



March NEWSLETTER

VOL 3: ISSUE 3



MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF HERNANDEZ

This month, I'm pleased to share our [2018 Annual Report](#) with you. In it, you'll have the opportunity to read about our divisions and the ways each one serves Travis County. When most people think of the Sheriff's Office, they likely think of patrol deputies and detectives, but the agency carries vast responsibilities in areas you might not have even imagined.

In preparation for this Annual Report, I assembled leaders from each of our bureaus (Administration & Support, Corrections and Law Enforcement), both sworn and civilian, and asked each leader to share the accomplishments of his/her team. I was so proud of the achievements made and am confident you'll agree these innovative solutions are noteworthy and provide significant cost savings for Travis County through better efficiency.

We continually look for ways to serve at the highest standards and I thank you all for your continued support.



A SPECIAL GIRL SCOUTS THANK YOU



Did you know the Girl Scouts give "Hero Boxes" of cookies to military personnel and first responders? And did you know there's a Girl Scouts troop in Austin whose members are all certified divers – the only one of its kind in the nation? We found out about these remarkable young women when they reached out to us and asked if they could give cookies to our Dive Team.

Dive Team Sergeant Greg Lawson and Lake Patrol Deputy Jennifer Boland met the scouts on Lake Travis and showed them our boat and dive gear. The group went out to Starnes Island and Lawson taught the troop how TCSO handles underwater evidence recovery. The scouts earned certificates for the training and our dive team happily accepted the Girl Scouts cookie bounty!



TCSO DIVE TEAM



The Sheriff's Office Underwater Recovery Team (SURT) was formed in March 1998 to replace an all-volunteer civilian team in an effort to enhance underwater investigations done in Travis County. SURT members are highly dedicated and know that they are performing an invaluable service to the residents of Travis County.

The Team is comprised of deputies from the Law Enforcement Bureau, and specially trained civilians from the Corrections and Administration & Support Bureaus. Positions on the team range from topside support to scuba divers. The SURT has 12 training days a year. Training topics include search and recovery techniques, diver rescue, deep diving, limited visibility diving, night operations and specialized equipment familiarization.

Photo courtesy of Jennifer Idol

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WESTLAKE LEADERSHIP CLASS



On March 14th, Sheriff Hernandez had the privilege of presenting to attendees at the [Westlake Chamber of Commerce's](#) Leadership Class. The class consists of 14 individuals who live/work in the Westlake community. The March topic was Government and Sheriff Hernandez shared insights on leadership, the importance of a vision and mission, and the strategic direction of TCSO.

SHORT HOMICIDE CONVICTION



On April 7, 2017 deputies responded to a 911 call reporting a deceased man in western Travis County. The body of Austin defense attorney James Short was discovered and TCSO began its investigation into his death. Evidence indicated Short was tortured prior to his death and items collected lead detectives to arrest Justin Twyne and charge him with first degree murder.

Twyne went on trial March 5th and was found guilty. He was sentenced on March 12th to 40 years in prison with parole eligibility after half the sentence has been served.



COBRA #91 GRADUATION



The TCSO Training Academy offers a Corrections Officers Basic Recruit Academy (COBRA) for all new-hire Corrections Officers. Corrections Officers attend the COBRA course while on-duty within their first year of employment; Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) provides a one year, temporary Corrections Officer license. COBRA is 360 hours of very educational, detailed and supportive instruction that consists of the following:

- PHASE 1: Course satisfies TCOLE requirements for the Basic County Corrections course; topics include booking, identification, inmate rights, head-counts, emergency procedures, searches, classifications, health services, etc.
- PHASE 2: Course highlights those areas that are fundamental to normal and emergency operations of the Travis County Correctional system; topics include defensive tactics, firearms training, CPR, smoke-house safety, departmental policies, interpersonal communication, wellness, etc.

Congratulations to the following officers of COBRA Class #86 that graduated on March 8th: John Benavides, Shishir Budhathoki, Jeffrey Cairns, Victoria Davis, Eli Diarra, James Fester, Heather Fraser, Vidal Cobra, Desiree Jackson, Sydney Jetmore, Nurbek Kulov, Jeremy Landen, Veronica Mancias, David Mojica, Victor Naranjo, Joseph Quiroz, Julio Solis, Edgar Soto, Tori Sparkman, Daniel Sullivan, Victor Tavares, Keneniah Villanueva, James Williams, and Adrian Young.

IMPAIRED DRIVING MOBILIZATION



Each year, TCSO participates in the Impaired Driving Mobilization grant offered by the Texas Department of Transportation. This grant operates in four waves designed to target specific times of year when impaired driving spikes: Spring Break, Independence Day, Labor Day and Christmas/New Year's Eve. Our Spring Break initiative took place March 8th -25th.

The grant provides enough funding for TCSO to offer 80-90 hours of overtime shifts to our DWI deputies. Additional deputies on our roadways helps reduce the number of impaired drivers and saves lives.

DWI MARCH FOR CHANGE



On March 8th, TCSO was proud to show their support and honor those that lost their lives to impaired driving at the [AAA Texas](#) and [MADD](#) DWI March for Change at the Texas State Capitol. It was powerful to connect with the victims' families. Working together with our community we can bring awareness to the devastating impact of impaired driving.



LAW ENFORCEMENT PROMOTION



On March 1st, Sheriff Hernandez appointed Craig Smith as Major of the Law Enforcement (LE) Bureau. Smith began his career with the Travis County Sheriff's Office in 1993. He worked in the Corrections Bureau prior to transferring to a field-training officer.

In 1998, Smith moved to the Narcotics Unit where he worked as an Undercover Narcotics Investigator, later attending the Drug Enforcement Agency Academy in Quantico, VA to become a certified methamphetamine laboratory expert. In 2001, he moved to the SWAT Team and attended training in Tactical Leadership presented by United States Army DELTA, and quickly became a team leader. Smith moved to the Training Academy in 2005 as an instructor in firearms, defensive tactics, narcotics, arrest search and seizure and search warrants. He promoted to Detective in 2006 and worked in the Major Crimes Unit; his duties included the investigation of homicides, suicides and sexual assaults.

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THE DONUT BOY



On March 23rd, TCSO joined the Austin Police Department and the University of Texas Police Department as The Donut Boy came to town.

Tyler Carach is on a mission to thank law enforcement officers from all over the country. It all began in August 2016 when at a local store, he saw four deputies and asked if he could use his allowance money to buy them their favorite snack...Donuts! His campaign as The Donut Boy began, delivering more than 80,000 donuts to agencies in 44 states.

Thanks for the treats and appreciation, Donut Boy...We look forward to having you back in Austin!



On February 13, 2018, a driver with his child in the back seat of his pickup truck observed a man exit his vehicle in distress near Lamar and US Hwy 183. The man walked directly toward the pickup and forced his way into the vehicle and then forced the driver to drive across town.

The driver made it to the 11200 block of FM 969 when he noticed a TCSO Deputy traveling toward him in the opposing lane. He stopped his truck directly in front of Deputy Ann Rivas' patrol vehicle and yelled to Rivas that the man in his truck tried to kill him. The suspect immediately exited the front passenger's side and went directly toward Rivas. He shoved her against her vehicle, assaulting her by striking her in the face multiple times and attempting to strangle her with his hands.

Rivas maintained consciousness during the assault and was able to push the suspect off her. She stomped a Taser and commanded him to the ground on his stomach. A DPS Trooper was the first to respond to her assistance and was able to take the suspect into custody.

The pickup driver later told deputies he was in fear for his life and that of his young child; and that his only safe escape was to drive directly in front of Rivas' patrol vehicle to report the incident while in progress.

For her part in foiling a kidnapping and for the competency she demonstrated, subduing the suspect, Rivas was recognized with the Commendation Bar at the TCSO Awards Ceremony on March 28th.

