



VOL 6: ISSUE 2



MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF HERNANDEZ

The TCSO uniform represents something unique amongst law enforcement agencies. We're more than just police. We employ two types of sworn officers: Corrections Officers (Jailer's License) and Deputy Sheriffs (Peace Officer's License). A good percentage of our sworn employees are both.

Many, if not most of our deputies start their careers working in our jail facilities as Corrections Officers (COs). COs go through a rigorous [academy training course](#) that equips them to do the job safely and effectively. This training includes de-escalation techniques and mental health awareness. COs work in the living environment of people who have been incarcerated on criminal charges. They know that problem and conflict resolution is done mainly through good communication and the ability to de-escalate tension. And they master those skills every day, on every shift. I know this is what makes our deputies so special. They take the relational skills they developed while working in the jail onto the streets.

Deputies with experience as COs, combined with the additional [academy training](#) they receive, are equipped to quickly identify when people are in crisis. This ability to see beyond a person's behavior to the causative factor

is key to avoiding the use of force and unnecessary arrests. These skills not only keep our officers safe, but they also equip them to be wise and make split second decisions that protect everyone involved in critical incidents.

As we have seen in jails across the country, TCSO is also experiencing staffing shortages. Deputies who have kept their Jailer's Licenses have been integral in helping us fill the gap, voluntarily picking up overtime shifts. If you're interested in a career in law enforcement and looking for a place to start, I invite you to consider working in corrections. It's a great place to learn and grow, with opportunities for advancement and great benefits. [Check us out!](#)



TCSO arrested Marcos Enrique Mendoza for the murder of Gerald Carl Vanbrakle Jr., 42 of Austin. Mendoza confessed to shooting Vanbrakle as well as a second victim, who sustained a non-life-threatening wound and was hospitalized.

At 9:35 am on February 4, 2022, deputies responded to the 16900 block of Hayride Circle in response to a 911 caller who reported shots fired and two victims with gunshot wounds. Upon arrival, deputies found Vanbrakle, obviously deceased with multiple gunshot wounds, and a Hispanic male with a non-life-threatening gunshot wound.

Evidence at the scene and witness statements led detectives to believe the shooter was Marcos Enrique Mendoza. They then began tracking down his whereabouts. On February 5, 2022, a tip came in from a caller who said Mendoza was located on a property in East Travis County. TCSO SWAT, aided by Hays County SWAT located Mendoza, hiding on a property adjacent to the reported location.

TCSO NEW HERDING DOGS



We're excited to welcome two new K-9s Sam and Zeke, herding dogs in our Estray Unit. They are mixed border collies (a breed with heightened herding instincts) who were recently trained in Granbury, TX by [Diamond J Stock-dogs](#). Training typically begins when the dogs hit their first birthday and can take up to a year, depending on the dog.

As of 2017, there are over [1,000 farms](#) in Travis County, many of which have a good deal of livestock. Occasionally, these animals escape their boundaries, which can cause all sorts of problems. Herding dogs are trained to gather up these strays and can get to places that are difficult for humans to access. Sam and Zeke have already had two successful deployments.

WESTLAKE H.S. MENTORSHIP



Sr. Deputy Garrett Kunz is a School Resource Officer assigned to Westlake High School. This year, student Clara Stokes approached him and expressed her interest in a career in law enforcement. She asked if he might be willing to mentor her. Deputy Kunz was happy to accept that invitation and has enjoyed teaching her the basics of the job. He even went so far as to set up an investigation for the young sleuth. Clara worked the case beautifully and ended up arresting the Assistant Principal!

SPREADING LOVE TO SENIORS



Our Community Outreach Unit (COU) spread some love to residents at the Sedona Trace and Conservatory at North Austin senior living facilities. TCSO corrections officers, deputies, and civilian staff added hand-written notes of support and love to approximately 300 Valentine's Day cards. On Valentine's Day, our COU officers delivered the cards along with stuffed teddy bears to the seniors – so much joy & love was felt by all!

WESTLAKE PUBLIC SAFETY DAY



Sheriff Hernandez, along with Deputies Jon Culin and Matt Henson from our Police Technology Unit, recently joined the [Westlake Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Academy](#) for their Public Safety Day. They discussed the role of the Sheriff's Office in the areas of community corrections and law enforcement, with a focus on recent crime trends and emerging issues. Deputy Culin presented new opportunities created by drones, which can safely survey dangerous situations and document car accidents, reopening roadways much more quickly. It was a lively discussion, and TCSO is grateful to the Westlake Chamber for inviting Sheriff Hernandez and our Technology Unit to participate.

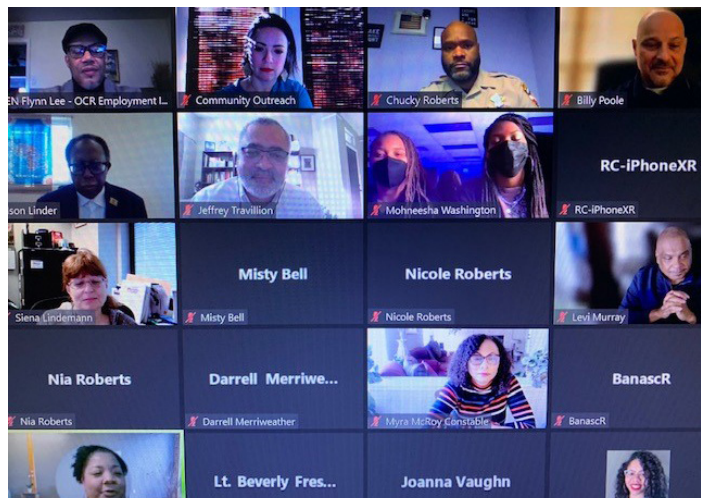
CITIZENS' ACADEMY



TCSO is excited to host our 35<sup>th</sup> Citizens' Academy this Spring. The academy provides citizens valuable insights on the criminal justice process and the how's and why's of TCSO operations and services. The education and dialogue the academy offers is designed to improve community relations and the quality of life for Travis County residents.

The Citizens' Academy is a 10-week program that will meet every Thursday from March 24 – May 26. There are 10 slots still available - application process closes March 7<sup>th</sup>. You can find more information and apply online [HERE](#).

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the [TCSO Building Bridges](#) program hosted a Black History Month virtual celebration. It was a pleasure to have the Negro National Anthem performed by Sherice Williams and an African dance piece "Wade in the Water" performed by the [LBJ First Ladies](#) as well as [Austin NAACP](#) President Nelson Linder and Travis County [Precinct One](#) Commissioner Jeff Travillion share thoughts on the significance of black history in our community – honoring the past with hope for the future.

Thank you to all the amazing performers and presenters, and the great community turnout, for such a meaningful discussion! Together we're making a difference in our community's progress.

WATER CRISIS RESPONSE



When the [City of Austin](#) issued a boil water notice earlier this month, TCSO jails were prepared to care for inmates and staff. TCSO maintains an up-to-date strategic stockpile of fresh drinking water, and bottled water was distributed, along with coolers of water that had been boiled prior to being consumed by inmates and staff. Supplementing this supply, were additional bottles provided by the [Travis County Emergency Operations Center](#). We are grateful for the teamwork of our county partners and our extraordinary staff, who made sure no one went without clean water for the duration of the boil water notice.