the vehicle. Sgt. Jeff Hewitt and Deputy Jared Hewitt both arrived at the location from opposite directions, at the same time.
- The front of the vehicle was covered in flames as Sgt. Jeff Hewitt began beating on the side of the vehicle, at the same time Deputy Jared Hewitt jumped into the back of the burning truck bed to beat on the cab window.
- Visibility was extremely poor, and the sound of the fire drowned out voices. Finally, the female occupant cracked open the door of the truck, and they were told to exit, however the male occupant was having trouble getting his 4-year old son out of his car seat.
- Sgt. Jeff Hewitt opened the back door, got the child from the seat and ran him to the patrol car. Deputy Jared Hewitt escorted the male and female occupants to the patrol car. All three occupants were safely

rescued and quickly left the scene with the deputies. By then, the truck was then completely engulfed in flames.

- The Franklin County Sheriff's office is honored to have these two deputies, father and son, on duty for the community. The State of Florida is grateful for their service and thankful for their bravery in preventing casualties on that tragic day.

Sergeant Chris Nichol

Panama City Police Department

Nominated by the Florida Police Chiefs Association

- Sergeant Chris Nichol has been with the Panama City Police Department for the past 12 years. In 2018 Sergeant Nichol responded to two very dangerous calls, and because of his leadership, both were resolved without law enforcement casualties.
- On May 22, 2018, Sergeant Nichol responded to the report of shots fired in the 2200 Block of Beck Avenue in Panama City. A murder suspect from an adjoining county had filled an apartment with gasoline and retreated to the second story where he began to shoot at citizens and responding officers.
- Upon arrival, Sgt. Nichol came under fire and was forced to retreat to the rear of his vehicle for cover. Sgt. Nichol, the SWAT team leader,

directed other members to locations where they could provide cover for officers who were pinned down.

- Sgt. Nichol worked with the Bay County Sheriff's Office SWAT Team to coordinate rescue of the pinned down officers. His actions on that day demonstrated sound tactical leadership while under fire. His actions directly contributed to the resolution of the situation without law enforcement casualties.
- On August 8, 2018, Officers of the Panama City Police Department responded to a local address in reference to a domestic dispute. The suspect armed himself and went into a bedroom at the end of a hallway.
- Sgt. Nichol, serving as SWAT Team Leader responded to the scene. SWAT entered the residence and relieved the patrol officers who had been inside. Negotiations with the suspect broke down after some time and the suspect became more aggressive.
- Sgt. Nichol was at the front of the SWAT team when the suspect emerged and opened fire, striking him in the neck. Despite being wounded, he fired less lethal rounds while another team member provided cover fire. Sgt. Nichol remained calm, ascertained that his wound was non-life-threatening and continued to provide direction to the team.

- Sgt. Nichol's ability to remain calm under fire, while wounded, led to the resolution of the situation without law enforcement casualties. These exceptional acts of valor while in extremely dangerous situations is an example of his outstanding work ethic and commitment to the State of Florida.

Corporal Mithil Patel

Florida Highway Patrol

Nominated by the Florida Highway Patrol

- Corporal Mithil Patel has been with the Florida Highway Patrol for the past 6 years. On December 3, 2018, Corporal Patel was conducting a traffic crash investigation that occurred on I-95 in Martin County. As a result of the traffic crash, the right lane and shoulder were closed. Service contractors and Road Rangers from the Florida Department of Transportation were on-scene with cones and arrow bards to alert the motoring public of the lane closure and potential hazards.
- While Corporal Patel was standing on the right shoulder speaking to Mr. Rony Bottex, one of the drivers involved in the initial crash, a secondary crash occurred. The secondary crash, not related to the initial crash, involved a Chevy van and an Audi passenger vehicle traveling northbound on I-95 in the left lane, ultimately causing the

Audi to rotate clockwise and travel northeast, directly into the lane closure where Corporal Patel and Mr. Bottex were standing.

- Recognizing the imminent danger from the secondary crash, Corporal Patel – without hesitation – took immediate action to push Mr. Bottex out of the Audi's path, likely saving Mr. Bottex's life. Both Corporal Patel and Mr. Bottex were struck by the vehicle, however, Corporal Patel received the brunt of the impact and was propelled into the air. The split-second reaction by Corporal Patel to place himself in harm's way to save the life of an innocent bystander is a testament to his true character.
- Corporal Patel was subsequently transported to Saint Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach. He was unable to return to full duty for nine months following the crash. Although Corporal Patel has no recollection of the crash, a news-media crew from CBS 12 captured the entire incident on video which made national and international news and has since gone viral.
- Corporal Patel was recognized as the 2019 Florida Highway Patrol Trooper of the Year which is awarded to a deserving member of the Florida Highway Patrol for their courage, service, and protection, to ensure the safety and welfare of Floridians and visitors.

Officer Michael Rice

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

Nominated by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

- Officer Michael Rice has been with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for the past 8 years. Officer Rice has been called upon for emergency response deployment on multiple occasions, most recently during the initial deployment to Hurricane Michael, when he was chosen to assist his regional commander in establishing the primary command post for the incident.
- Officer Rice maintained effective communication between the FWC officers in the disaster area, the various Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs) in the affected counties, and the state EOC. His organizational skills, dedication, and adaptability helps him to succeed at any task to which he is assigned. He is truly a valuable member of the Law Enforcement community, especially during times of critical need.
- Officer Rice excels as a Field Training Officer (FTO) and is assigned as the primary FTO in the Northeast Region. Due to his dedication to the success of his colleagues, Officer Rice has been utilized for training several officers outside of his assigned patrol area.
- Officer Rice has also demonstrated innovation within modern law enforcement practices when he recognized growing numbers of drug overdoses and drug-related cases in Central Florida. He worked to become the Northeast Region's first Drug-Recognition Expert and

obtained the highest level of certification in the field. Officer Rice frequently travels around the region to assist officers in developing their alcohol and drug detection skills.

- Officer Rice made substantial contributions to both patrol and investigations and is set to receive a lifesaving medal for saving a young woman that nearly drowned after she fainted and fell from a personal watercraft on Lake Weir.
- The woman was not wearing a life jacket and disappeared beneath the surface of the water. Officer Rice (and Investigator Justin Miller), quickly recognized the emergency and recovered her from the water before the incident became tragic.
- In another case, Officer Rice was contacted by the U.S. Forest Service to take lead on an illegal debris dumping investigation. The violation occurred in the Lake County portion on the Ocala Waste Management Area, where subjects dumped 6,620 pounds of construction material on a forest road. The officers located a piece of mail within the debris with a name and address on it.
- Officer Rice conducted an interview with the homeowner and learned that a company was hired to do repair work at the home. Officer Rice located the two suspects who were employees with the company. One of the suspects admitted that the two dumped the construction materials on the forest road instead of disposing of it properly. Arrest warrants were obtained for both suspects for felony dumping.

- Officer Rice truly understands what it means to be a conservation officer. He made substantial contributions to both patrol and investigations in protecting Florida's natural resources. In addition to his patrol duties, Officer Rice's experience and great work ethic are key in protecting Florida's natural resources from illegal exploitation.

Detective Sean Sweeney

Pasco County Sheriff's Office

Nominated by the Florida Gang Investigators Association

- Detective Sean Sweeney has been with the Pasco County Sheriff's Office for the past 11 years. Detective Sweeney is currently assigned to the Strategic Investigations Unit (SIU) and as a Task Force Officer (TFO) with Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives (ATF).
- Detective Sweeney's current responsibilities in SIU are to disrupt, displace, and ultimately dismantle specific criminal networks operating in Pasco County, with special emphasis on networks involved in violent behavior. Additionally, Detective Sweeney assists with gang member identification and documentation.
- Over the course of a three-year period, Detective Sweeney was instrumental in identifying criminal gang activity related to a "White Supremacist" prison gang known as the "Unforgiven." Through information sharing, intelligence gathering, and gang documentation,

Detective Sweeney worked hand in hand with detention deputies and federal law enforcement partners to build criminal charges against multiple members of the Unforgiven gang.

- The investigation revealed that multiple members of the Unforgiven were operating outside of the correctional facility, which led to the discovery of the illegal sale and possession of firearms by convicted felons, possession with the intent to distribute illicit narcotics, and the manufacturing of explosive devices. Over 36 members and associates were indicted on multiple charges.
- Detective Sweeney's hard work and dedication along with his ability to coordinate a multi-agency investigation with ATF and additional Task Force Officers from multiple jurisdictions led to a joint operation called "Operation Black Jack" on November 15, 2018. During the course of this operation, the ATF and Pasco County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant and served multiple federal indictments.
- Detective Sweeney's professionalism, loyalty, and exceptional performance reflected credit upon himself, the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, and the Tampa Bay Region for the relentless pursuit of reducing harmful criminal activity within our communities.

Special Agent Jennifer Wolf

Florida Department of Law Enforcement

Nominated by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement

- Special Agent Jennifer Wolf has been with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for almost 5 years. Special Agent Wolf is in the Tallahassee Regional Operations Center (TROC) Live Oak Field Office and is a member of the North Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force.
- Special Agent Wolf was the case agent on a total of 10 major cases in 2018, assisted on three other major cases, authored 147 Investigative Reports and made a total of 10 arrests. These cases included five In-Custody Death Investigations, one of which is currently pending trial after the inmate was indicted for First-Degree murder by a grand jury.
- In January 2018, Special Agent Wolf opened a case along with the Columbia County Sheriff's Office into a Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) led by Benjamin Ratliff. Ratliff had 29 arrests and 11 Felony convictions prior to this case. This investigation utilized many investigative techniques including controlled buys, interviews of witnesses and suspects, surveillance operations, and multiple search warrants on phones and photo line-ups.

- This investigation netted over a pound of methamphetamine, a seized SUV, and a total of five arrests that are being federally prosecuted. This case remains active.
- In addition to this case, Special Agent Wolf was assigned a cold case involving a Missing Person and worked with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office to locate and interview numerous family members and other witnesses, collect medical and police records and conducted a cadaver dog search on the properties of multiple land owners.
- Special Agent Wolf contacted the Office of StateWide Prosecution in Tampa and worked with Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Cass Castillo to move forward with charges against the suspect. Special Agent Wolf was instrumental in coordinating and preparing all witnesses for trial. He also testified in trial where a jury in Alachua County convicted the suspect of Manslaughter on December 6, 2018, he was sentenced to 30 years in prison.
- Special Agent Wolf's tenacity, resourcefulness and desire to leave no stone left unturned in her investigations undoubtedly contributed to the successfulness of the aforementioned cases. In addition to her current responsibilities, Special Agent Wolf also serves on the North Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force where she handles all aspects of major drug case investigations.
- Special Agent Wolf is an exemplary FDLE agent who represents what it means to be a devoted public servant.

Detective DeWayne White

Department of Financial Services, Division of Investigative & Forensic Services

Nominated by the Department of Financial Services, Division of Investigative & Forensic Services

- Detective DeWayne White has been with the Department of Financial Services, Division of Investigative & Forensic Services for the past 6 years. Detective White took a single complaint from a doctor regarding possible medical billing fraud involving his identity and discovered a major Insurance Fraud Ring operating throughout Central and South Florida, stealing doctor's identity and using the information to fraudulently bill and collect millions of dollars from two major healthcare providers in Florida.
- Detective White's investigation found that these individuals had filed fraudulent claims totaling over \$40 million dollars and claims paid totaling over \$10 million dollars by United Healthcare Insurance Company and BlueCross BlueShield of Florida.
- The significance of this discovery made it imperative to identify victim doctors, insurance carriers, insurance claims, subjects, fake clinics, as well as bank accounts used to collect and launder the fraudulently obtained money.

- Detective White's commitment to this case involved working long hours, reviewing thousands of pages of documents, visiting numerous locations in South Florida, communicating with numerous victims, and working diligently with co-workers and the Prosecutor's Office to dismantle this large insurance fraud ring.
- To date, a total of twelve subjects have been arrested and charged with Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO), Fraudulent Insurance Claims, Money Laundering, Scheme to Defraud, and Criminal Use of Personal Identification. Detective White's dedication to getting the job done demonstrates an intense commitment to providing excellent service to his co-workers, his superiors, and the citizens of Florida.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's give all our Law Enforcement Officers of the Year a round of applause and thank them for their willing to serve, dedication to duty and commitment to your personal safety.

And our overall winner, selected by an independent group of professionals, goes to the father and son team of Sgt. Jeff Hewitt and Deputy Jared Hewitt of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office.

Congratulations to all our winners and their families for their unselfish service.