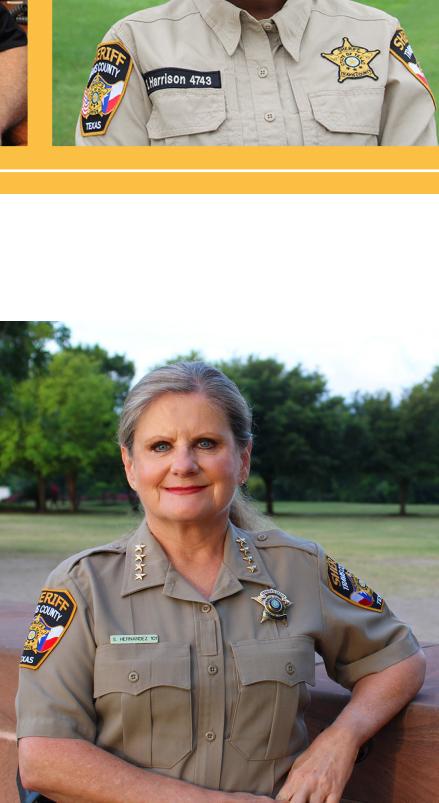
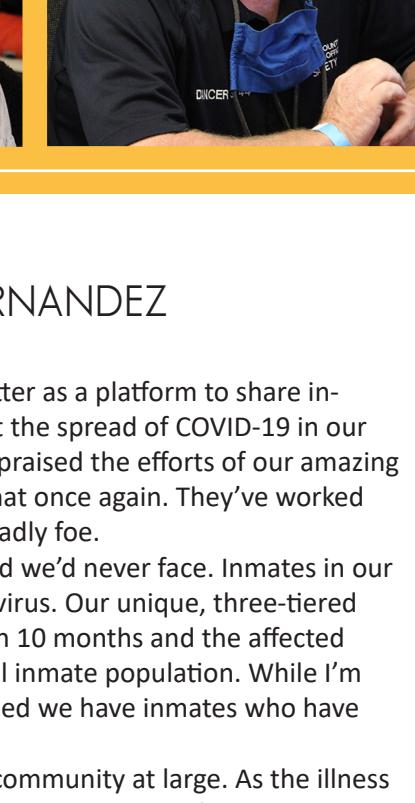


JANUARY NEWSLETTER

TRAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



VOL 5: ISSUE 1



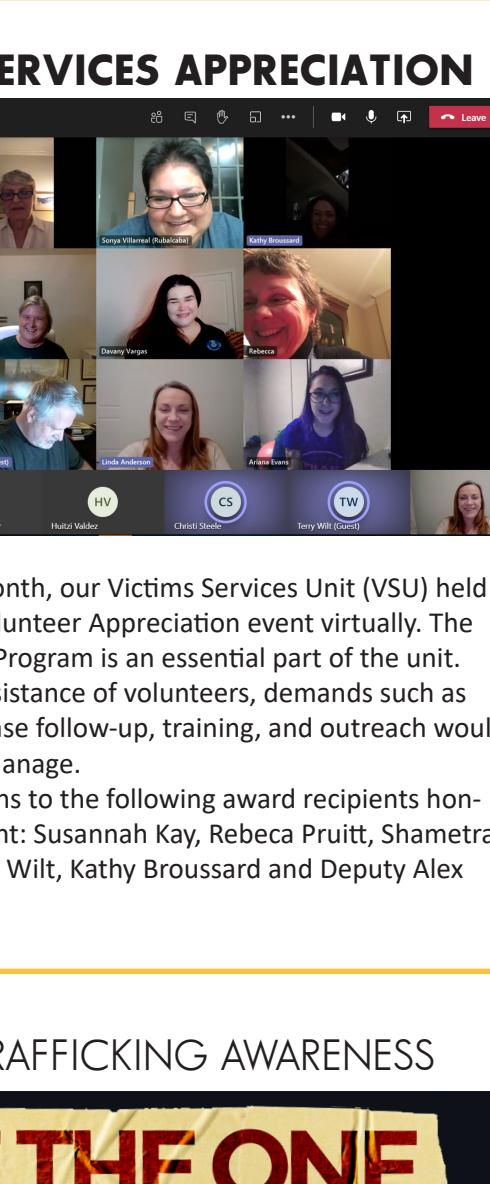
MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF HERNANDEZ

For nearly a year now, we've used this newsletter as a platform to share information with you regarding our efforts to fight the spread of COVID-19 in our community and within our jails. I've repeatedly praised the efforts of our amazing employees and I'll take this opportunity to do that once again. They've worked tirelessly to hold the line against an invisible, deadly foe.

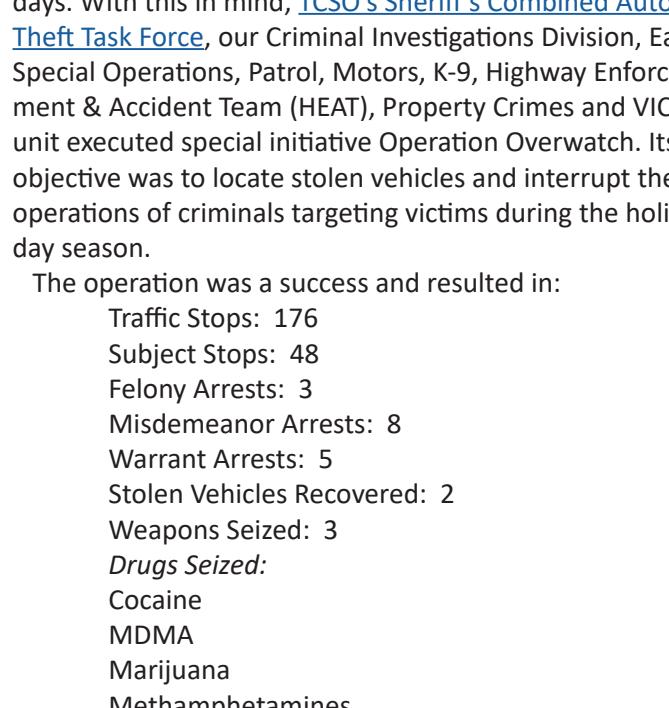
This month, we experienced a reality we hoped we'd never face. Inmates in our general population have tested positive for the virus. Our unique, three-tiered isolation system kept the virus out for more than 10 months and the affected inmates represent approximately 3% of our total inmate population. While I'm pleased the percentage is so low, I'm disheartened we have inmates who have tested positive.

The jail community is a representation of the community at large. As the illness has moved rapidly among residents of Travis County, it naturally found its way into our jail facilities. The very nature of our duties requires a constant cycle of employees, inmates and service providers on our jail campuses.

I think the current situation is a call to action for each and every one of us. It's imperative that we continue to follow the procedures we know work; frequent hand washing, social distancing, wearing masks and sanitizing common surfaces is a regimen we have to adhere to with renewed vigor. Together, we can bring the numbers down in our community, which will ultimately benefit and protect us all.

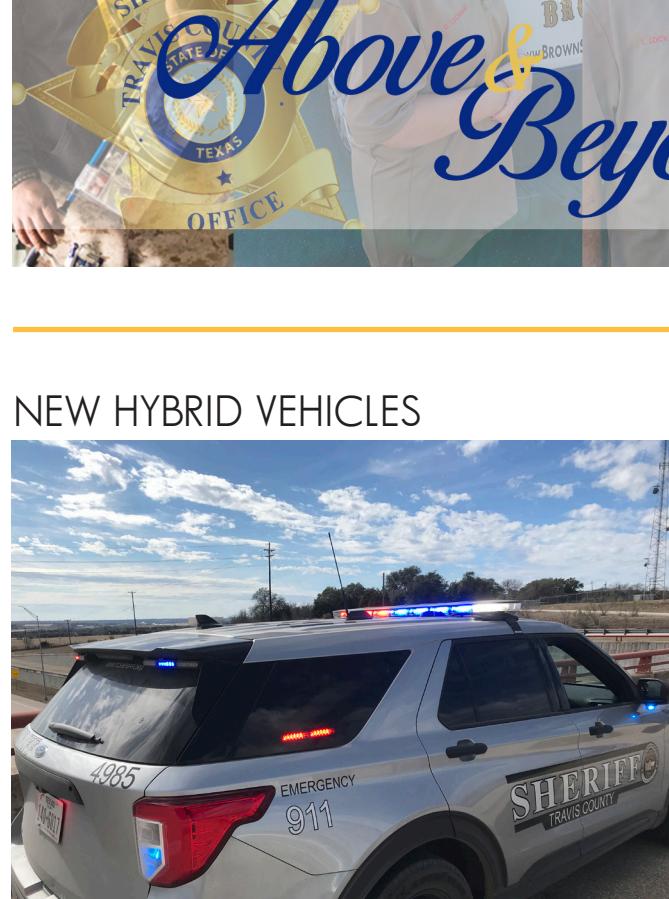


PRAYER WALK



On January 26th, TCSO Chaplain Lamar Claypool organized a prayer walk around the perimeter of the Travis County Correctional Complex to allow staff to reflect together and pray for everyone suffering from COVID-19, whether among our staff, the inmate population, or in our community. While social distancing and masking, a small group came together in fellowship to make the walk, which was filled with well wishes for everyone affected by the pandemic and hope for a recovery that brings profound healing.

OPERATION OVERWATCH



It's typical for TCSO to see an increase in vehicle thefts and burglaries around the Christmas and New Year holidays. With this in mind, [TCSO's Sheriff's Combined Auto Theft Task Force](#), our Criminal Investigations Division, East Special Operations, Patrol, Motors, K-9, Highway Enforcement & Accident Team (HEAT), Property Crimes and VICE unit executed special initiative Operation Overwatch. Its objective was to locate stolen vehicles and interrupt the operations of criminals targeting victims during the holiday season.

The operation was a success and resulted in:

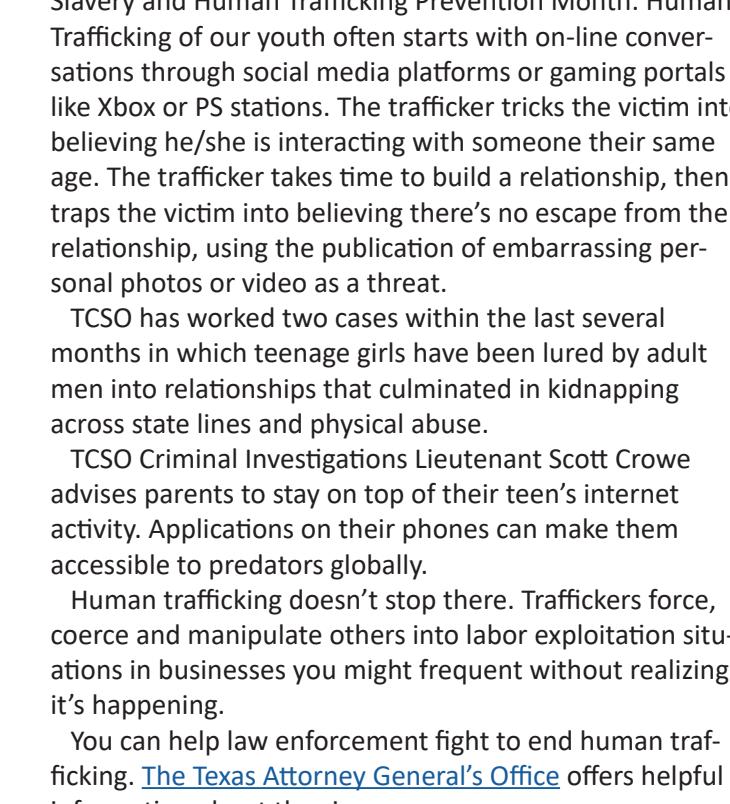
Traffic Stops: 176
Subject Stops: 48
Felony Arrests: 3
Misdemeanor Arrests: 8
Warrant Arrests: 5
Stolen Vehicles Recovered: 2
Weapons Seized: 3

Drugs Seized:

Cocaine
MDMA
Marijuana
Methamphetamine
Promethazine
THC Oil

TCSO would like to thank the Hays County Sheriff's Office, Texas Department of Public Safety and Pflugerville Police Department for the assistance they provided as incidents unfolded.

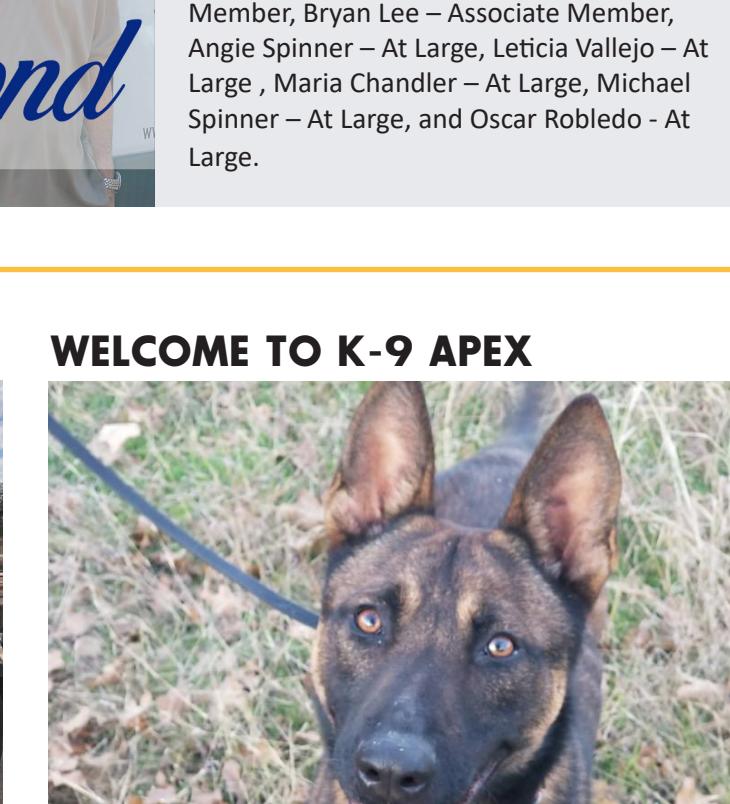
VICTIM SERVICES APPRECIATION



Earlier this month, our Victims Services Unit (VSU) held their annual Volunteer Appreciation event virtually. The VSU Volunteer Program is an essential part of the unit. Without the assistance of volunteers, demands such as on-call shifts, case follow-up, training, and outreach would be difficult to manage.

Congratulations to the following award recipients honored at the event: Susannah Kay, Rebeca Pruitt, Shametra McGregor, Terry Wilt, Kathy Broussard and Deputy Alex Sanchez.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS



By Presidential proclamation, January 2021 was National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Human Trafficking of our youth often starts with on-line conversations through social media platforms or gaming portals like Xbox or PS stations. The trafficker tricks the victim into believing he/she is interacting with someone their same age. The trafficker takes time to build a relationship, then traps the victim into believing there's no escape from the relationship, using the publication of embarrassing personal photos or video as a threat.

TCSO has worked two cases within the last several months in which teenage girls have been lured by adult men into relationships that culminated in kidnapping across state lines and physical abuse.

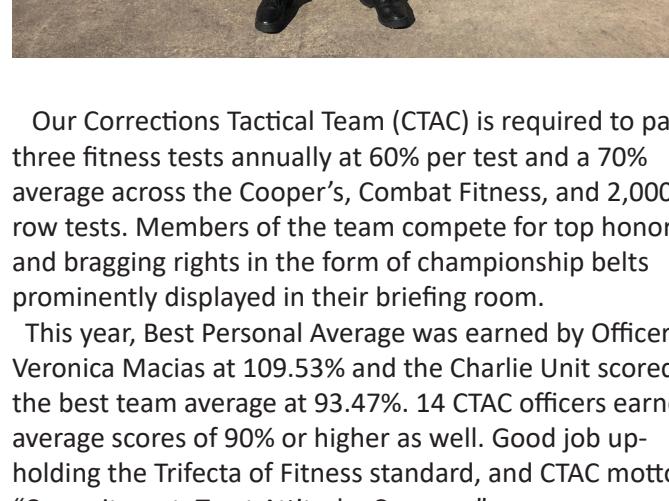
TCSO Criminal Investigations Lieutenant Scott Crowe advises parents to stay on top of their teen's internet activity. Applications on their phones can make them accessible to predators globally.

Human trafficking doesn't stop there. Traffickers force, coerce and manipulate others into labor exploitation situations in businesses you might frequent without realizing it's happening.

You can help law enforcement fight to end human trafficking. [The Texas Attorney General's Office](#) offers helpful information about the signs.

If you believe someone is being trafficked, please report it by calling the TCSO tip line at 512-854-1444 or via the [iWatch Texas website](#) or call their hotline 844-643-2251.

NEW HYBRID VEHICLES



TCSO is rolling out 10 new hybrid Ford Explorers to test how they perform under the stress of law enforcement operations.

The hybrid Explorers, nine of which have been deployed so far, look just like any other vehicle in the fleet. According to Ford, over the course of a year, hybrid Explorers can potentially use 1,000 fewer gallons of fuel than a non-hybrid Explorer.

TCSO is also replacing older vehicles for detectives with hybrid Ford Fusions, retiring older Ford Crown Victorias and Chevrolet Tahoes.

Additionally, two changes to the light bars on top of some new patrol vehicles could help during time-sensitive calls and save lives.

One change allows deputies to use their light bar to send white light in all directions around their vehicle. This can be particularly helpful, for example, when searching for a lost child in the dark.

The other change will slow the flashing red and blue lights when a deputy's vehicle is stopped. Research has shown that slower flashing light patterns are less likely to attract drunk drivers and could thereby reduce the number of rear-end collisions into TCSO vehicles.

WELCOME TO K-9 APEX

The TCSO K-9 unit is larger than ever before with the addition of our sixth canine Apex, a 16-month-old male "mali-herd" (German Shepherd and Malinois mix). He joins fellow K-9s JP, Shadow, Roki, Radar, and Bodie.

Apex and his handler, Senior Deputy Colton Yarborough, have begun training, which consists of a five-week basic handler's course to certify them as a team.

Training in TCSO's K-9 unit doesn't stop there. All six canine teams train together for 10 hours one day a week. The day starts with physical training with their handler, then they track through thick woods, search large, multi-level buildings, or perform narcotics searches.

"More K-9 teams allows for a quicker response time to calls requiring an apprehension or search," said TCSO Sergeant Brian Turner, who supervises the K9 unit. Turner said the K-9 unit has had five teams since the 1990s and that "as the need for canine responses increased, inevitably so did the number of canines required to respond to those calls."

FITNESS AWARD

Our Corrections Tactical Team (CTAC) is required to pass three fitness tests annually at 60% per test and a 70% average across the Cooper's, Combat Fitness, and 2,000m row tests. Members of the team compete for top honors and bragging rights in the form of championship belts prominently displayed in their briefing room.

This year, Best Personal Average was earned by Officer Veronica Macias at 109.53% and the Charlie Unit scored the best team average at 93.47%. 14 CTAC officers earned average scores of 90% or higher as well. Good job upholding the Trifecta of Fitness standard, and CTAC motto "Commitment, Trust Attitude, Courage."

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH - PACE

In 2018, TCSO Corrections Lieutenant Laura Town and Clinical Mental Health Supervisor Brook Bonnema attended the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Conference on the use of Restrictive Housing (RH) in jails and prisons. The training was based on the Department of Justice's (DOJ) guiding principles of managing and reducing the use of restrictive housing/isolation.

Restrictive housing is defined as any correctional housing that removes the individual from the general population, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, and places him/her in a locked room or cell for most of the day. On average, these individuals are isolated for 22 hours or more.

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