

**Executive Director Dave Kerner**  
Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles



**Colonel Gary L. Howze, II**  
Florida Highway Patrol

***Welcome you***  
to the  
**Florida Highway Patrol**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Banquet**



**Sponsored by the Florida Highway Patrol Advisory Council & Auxiliary**



FLORIDA HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES

Dave Kerner  
Executive Director

General Headquarters  
2900 Apalachee Parkway  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399



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## 9th Annual Florida Highway Patrol Awards Banquet July 26, 2025

Dear FHP members, family, and friends:

Welcome to our 9th Annual Awards Banquet. On behalf of Governor Ron DeSantis and the Florida Cabinet, we are delighted to join you in sunny Orlando to honor and thank our many State Troopers, State Law Enforcement Dispatchers, civilian staff, and volunteers receiving awards and recognition tonight. The personnel honored tonight represent just a fraction of the amazing and courageous work FHP does every day, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

I would like to recognize the men and women of the FHP Advisory Council and Florida Highway Patrol Auxiliary, who are primarily responsible for the tremendous success of this annual awards banquet. Without their effort, resources, and passion, this important event would not be a reality.

As we enjoy this event and the freedoms of the greatest country to ever exist, let us give thanks and gratitude to the men and women who have given the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country. Whether in the military or law enforcement, we recognize that their death was for our protection and the protection of our way of life.

The Florida Highway Patrol continues to lead the way in serving the public safety needs of the great state of Florida. From excelling in our traditional duties, to taking on new and important duties such as university and school protection, border security, immigration enforcement, aviation support, and pursuit intervention, State Troopers lead the way!

Finally, let us also remember the 53 FHP State Troopers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. We pray for their families and friends left behind and hope they have comfort knowing their loved one is a hero..

It is a privilege and honor to serve this proud and historic law enforcement agency. On behalf of Colonel Howze and the entire command staff, thank you for your support of your Florida Highway Patrol.

Sincerely,

Dave Kerner

Courtesy   Service   Protection



**The Florida Highway Patrol Executive Staff welcomes all nominees, members, distinguished guests, and their families to the FHP 9th Annual Awards Banquet. We are proud of your hard work, achievements, and dedication to the Florida Highway Patrol's mission by keeping Florida's roadways safe and always upholding our motto – Courtesy \* Service \* Protection. Congratulations to each of our award winners.**



## *Awards Program Agenda*

**Welcome by Colonel Gary Howze  
Invocation by FHP Auxiliary Major Wayne Hunter  
Presentation of Colors by the FHP Honor Guard  
Pledge of Allegiance by Colonel Gary Howze  
National Anthem by Alessandra Feola**

**Opening Remarks by:  
Colonel Gary L. Howze, II**

### *Dinner*

**Remarks by:  
American Association of State Troopers,  
Executive Director John Bagnardi  
Auxiliary Lt. Colonel Danny Barber  
Advisory Council President Steve Barnett  
Executive Director Dave Kerner**

**Announcer: Erik von Ancken**

### **Award Categories**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Criminal Investigator of the Year</b>               | <b>James Fulford Award</b>                          |
| <b>Traffic Homicide Investigator of the Year</b>       | <b>Life-Saving Award</b>                            |
| <b>Instructor of the Year</b>                          | <b>Silver Star Award</b>                            |
| <b>Criminal Interdiction Unit of the Year</b>          | <b>Purple Heart Award</b>                           |
| <b>Public Service Award</b>                            | <b>Medal of Valor</b>                               |
| <b>Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Excellence Award</b> | <b>Civilian Employee of the Year</b>                |
| <b>DUI Achievement Award</b>                           | <b>State Law Enforcement Dispatcher of the Year</b> |
| <b>Hurd-Smith Award</b>                                | <b>FHP Auxiliary Trooper of the Year</b>            |
|  | <b>Trooper of the Year</b>                          |

**Closing Remarks by Colonel Gary L. Howze, II**

**Benediction by FHP Auxiliary Major Wayne Hunter**



Announcer

## Erik von Ancken



Erik von Ancken grew up in Scarsdale, N.Y., and graduated from the State University of New York's Binghamton University. He holds a degree in economics and a minor in Spanish. He started his career in journalism with an internship at a CBS affiliate in his college town. Later, Erik covered the metro New York City area, where he learned to shoot, edit, report, produce, and anchor. Erik also reported and anchored at an ABC affiliate in Sarasota. Erik joined the Orlando News 6 Team in 2003.

Erik's reporting and anchoring have earned him more than a dozen prestigious awards, recognizing him as one of the best and most trusted journalists in the southeastern United States. He has been honored with Emmys for both his anchoring and reporting along with numerous nominations for his storytelling and investigative work. He has earned numerous first place and best-overall awards from the Associated Press and the Society of Professional Journalists.

# Award Nominees

## Criminal Investigator of the Year

### Trooper Raul H. Gonzalez-Cortina – Troop Q, BCII



On March 26, 2024, Trooper Gonzalez-Cortina received information about a stolen vehicle that was being driven by a primary suspect in a Major Theft Organization investigation. Trooper GonzalezCortina located the vehicle and began surveillance in Miami-Dade County. Trooper Gonzalez-Cortina contacted task force members and utilized the Miami-Dade Police Department's (MDPD) Aviation Unit to track the stolen vehicle. The subject was taken into custody without incident with the assistance of Troop E Troopers, and the stolen vehicle was recovered.

Trooper Gonzalez-Cortina was able to obtain enough evidence during surveillance to obtain a search warrant for the subject's farm property for stolen vehicles, stolen cargo, stolen vehicle parts, and other evidence of criminal activity. On March 28, 2024, Trooper Gonzalez-Cortina executed the search warrant with the assistance of FHP Cargo Theft Task Force officers and the MDPD Cargo Theft Unit. During the search, a military mortar projectile was located. Trooper Gonzalez-Cortina stopped the search and secured the property. He summoned the assistance of Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) teams, and the MDPD and US Air Force (USAF) EOD Teams responded. The USAF EOD team determined the mortar to be live ordinance and took custody of it for disposal.

## Traffic Homicide Investigator of the Year

### Corporal Stephen J. Rudd – Troop L, SIRT Team



On February 2, 2024, Trooper Zachary Fink was killed in the line of duty car crash as a result of a subject fleeing law enforcement during a high-speed pursuit. This investigation was not a typical traffic homicide investigation. It involved a fleeing reckless vehicle, which was a non-contact vehicle. These reckless actions resulted in the death of the pursuing officer, Trooper Fink, and a truck driver.

Corporal Rudd obtained all known available videos of the incident, including in-car camera footage and body-worn camera footage from the many officers on scene. He obtained DNA from the suspect as well as from the interior of the vehicle. Furthermore, he obtained a warrant for the suspect's cellphone to further determine the events of this deadly morning. His in-depth investigation resulted in a solid criminal case. The suspect was arrested on February 2, 2024, for Murder (2 counts), Vehicular Homicide (2 counts), Driving without a License resulting in death (2 counts), Felony Murder (2 counts), Felony Homicide (1 counts), and Fleeing and Eluding Officer after crash involving death (1 count).

## Instructor of the Year

### Sergeant Joshua N. Wright - FHP Academy



Training Academy, assigned to the In-Service Training Section. Sergeant Wright provided excellent training to recruits and in-service personnel throughout the year while assisting with other projects, including designing an in-service pursuit driving course, overseeing the ammunition inventory, and assuming responsibility for the academy firearms inventory when the Division Armorer left.

During 2024, Sergeant Wright worked tirelessly, demonstrating professionalism and dedication in accomplishing the FHP Training Academy's mission. Sergeant Wright researched and developed a pursuit driving course for agency members. When FHP updated its policy allowing troopers to pursue dangerous fleeing criminals, Sergeant Wright took the initiative to create a driver training course to enhance troopers' pursuit capabilities. He conducted research and visited other states, and with the information he acquired, he developed and tested a pursuit driving course. While also responsible for the agency's ammunition inventory, Sergeant Wright, assisted with the armory inventory during a crucial time when the Division Armorer resigned from the agency. Sergeant Wright assisted with a final surplus of outdated equipment and ensured full accountability within armory operations.



## Auxiliary Instructor of the Year

### Auxiliary Captain Joseph Filice, District Commander, Troop F

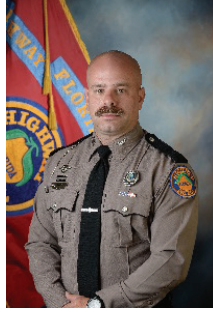


Florida Highway Patrol Auxiliary Captain Joseph Filice has served in Troop F, Bradenton, since April 2010. Captain Filice supervises the auxiliary functions in Troop F, ensuring its auxiliary members can achieve their normal duties, training, and officer safety. He is recognized for his passion, qualifications, and expertise in the many disciplines of instruction. Captain Filice holds 25 instructor certifications to include general instructor, firearms, armorer, and taser. He is a tremendous resource, supplementing the local Troop F training program for full-time and auxiliary members. The 12th Judicial Circuit recently commended Captain Filice for his instruction on helmet safety during PedBike week.

During 2024, Captain Filice volunteered nearly 1,900 hours, primarily for instruction and patrol-related duties. In addition to his FHPA duties, he is involved in various community outreach programs, including the local Marine Corps League, where he donates numerous hours of service.

## Contraband Interdiction Unit Team of the Year

**Trooper Trent D. Sistrunk**  
**Trooper Corey A. Burk, Troop B, CIU**



In 2024, Trooper Trent Sistrunk and Trooper Corey Burk were responsible for the seizure of the following: 79 pounds of marijuana, 10 pounds of methamphetamine, 207 pounds of cocaine, 4 guns, 5 vehicles, and \$8,000 in US currency, resulting in 189 felony charges being filed.

Additionally, Trooper Sistrunk conducted a traffic stop with an arrest for fraud. The vehicle had 29 stolen credit cards and 3 stolen checks. This traffic stop led to a large-scale check theft/cashing ring that had made fraudulent check deposits totaling more than \$174,000 in US currency and 100 victims.

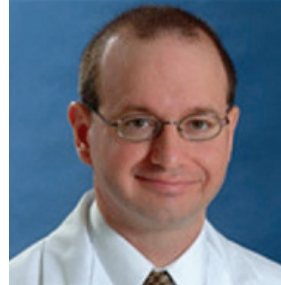
## Public Service Award



**Dr. Brad Feuer**  
**Chief Surgeon**



**Dr. Carl Schulman**  
**Southern Regional**  
**Surgeon**



**Dr. Peter Pappas**  
**Northern Region**  
**Surgeon**

All three of our regional surgeons are highly qualified physicians who volunteer their time to support the Florida Highway Patrol. The surgeons have provided medical directorship of the Training Academy and Regional Special Response Teams, advised command on a variety of medical issues, responded to troopers injured while on duty, facilitated tertiary care referrals in cases of complex illness, provided troop-wide health screenings, and supported the men and women of the Florida Highway Patrol in many other ways.

For over three years, the Regional Surgeons have led quarterly presentations on member health and wellness. These presentations have been well attended by Florida Highway Patrol members, Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles members, and many of our partner state and federal law enforcement agencies throughout the Southeastern United States.

## Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Excellence Award

### Sergeant Timothy B. Collins, Troop I



Sergeant Timothy Collins is a very reliable, dedicated employee and is highly respected among his peers and members in the Tallahassee district. Due to a sergeant position vacancy in the Tallahassee district, Sergeant Collins managed two squads for over a year. He was also called upon to perform district Lieutenant duties and manage the entire district for approximately three months while the district Lieutenant was out on medical leave. Sergeant Collins was relied upon heavily and performed the duties of three people during this time to ensure the Tallahassee district-maintained operations to meet the agency's goals and objectives.

**Additionally, Sergeant Collins earned a Life Saving Award for his heroics last May.**



## DUI Achievement Award (DUI 100)

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Trooper Jordan A. Capela, Troop G</b>      | <b>170</b> |
| <b>Trooper Ryan A. Ehrhart, Troop F</b>       | <b>139</b> |
| <b>Trooper Taylor M. Ledford, Troop F</b>     | <b>136</b> |
| <b>Trooper Roger D. Berlyne, Troop C</b>      | <b>111</b> |
| <b>Trooper Aison K. Desuyo, Troop L</b>       | <b>108</b> |
| <b>Trooper Kenneth R. Montgomery, Troop G</b> | <b>105</b> |



## Hurd-Smith Award

### **Trooper Jordan A. Capela, Troop G – 170 Arrests**



The Hurd-Smith Award is given to the trooper with the most Driving Under the Influence arrests in a year. This award was named in honor of two troopers who were killed in the line of duty by drunk drivers. The Hurd-Smith Award is presented annually in memory of Trooper Kimberly A. Hurd, who was killed by a drunk driver on July 16, 1992, and Trooper Robert G. Smith, who was killed by a drunk driver on July 26, 1997.

# James Fulford Award

Presented by FHPA

## Trooper Esteban Ramos, Troop K



In 2024, Florida Highway Patrol Auxiliary recruiting efforts gained two new crossover members, Recruits Troy Bankert and Frank Milow. Both had previous law enforcement full standards and required FHP crossover certification. Trooper Esteban Ramos established all the crossover requirements and schedules to obtain the necessary equipment and exercises to complete this training. Given the difference in the timing of these individuals joining the FHPA, Trooper Ramos had to set up and schedule individual training classes. Trooper Ramos took a leadership role in arranging training facilities to include firearms ranges from outside agencies and facilities to conduct all other high-liability training. He completed many of these communications during his off-duty hours. This dedication and leadership resulted in expedited completion for both new members. Trooper Ramos also completed all required forms to order duty uniforms, leather, and brass to ensure the new members would be in full uniform during their formal swearing-in process. This was not his responsibility, but given Trooper Ramos's dedication and leadership, he took on this additional task. His contribution to this endeavor has been truly appreciated.

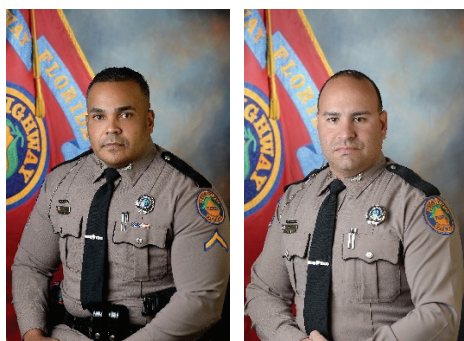
## Life-Saving Award

### **Trooper Alan Middlebrooks, Troop H**



On February 19, 2024, at approximately 3:21 pm, Trooper Alan Middlebrooks arrived on the scene of a crash in Jefferson County, Florida. Upon arrival, bystanders and family members were attempting to extract occupants from the vehicle, which had struck a tree and caught fire. Trooper Middlebrooks immediately deployed his fire extinguisher and was able to extinguish the fire. Bystanders extracted the passenger, who showed no signs of life. Trooper Middlebrooks worked with bystanders to free the driver, who remained entrapped and unconscious. Trooper Middlebrooks observed the driver's right leg was nearly amputated, so Trooper Middlebrooks applied a tourniquet to the driver's injured leg. Trooper Middlebrooks, with the assistance of Sergeant Wysocki from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, then administered AED applications and chest compressions to the passenger for approximately 10 minutes until Jefferson County EMS arrived and assumed primary care.

### **Trooper Eddy G. Baez and Trooper Luis A. Resto, Troop K**



On March 15, 2024, the Lake Worth Regional Communications Center received a report of a traffic crash northbound on State Road 91 (Florida Turnpike) around the 168-mile marker, within St. Lucie County. Upon arrival at the scene, Trooper Eddy Baez and Trooper Luis Resto discovered an unresponsive male who was not breathing and did not have a pulse. Trooper Baez immediately started CPR while Trooper Resto retrieved his assigned AED. After attaching the AED, a shock was delivered to the unresponsive driver. Saint Lucie County EMS responded to the scene and assumed primary care and transported the driver to Lawnwood Trauma Center.



## Life-Saving Award

### **Trooper Matthew W. Mays, Troop B**



On April 3, 2024, Trooper Matthew Mays was off-duty and inside his residence when a neighbor contacted him regarding an overdose that had occurred at a nearby residence. Trooper Mays immediately retrieved PPE and Narcan® equipment from his patrol car and responded to the nearby residence. Upon arrival, he observed an unresponsive female on the bathroom floor and a male subject attempting to perform CPR on the female. Upon noticing signs of a possible overdose, Trooper Mays administered a dose of Narcan to the unresponsive subject. Trooper Mays determined the subject had no pulse, so he took over CPR from the male subject. During CPR, the female gasped and sat up. Trooper Mays continued to provide care until Marion County Fire Rescue arrived and assumed primary care.

### **Trooper Matthew P.H. Belen, Troop C**



On April 25, 2024, at approximately 11:50 am, Trooper Nathaniel Wooten became involved in a vehicle pursuit on westbound I-4 near mile marker 39. Trooper Matthew Belen joined the pursuit as a backup unit. The suspect vehicle entered a curve in the roadway at high speed, losing control and crashing into several commercial motor vehicles. As a result of the crash, the suspect vehicle split into two pieces, ejecting both occupants onto I-4. Trooper Wooten attended to the driver, who was conscious and alert, while Trooper Belen attended to the passenger. When Trooper Matthew Belen approached the passenger, he immediately recognized that the passenger was not breathing and had dilated pupils. Trooper Belen immediately retrieved his AED and began CPR. After approximately 10 minutes of CPR, the passenger regained consciousness and began vomiting blood. Trooper Belen placed the passenger in the recovery position and continued to monitor the passenger until Polk County EMS arrived and assumed primary care.

## Life-Saving Award

### **Sergeant Timothy B. Collins, Troop I**



On May 20, 2024, Sergeant Timothy Collins encountered a pickup truck that overturned in the wood line, where an elderly male, was trapped inside the vehicle. Sergeant Collins could see that the driver was trapped upside down, covered in blood, and was not moving. Sergeant Collins broke the right rear window to enter the vehicle. The driver's face was red/purple, and he was struggling to breathe. The driver was still secured in his seat belt upside down with his head and neck pressed against the ceiling of the truck, obstructing his airway. Sergeant Collins crawled inside the vehicle through the window on broken glass and in blood to release the seatbelt. After releasing the seatbelt, Sergeant Collins pulled the driver toward the rear passenger compartment of the vehicle, opening the driver's airway and restoring his breathing.

### **Trooper Auris F. Amparo, Trooper Reyna R. Hernandez-Murillo, Troop L**



On May 26, 2024, Trooper Auris Amparo responded to a call about a highway disturbance where a subject had forced a tow truck to stop and then entered the towed vehicle to prevent repossession of the vehicle when the subject experienced cardiac arrest. Upon Trooper Amparo's arrival, he determined the subject was unresponsive, not breathing, and did not have a pulse. Trooper Amparo advised dispatch of the cardiac arrest and conducted CPR for approximately 3 minutes until the arrival of the first backup unit, Trooper Reyna Hernandez. Trooper Hernandez conducted CPR for approximately 4 minutes until being relieved by Trooper Amparo, who then conducted approximately two additional minutes of CPR before the arrival of Broward Sheriff's Office Fire Rescue who subsequently assumed primary care.

## Life-Saving Award

### **Trooper Steven C. Carroll, Jr., Troop F**



On June 24, 2024, the Fort Myers Regional Communications Center (FMRCC) dispatched Trooper Steven Carroll to a single-vehicle rollover crash on I-75 southbound at mile marker 153 in Charlotte County. Trooper Carroll was the first emergency responder to arrive on the scene. When he arrived, Trooper Carroll was advised that the driver was still entrapped in the vehicle. Trooper Carroll immediately gained entry into the vehicle and found the driver restrained in the vehicle with her head submerged under water. Trooper Carroll elevated the driver's head and held her above the water, allowing her to breathe. When EMS arrived, Trooper Carroll was able to lift the driver above water, cut the seatbelt, and extricate her from the vehicle.

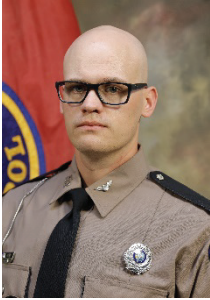
### **Trooper David A. Blake, Troop F**



On July 4, 2024, Trooper David Blake was traveling on Daniels Parkway when he observed a crashed pickup truck that was on fire. The truck crashed into trees along the north shoulder of the roadway. Trooper Blake was the first person on scene and quickly exited his patrol vehicle to render aid to the occupants in the truck as it filled with smoke. Trooper Blake was determined there was only one occupant in the vehicle and extracted him as the vehicle became engulfed in flames. The driver was unconscious and unresponsive. Trooper Blake rendered aid to the driver until EMS arrived and assumed primary care.

## Life-Saving Award

### **Trooper Nicholas S. Lane, Troop F**



On July 7, 2024, Trooper Nicholas Lane was completing a crash investigation in the area of US 41 and SR 70 in Manatee County when he heard multiple gunshots. Trooper Lane proceeded to the area of the gunshots and was directed by bystanders to a parking lot of Touch of Class Restaurant & Lounge. Trooper Lane found one male on the ground with a gunshot wound to the left groin area. Trooper Lane rendered aid to the victim by applying pressure to the wound and packing it with gauze. Due to a large crowd gathering at the scene, Trooper Lane and Manatee County Sheriff's Office deputies carried the wounded man through the crowd to a secure location where Manatee County EMS assumed primary care.

### **Sergeant Scott J. Stoltz, Academy**

(See Trooper of the Year Category)





## Life-Saving Award

### **Trooper Eric D.L. Abraham, Troop A**



On August 24, 2024, Trooper Eric Abraham was assisting Trooper Radcliff Jr. with a previous crash investigation and DUI arrest at Thomas Drive and Crescent Street when a separate vehicle crashed into the flatbed portion of the tow truck that was on scene. Trooper Abraham immediately notified the Tallahassee Regional Communications Center of the secondary crash and rushed to the vehicle to render aid. Trooper Abraham discovered the driver was unconscious and unresponsive with serious injuries to her left arm and leg. Trooper Abraham conducted a sternum rub causing the driver to regain consciousness with agonal breathing. Trooper Abraham retrieved his trauma kit and applied a tourniquet to prevent excessive bleeding. Trooper Abraham continued to provide care until Bay County EMS arrived and assumed primary care.

### **Trooper Brandon D. Brelsford, Troop F**



On September 14, 2024, Trooper Terrence McLaughlin conducted a traffic stop on Interstate 75 at Mile Marker 171 in Sarasota County. The vehicle was occupied by one adult and one two-year-old child. As Trooper Brandon Brelsford was field training officer to Trooper Bryan Petty at the time, they responded to take over the traffic stop. During the traffic stop the two-year-old child suffered a seizure. Trooper Brelsford assessed the condition of the child, who had a pulse with shallow breathing. To maintain the child's airway, Trooper Brelsford placed the child in a recovery position. While in the recovery position, the child stopped breathing but did maintain a pulse. Trooper Brelsford immediately administered two rescue breaths, and the child began breathing again. Trooper Brelsford continued to monitor the child until Sarasota County EMS arrived and assumed primary care.

## Life-Saving Award

### **Trooper Robert S. Valenzuela, Troop E**



On October 4, 2024, Trooper Robert Valenzuela performed a life-saving event on a victim involved in a two-vehicle traffic crash on northbound SR 826 and SW 24 Street. The victim exited his vehicle after the collision to inspect the damage. Meanwhile, the other vehicle's elderly driver mistakenly applied the gas pedal and pinned the victim between both vehicles. A good Samaritan was able to unpin the victim from between the vehicles, but the victim sustained life-threatening injuries due to rapid bleeding from his right leg.

Trooper Valenzuela quickly assessed the victim and applied a tourniquet to prevent further bleeding. Trooper Valenzuela then applied a large trauma dressing pad over the open wound and held pressure on the trauma pad until EMS arrived and assumed primary care.

### **Trooper Dennis A. Cole, Troop K**



On October 30, 2024, at approximately 9:59 am, Trooper Dennis Cole responded to an incident on State Road 91, at mile marker 48, where a male subject was attempting to jump from the overpass onto Pembroke Road. The subject was observed pacing back and forth on the right northbound shoulder. Trooper Cole attempted to communicate with the subject, who then sat on top of the wall and began to slide down as if to jump. Trooper Cole quickly ran over and grabbed the subject's arm and

leg, preventing him from falling from the overpass. With the assistance of a passenger from a passing truck, Trooper Cole successfully pulled the subject back to safety. The subject was handcuffed, and transported to Broward Health Medical Center where he was Baker Acted.

## Silver Star

### **Trooper Michael B. McKinstry and Trooper Sergio A. Pearce, Troop C**

On August 26, 2024, at approximately 4:44 P.M., the Tampa Bay Regional Communications Center (TBRCC) received a report of an armed carjacking that occurred in Pasco County. The Pasco County Sheriff's Office advised that a male suspect carjacked an Uber driver at gunpoint and stole



a silver 2024 Honda Accord. The TBRCC obtained a GPS Ping the victims' vehicle. Trooper Justin Gitto, Trooper Michael McKinstry, and Trooper Sergio Pearce located the suspect vehicle on U.S. Highway 19, in Levy County, entering Troop B. Trooper Gitto positively identified the suspect vehicle and attempted a Felony Traffic Stop which resulted in the suspect fleeing.

During the pursuit, the Levy County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) assisted by deploying stop sticks to end the pursuit, however the suspect evaded the stop sticks and shortly thereafter fired several rounds toward Trooper Gitto, striking his patrol car. Trooper Gitto discharged his pistol through the windshield toward the suspect to end the deadly threat, but the suspect continued to flee. At that point, Trooper McKinstry and K9 Trooper Pearce took lead in the pursuit while Trooper Gitto re-engaged in the pursuit. The Levy County Sheriff's Office deployed a second round of stop sticks, but the suspect again evaded them and began traveling the wrong way on U.S. Highway 19. During the pursuit, the suspect continued firing shots at FHP Troopers. Trooper McKinstry followed the suspect vehicle on U.S. Highway 19 and engaged in intentional contact with the suspect vehicle, however; the suspect continued to flee.

Considering the escalated threat to law enforcement and the public, Trooper Gitto discharged his firearm at the suspect vehicle from the northbound travel lanes of U.S. Highway 19. The suspect vehicle traveled off the roadway and overturned several times before coming to final rest. FHP Troopers and the LCSO conducted a Felony Traffic Stop and engaged the suspect who was still in the vehicle. The Levy County Fire Rescue responded and pronounced the suspect deceased on-scene.

**(Trooper Justin J. Gitto was awarded a Medal of Valor)**

## Medal of Valor

**Sergeant Joshua J. Malloy**  
**Trooper Wesley R. Kelly**  
**Trooper Jeremy M. Fields, Troop C**  
**(See Trooper of the Year)**



**Trooper David A. Kitchen, Troop B**  
**(See Trooper of the Year)**



**Trooper Justin J. Gitto, Troop C**  
**(See Silver Star)**

## Civilian Employee of the Year

### Olivia L. Zabrucki, Troop Q



On May 5, 2024, Law Enforcement Intelligence Analyst (LEIA) II Olivia Zabrucki was assigned to assist the Bureau of Criminal Investigations and Intelligence South-Fort Myers investigators with identifying and locating a suspect vehicle. During the initial review of images requested from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) cameras and Automated License Plate Readers (LPRs), a potential suspect vehicle was identified, and two photo lineups of the registered owners were generated for the requesting BCII Investigator.

Dissatisfied with the results, LEIA II Zabrucki sent an updated request to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requesting additional information. Over several days, LEIA Zabrucki reviewed over 4,000 images from the FDOT cameras and LPRs. LEIA II Zabrucki ultimately located images of the suspect vehicle before and after the road rage highway shooting. Based on the information provided by LEIA II Zabrucki, BCII Investigators were able to locate the suspect vehicle and subsequently charge the suspect with three felony counts of discharging a firearm from a vehicle, three felony counts of shooting or throwing a missile into a vehicle, and three felony counts of aggravated assault with intent to commit a felony.

For this investigation alone, LEIA II Zabrucki generated five photo lineups, reviewed over 4,000 images from two data requests, and supported the investigators past the regular work hours.

## Civilian Employee of the Year

### Fanny M. Macias, Troop E



Ms. Fanny Macias systematically facilitated and actively worked to complete the Troop E Inventory, SLERS Radio Programming, and the new computer refresh for Troops E, J, K, and Q. These tasks and associated work were all completed successfully and by critical deadlines. It did not go unnoticed that all her work was done with a positive and encouraging attitude with attention to detail. Ms. Macias routinely worked on her days off and stayed late almost every shift to ensure nothing slipped through the cracks. Ms. Macias' efforts ensured troopers were efficiently equipped with the necessary tools to perform their duties and fulfill their commitment to courteously serve and protect those who depend on FHP for their safety.

### Tanya S. Golemo, Troop G



Administrative Assistant Tanya Golemo routinely assists other members throughout the district with processing and maintaining their required administrative reporting. Ms. Golemo interacts well with all her co-workers and establishes a positive rapport with phone callers, walk-in traffic, and various internal and external stakeholders. On September 9, 2024, an individual entered the St. Augustine FHP Station clearly in physical and mental distress. When troopers attempted to help the subject, she became agitated, loud, aggressive, and even verbally abusive. Ms. Golemo stepped in, calmed the subject down, and ascertained her needs. The individual requested a ride to Volusia County and complained of injuries sustained in an altercation several weeks prior. Ms. Golemo remained calm, offering medical assistance, and attempted to help the individual where she wanted to go in Volusia County. Ms. Golemo was personally able to de-escalate the situation using her interpersonal skills with a mentally unstable subject.



## State Law Enforcement Dispatcher of the Year

### **SLED Mark-Anthony Gibson, Lake Worth Regional Communication Center**



On February 25, 2024, at 6:20 pm, the Lake Worth Communications Center (LWRCC) received a transfer call from the Seminole Regional Communications Center with the Riviera Beach Police Department and Orange County Sheriff's Office on the phone, stating they were tracking a kidnapping suspect wanted in connection with an active Amber Alert traveling northbound on Florida's Turnpike in Orange County.

Troop K troopers were initially dispatched, but Troop C troopers quickly became involved, ultimately intercepting the vehicle and safely recovering the child.

State Law Enforcement Dispatcher (SLED) Mark-Anthony Gibson received the call from Riviera Beach PD and remained landline for over 20 minutes, gathering vehicle information and updated locations as the vehicle traveled north into Sumter County on Florida's Turnpike. SLED Gibson updated LWRCC's CAD notes for Troop K units and simultaneously updated TBRCC's CAD notes for Troop C units. SLED Gibson communicated with the TBRCC dispatcher via CAD and facilitated real-time updates, which would otherwise have been delayed by making phone calls to TBRCC. SLED Gibson did all of this while simultaneously working an unrelated radio channel without any disruption to normal services. The vehicle eventually exited the Turnpike onto I-75, which would have effectively ended the LWRCC's involvement in the incident, however, SLED Gibson remained on landline with Riviera Beach PD and continued to update CAD and relay information. When a Troop C trooper gained a visual on the suspect vehicle, Troop K troopers were immediately advised because SLED Gibson actively monitored the TBRCC's CAD incident.

## State Law Enforcement Dispatcher of the Year

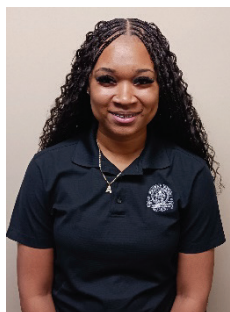
### **SLED Jessica Celona, Lake Worth Regional Communication Center**



On October 26, 2024, SLED Supervisor Jessica Celona took a call from a female who was involved in an active domestic assault on Interstate 95 in Palm Beach County. Due to the caller's attacker being with her in the vehicle, SLED Supervisor Celona determined the victim was pretending to talk to a family member. She stated that her attacker and her abuser was her husband, who was currently driving the vehicle they were in, and he was refusing to pull over. The male subject had already struck her twice, and the call was soon disconnected. SLED Supervisor Celona leveraged available technology to initiate a text conversation with the victim. She asked if it was safe for FHP to call her back, and the victim responded, "NO." They communicated by text for approximately thirty minutes. SLED Supervisor Celona obtained the location of the individual and relayed this information to troopers and local police agencies. The subject was ultimately stopped in Martin County and arrested for felony DUI, felony DWLS, and Battery. SLED Supervisor Celona went above and beyond to allow for an effective response when challenged with multiple impediments, resulting in an arrest of the attacker without further jeopardizing the victim's safety. The victim was removed from immediate danger due to the dedication and tenacity of SLED Supervisor Celona to assist when needed the most.

## State Law Enforcement Dispatcher of the Year

### **SLED A'Lashanae A. Pride, Tallahassee Regional Communication Center**



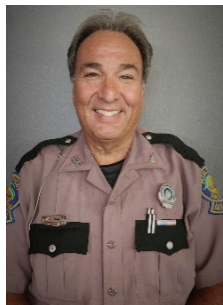
On April 8, 2024, SLED A'Lashanae Pride's skills were put to the test when the TRCC received a call from the Holmes County Sheriff's Office about a female who had been reported as actively shooting a gun on the Interstate. The suspect told people that God told the suspect to go on a killing spree. The suspect had a handgun and a rifle in her possession. A motorist's vehicle was struck multiple times by the suspect. The motorist also sustained non-life-threatening injuries.

Trooper Hardy located the suspect's vehicle exiting the interstate, where he was able to conduct a traffic stop on the vehicle. Trooper Hardy was able to quickly and safely apprehend the female suspect without further incident.

During this event, SLED Pride dispatched multiple zone units and held the radio channel for emergency traffic. She kept troopers informed of all pertinent information as soon as it became available. She thoroughly documented all dispatch records throughout this high-priority, high-stress incident. SLED Pride remained calm under pressure, and her voice and confidence never faltered, even when the trooper did not answer his radio after contact with the suspect was made. These characteristics are what helped lead to the successful apprehension of the female suspect.

## Auxiliary Trooper of the Year

### Auxiliary Sergeant Mario Impellizeri, Troop D



On June 17, 2024, Auxiliary Sergeant Mario Impellizeri was patrolling with Sergeant Spencer Ross eastbound on SR-408. They observed a Dodge Challenger rapidly approach from behind and quickly pass the marked FHP patrol vehicle. Sergeant Ross clocked the Challenger at 103 MPH. Sergeant Ross and Auxiliary Sergeant Impellizeri overtook the violator and maintained visual contact until they were in position for a traffic stop. The Challenger abruptly changed lanes multiple times, recklessly passing other vehicles on the left and right. While behind the Challenger with lights and sirens, the vehicle did not stop. The fleeing felon increased the deadly threat to the public passing through a toll plaza at 100 MPH and reached speeds of 119 MPH. When attempting to position for a PIT to end the deadly public threat, the fleeing felon suddenly brake-checked them and continued to abruptly fluctuate speed from 95-100 MPH and continued moving back and forth across all lanes of traffic. As the pursuit approached Kirkman Road, the Challenger's speed increased to 121 mph as a PIT maneuver successfully spun the Challenger into a center guardrail, ending the pursuit. After being stopped, the Challenger's driver climbed into the back seat, and Sergeant Ross and Auxiliary Sergeant Impellizeri cautiously removed both the passenger and the driver. After the subjects were detained, the driver began complaining of chest pains, and the Auxiliary Sergeant Impellizeri summoned EMS to the scene.

## Auxiliary Trooper of the Year

### Auxiliary Trooper Ciro Iovine, Troop D



On November 17, 2024, Auxiliary Trooper Ciro Iovine was completing his volunteer work and leaving the Volusia County Fairgrounds parking area near DeLand. Traffic along State Road 44 was heavy, and many vehicles were attempting to exit the fairgrounds. As Auxiliary Trooper Iovine was preparing to enter onto SR-44, the vehicle in front of him accelerated onto the roadway with a wide right turn and into the immediate path of another faster-traveling vehicle along SR-44, resulting in a serious crash. Auxiliary Trooper Iovine immediately pulled forward, blocking any other vehicles from entering the crash scene, and exited his vehicle to assist. He directed bystanders to call 911 and went to the nearest vehicle, where he did a quick check for any serious injuries and found none. Auxiliary Trooper Iovine went to the occupants of the other vehicle that had been in front of him. He found the driver's door crushed and inoperable, with the occupants crushed and entrapped in the console of the passenger side interior. Auxiliary Trooper Iovine was able to remove a female passenger by breaking the back window and then carrying her to safety. He then returned to aid the driver. As he evaluated the driver, he found no pulse and applied a sternum rub. After a reassessment, the driver regained consciousness. Auxiliary Trooper Iovine stayed with all the victims, maintaining constant vigilance for any degradation of their condition until he was properly relieved by EMS.

## Auxiliary Trooper of the Year

### Auxiliary Trooper Garrett Popovich, Troop D



On December 31, 2024, Auxiliary Trooper Garrett Popovich was riding with Trooper Christopher Wray. At approximately 5:15 PM, they were dispatched to assist in the pursuit of a vehicle matching a BOLO of a driver making suicidal threats. After the initial visual was lost by responding units, Jacksonville Regional Communication Center (JRCC) advised that they again had visual contact with the vehicle and that it was exiting onto US 1, heading south. Trooper Wray proceeded toward the fleeing suspect vehicle. Trooper Musial advised that the vehicle he was pursuing was traveling at a high rate of speed directly in the path of their patrol vehicle. As Trooper Wray attempted to change course, the suspect vehicle matched its course and again positioned itself in the direct path of the patrol vehicle. Trooper Wray took evasive action and traveled on the grassy shoulder on the north side of Old Kings Road. The driver of the suspect vehicle again matched its direction and collided with the patrol vehicle. Trooper Wray and Auxiliary Trooper Popovich then exited the patrol vehicle to ensure the scene was under control and the suspect was secured. Both Trooper Wray and Auxiliary Trooper Popovich sustained injuries requiring medical attention and were transported to Advent Health for treatment.



## Trooper of the Year

**Sergeant Joshua J. Malloy, Trooper Wesley R. Kelly,  
and Trooper Jeremy M. Fields, Troop C**



On April 17, 2024, at approximately 3:44 pm, FHP Criminal Interdiction Unit (CIU) Sergeant Joshua Malloy, along with CIU Trooper Wesley Kelly and Trooper Jeremy Fields, were inside the Troop C- FHP Headquarters. Trooper Fields observed a Tampa Police Department (TPD) marked patrol unit enter the driveway access south of the Florida Highway Patrol Office and with its emergency equipment engaged. CIU Trooper Fields, Trooper Kelly, and Sergeant Malloy exited the FHP station to assist the TPD unit. The TPD Officer said TPD had received a bomb threat to the FDOT building.

The suspect was observed seated inside a blue Hyundai SUV in front of the FDOT building, Sergeant Malloy observed the suspect to be armed with a handgun in his right hand, pressed to his right temple. The suspect was given loud verbal commands by law enforcement on the scene to drop his weapon. As Sergeant Malloy and Trooper Kelly communicated back and forth, the suspect discharged his handgun into the right temple area of his head. TPD Officers opened the front driver's side of the vehicle and confirmed the presence of an explosive device, prompting all officers to retreat to the point of safety.

The TBRCC was notified to contact the State Fire Marshall and the TPD Bomb Squad. Trooper Fields then entered the FDOT Offices through the west entrance to secure the premises and ensure proper evacuation of the FDOT Offices and the TBRCC. TPD's Bomb Squad later confirmed the explosive device inside the suspect's vehicle was a large pressure cooker weighing around 50 pounds, filled with ball bearings. The explosive device was strategically placed in the suspect's vehicle underneath five large gas cans filled with gasoline to maximize the explosion had the suspect been successful with detonation.

## Trooper of the Year

### First Place - Trooper David A. Kitchen, Troop B



On July 14, 2024, at approximately 5:45 pm, the Jacksonville Regional Communications Center (JRCC) broadcasted a BOLO of a reckless driver on Interstate-75 southbound in Alachua County. Trooper David Kitchen observed the suspect vehicle traveling southbound in the area of the 377-mile marker. Trooper Kitchen attempted to stop the suspect vehicle, which resulted in a vehicle pursuit when the suspect fled. The pursuit entered Marion County and concluded in the area of the 372-mile marker after the suspect's vehicle struck multiple victim vehicles. When Trooper Kitchen exited his patrol vehicle and attempted to communicate, the suspect refused to follow verbal commands and attempted to get back into his vehicle. Trooper Kitchen closed the distance with the suspect at the passenger door and a physical altercation ensued when the suspect physically resisted. During the physical altercation, the suspect gained control of a firearm from his vehicle, which forced Trooper Kitchen to use deadly force against the felonious suspect. After the deadly force incident, Trooper Kitchen immediately began to render aid to save the life of the suspect. Trooper Kitchen's heroic actions stopped the suspect's malicious attack on Trooper Kitchen and may have ultimately saved the lives the victims of the car crash from being attacked. Trooper Kitchen's actions are the ultimate demonstration of valor in the face of danger and the love toward his fellow human.

## Trooper of the Year

### Sergeant Scott J. Stoltz, Academy



On July 30, 2024, around 7:10 pm, Sergeant Scott Stoltz demonstrated exceptional courage and quick thinking, saving a young life. As he ended his shift and pulled into his driveway, Sergeant Stoltz was approached by a frantic neighbor. The neighbor informed Sergeant Stoltz that her daughter was not breathing. Without hesitation, Sergeant Stoltz rushed to the neighbor's home and found a twenty-month-old girl in distress.

The girl was unresponsive; her airway was obstructed, and she had stopped breathing. Sergeant Stoltz took immediate control of the situation. He carefully laid the child down, assessed her condition, and detected a pulse. Recognizing the urgency, he cleared the child's airway and administered rescue breaths. Miraculously, the young girl gasped and started breathing on her own. Sergeant Stoltz remained beside the patient until Leon County Emergency Services arrived and assumed primary care. Thanks to his swift actions, the child made a full recovery.

***“Behind every badge is a hero  
who made a promise to protect,  
to serve and to stand in the gap  
when no one else will.”***

*-Chelsey Hayden*

*Tonight, we proudly salute the dedicated men &  
women of the FHP. Your unwavering commitment  
to safety, integrity and service keeps our  
roads secure and our communities strong.*

*We thank you for your courage, your sacrifice  
and your steadfast duty to the people of Florida.*

***You are truly the guardians of our  
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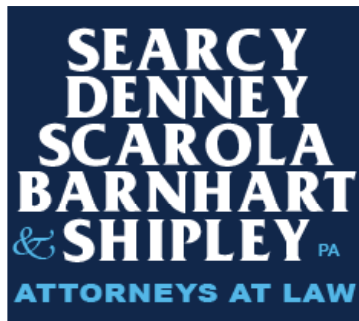
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Florida Highway Patrol  
and commend the brave men and  
women for their tireless commitment  
to safeguarding our highways  
and communities.**

**We are grateful for your sacrifices and  
proud of your achievements.**

**CONGRATULATIONS**  
**to all award recipients at the  
2025 Florida Highway Patrol  
Awards Banquet.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Howard Lorber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

***Howard M. Lorber & Family***



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## Honoring Service, Sacrifice, and Strength

It is with deep respect and unwavering gratitude that Genesis Medicus stand as the Lt. Colonel's Table Award sponsor at the 9th Annual Florida Highway Patrol Banquet. Tonight, we do more than celebrate — we honor the men and women whose courage on our roads reflects a steadfast commitment to duty, integrity, and the safety of all Floridians.

To serve with FHP is to carry the weight of responsibility with dignity, to answer the call when others seek refuge, and to lead with honor when seconds count. These are not just officers — they are guardians of our highways, symbols of strength, and examples of selfless public service.

Our company is proud to recognize these heroes — not just for what they do, but for who they are. Their legacy of excellence is one we hold in the highest esteem, and we are humbled to play a role in celebrating their enduring impact.

To the Florida Highway Patrol: thank you for protecting our communities, inspiring our future, and reminding us all of the true meaning of service.



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*Alan Jay  
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FHP Awards Banquet honorees—  
your dedication, courage, and  
service inspire us all.**

**We proudly salute the brave men and  
women of the Florida Highway  
Patrol who work tirelessly to keep  
our communities safe.**

**Thank you for your unwavering  
commitment to protecting the  
people of our great state.**



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John Staluppi's **Cars of Dreams Museum** is a private collection of classic vehicles located in Palm Beach County, Florida. The Museum is only open for select charity events and is not open to the public. The Coney Island theme features much of the memorabilia that is reminiscent of the iconic amusement park, featuring bumper cars, a beachfront boardwalk with a Carvel ice-cream store, Nathan's restaurant, hand painted murals of the Parachute Jump, and the world famous Cyclone rollercoaster. For more information on **Cars of Dreams**, visit [www.carsofdreams.com](http://www.carsofdreams.com).

*Congratulations from  
John and Jeanette  
Staluppi*





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everything you do to maintain the safety of our communities.



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*appreciative of the shared commitment to ensuring safety and providing exceptional service. I extend my sincere wishes for continued success and fulfillment in your endeavors ahead.*

*Bill Parker*



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Thank You  
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service and  
dedication.

*Congratulations to  
this year's winners.*

*Ulises Arias*

## FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL

Tonight's Winners and  
All Other Members

*I Salute You  
and  
Thank You*

Mr. Joey Rivero

---

CONGRATULATIONS TO  
ALL OF THIS EVENING'S  
AWARD WINNERS AND  
THANK YOU TO ALL  
FHP MEMBERS.

*Josh Kellam  
Garcia Family Farms*





# ABOUT THE FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL AUXILIARY



**The Florida Highway Patrol Auxiliary (FHPA)** is composed of a diverse group of community oriented men and women who donate their time and efforts to make the difficult task of law enforcement safer and more effective for the troopers and citizens traveling our highways. Members of the FHPA are volunteers and the organization is a separate, nonprofit entity of the Florida Highway Patrol. Auxiliary Troopers undergo a rigorous selection process and training is similar to that of a career State Trooper. The Florida Highway Patrol Auxiliary is authorized by the Florida Legislature.

Since 1957, Auxiliary Troopers have assisted the Florida Highway Patrol in the performance of its daily duties to include:

- Patrolling the streets and highways of the State and providing officer back-up.
- Providing timely assistance to disabled motorists.
- Participating in vehicle equipment and license checkpoints.
- Participating in specialized details.
- Responding to natural disasters and other emergency situations.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

We will promote a safe and secure Florida through professional law enforcement and traffic safety awareness.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

A Safer Florida through Courtesy, Service, and Protection.

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| <b>Courtesy</b>   | Treat others fairly and professionally.             |
| <b>Service</b>    | Render aid and assistance to members of the public. |
| <b>Protection</b> | Protect life and property.                          |

## **COMMAND STAFF**

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CHIEF ELDEN (PAT) BRADLEY III - South Region  
CHIEF CRUZ MORALES - Special Services Command  
CHIEF JOSEPH GENNARI - Administrative Officer  
MAJOR MIKE FRAHER - Training Division Coordinator  
MAJOR RICK COFFMAN - Statewide Recruiter Coordinator  
MAJOR LUIS STERLING - Strategic Partnership & Community Engagement  
Section (SPACES)  
MAJOR ROBERT MCMILLIN - Auxiliary Recruit Academy Coordinator  
MAJOR BRAD FEUER, M.D., J.D. - Chief Troop Surgeon

## **ABOUT THE FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL ADVISORY COUNCIL**



The Florida Highway Patrol Advisory Council is an organization comprised of business, professional, and community leaders throughout the state. Members of the Advisory Council provide assistance to the Director of the Florida Highway Patrol by offering input regarding the performance of the Patrol and quality of service provided to the public.

The Advisory Council was incorporated in 1999 as a not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) organization and subsequently established the Florida Highway Patrol Trooper Memorial Fund. This fund was established to provide a memorial honoring Florida Highway Patrol Auxilliary Troopers who lost their lives in the line of duty serving and protecting the citizens of the State of Florida.

On an ongoing basis the fund provides financial and other support to the families of troopers and auxillary troopers who lose their life or sustain life-threatening injuries in the line of duty. One hundred percent of the funding for the Advisory Council is through charitable contributions. The Advisory Council does not participate in or sanction telephone solicitation.

### **FHP ADVISORY COUNCIL OFFICERS**

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Harold Brewer, Vice-President  
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**Please visit [fhpadvisorycouncil.org](http://fhpadvisorycouncil.org) for more information.**



*Thank You  
for all you do!*

