



# eCountyLine

A newsletter for Volusia County employees

Winter 2018

## FROM THE COUNTY MANAGER'S DESK

### Happy New Year!



2017 was a good year in Volusia County. We welcomed three new County Council members, a new sheriff, supervisor of elections, property appraiser and clerk of the court.

We negotiated contracts with the unions representing sheriff's deputies and beach safety officers. All county employees receive the same wage and compression adjustments as union employees.

Employees were introduced to a Diversity and Inclusion Dynamic Master Plan, which provides program structure with specific strategies and goals that strengthen and complement the practices already in place.

Managing our health got a little easier with the introduction of the Volusia County Benefits app, which easily locates doctors, urgent care clinics, pharmacies and much more from our phones. This app complements the Cigna app, which puts important medical information at your fingertips.

The economy is good, and progress is happening throughout the county. Much of that progress is directly related to the work done every day by county employees. Whether it's processing permits, helping our most vulnerable with housing assistance, keeping our parks and trails operating, or clearing the streets after a hurricane, progress can't happen without a well-functioning government.

I'm very encouraged as we enter this new year. As Volusia County employees, we all have the same goal – work hard to make our community great. Thank you for your service, and here's to another great year!

– Jim Dinneen



*Environmental Specialist Hector Valle loads a plane with supplies for Puerto Rico residents who were devastated by Hurricane Maria in September.*

## Man on a mission: Hector Valle flies supplies to Puerto Rico

When Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, **Hector Valle** watched the news and worried about his hometown of Quebradillas, which is on the island's northwestern shore. With no word from his friends and family, he loaded a twin-engine plane Oct. 3 and flew to Quebradillas, where he found utter destruction.

"The people were exhausted and in shock," observed Valle, a Volusia County environmental specialist and former U.S. Navy and Army pilot. "Thousands had lost their homes, and the area was without power, potable water, communications, medical services, banking and transportation. They desperately needed water, food, medications and massive support."

For the next three months, Valle coordinated donation drives and almost-daily rescue missions through the Pirate Surf Club. Valle is president of the club, a group of 82 men and women who were born in Puerto Rico and live in the United States. The brave group of volunteers sent more than 150,000 pounds of equipment and supplies by land and sea.

"Volunteers from all walks of life came to assist and spent weeks there to distribute equipment and supplies, sometimes by foot, walking miles of treacherous terrain to deliver medical equipment, medicine, food, water and other critical supplies using backpacks and pack animals," Valle said.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## In the News



*Library Assistant Tahir Jeffers shows a patron how to do self-checkout at the Deltona Regional Library.*

### Libraries introduce self-service

The Volusia County Public Library began self-service reservation pickup and checkout at eight branches in December. Patrons can now streamline and speed up their visit when pressed for time.

Each location has a kiosk for simplified checkouts and renewals. A convenient calendar of events is available on the kiosk screen, showing events for the current week. A list of recommended reads displays during checkout with an easy interface to view and reserve selected titles.

### Man on a mission

*(continued from page 1)*

County employees chipped in by donating supplies. **Lisa Lewis**, supervisor of elections, quickly launched an effort to collect donations for the devastated island and provided collection centers throughout the county.

The Pirate Surf Club also provided medical teams and evacuated more than 50 urgent care patients before completing its mission Dec. 20.

The Red Cross, FEMA, Salvation Army and many other agencies are now providing support island-wide. Communications have been restored, and supermarkets have begun to receive supplies. The power grid in western Puerto Rico is 75 percent restored, and the rest of the grid is in the works.

"The islanders remain optimistic that they will rebuild and restore a new life and a new future for island residents," Valle said. "As they say on the island: 'Puerto Rico se levanta' (Puerto Rico will rise again)."

### LEC hosts outdoor festival

Take a walk on the wild side as Lyonia Environmental Center (LEC) presents the Florida Scrub Jay and Wildlife Festival from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 3.



The festival will feature Florida wildlife presentations, environmental displays, kids' activities, and guided hikes and eco-buggy tours of Lyonia Preserve. An early-bird hike will kick off the day at 8 a.m.

The 360-acre preserve is home to a variety of mammals including bobcats, raccoons, armadillos, opossums, rabbits and foxes. Reptiles include gopher tortoises, six-lined race runners and a variety of snakes. More than 70 species of birds, including the threatened Florida scrub jay, also live in the preserve.

Lyonia Environmental Center offers insights into Volusia County's fragile ecosystems through hands-on displays and educational programs. It's part of the Deltona Regional Library complex at 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona. Admission is always free.

### Share the news!

Did you recently earn a college degree, receive an award or certification, perform valuable community service, or come up with a great idea to reduce costs or improve service in your department? Is your division doing something new and exciting?

If so, please send your story to Community Information Specialist **Pat Kuehn** at [pkuehn@volusia.org](mailto:pkuehn@volusia.org).



### Volusia County Council

**Ed Kelley**, County Chair  
**Joyce Cusack**, At-large  
**Deb Denys**, Vice Chair, District 3  
**Pat Patterson**, District 1  
**Billie Wheeler**, District 2  
**Heather Post**, District 4  
**Dr. Fred Lowry**, District 5



# Revenue launches technology modernization initiative

by Craig Baumgardner, Operations Manager



2017 was an exciting year in the Revenue Division! We have undertaken a technology modernization initiative that involves the use of high-speed processing hardware and software to automate property tax payments and tag and title transactions.

In addition to significant cost savings, efficiency is realized through the improvement of the current workflow, including streamlining current processes, reducing human error and eliminating redundant data entry by staff. Bank deposits are now made via cash letter and transmitted electronically to the bank. Images captured through high-speed scanning and document retention provide a level of account documentation that has never before been realized.

The Revenue Division processes hundreds of thousands of payments each year, with a portion of these payments being processed through a third-party vendor. While outsourced payment processing is efficient, it is not as efficient as handling payments in-house with high-speed equipment. Revenue now enjoys much more efficient processing of problematic transactions such as payments without a payment stub, overpayments and underpayments, payments made close to a deadline, etc. Timely posting of payments is critical to ensure that our citizens receive applicable discounts and/or avoid penalties for late payments.

The county will also realize a large return on investment with the implementation of this project. Over a 10-year period, this project will result in a cumulative savings of approximately \$1.3 million, while providing a significant and continuous gain in efficiency. The cost savings coupled



*Administrative Coordinator Tonya Rose, left, and Revenue Specialist Alexis Gurgacz with the Opex FalconRED high-speed processor.*

with the efficiency and timely posting of payments are a win-win for all involved.

Great success is usually accomplished through the collaboration of many partners, and this project was no exception. In addition to the revenue staff, the project team included Information Technology, Purchasing and Contracts, Accounting and Legal Services. Members of these divisions were tireless in their efforts and support of this project. Many hours were spent planning the project and subsequent implementation, developing an RFP and selecting a vendor.

The hours spent in upfront planning paved the way for a relatively problem-free implementation and quick startup. We greatly appreciate the dedication and professional expertise contributed by this team to this project!

## Rob Stephens named director of Votran transportation system



Please join us in welcoming **Rob Stephens**, who has been named director of Votran, Volusia County's transportation system. He replaces **Steve Sherrer**, who was promoted to executive vice present for RATP Dev North America (formerly McDonald Transit Associates), where he provides management oversight services to transit systems in the eastern United States.

Stephens comes to Votran with 25 years of public transportation experience, most recently serving as the general manager for EZ-Rider, the public transportation provider in Midland and Odessa, Texas.

He has a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in business administration, both from Angelo State University in Texas.

Votran, which was established by the Volusia County Council in 1975, is a service of Volusia County Government. It provides transportation to all urban areas of the county with a fleet of 56 fixed-route buses, 44 paratransit vehicles and a commuter van pool program.

# Around the County

## Retirements

### November

Ernest Dobbins, Road and Bridge, 27 years  
Dennis Gephart, Central Services, 30 years  
Paul Luciano, Corrections, 19 years  
Jo Morrison, Corrections, 21 years  
Irmgard Vento, Corrections, 18 years  
John Young, Engineering and Construction, 28 years  
Georgia Zern, Environmental Management, 19 years

### December

Diane Bhothipiti, Library Services, 13 years  
Kala Fields, Corrections, 18 years  
Mary Fortin, Sheriff's Office, 15 years  
Cherry Freeman, Corrections, 25 years  
Richard Harris, Solid Waste, 22 years  
Vicki Held, Sheriff's Office, 19 years  
Morris Henderson, Library Services, 29 years  
Willie McGill, Road and Bridge, 41 years  
Deborah Shafer, Library Services, 10 years  
Jody Thomas, Sheriff's Office, 11 years  
Raymond Wheeler, Road and Bridge, 12 years  
Marion Wisneski, Sheriff's Office, 16 years



*After kicking the habit with the help of Chantix, Mark Blanchette is being featured in two national television commercials.*

## IT employee featured in national ads

As a teenager growing up in Daytona Beach in the 1980s, **Mark Blanchette** attended Spring Break festivities and was wooed by the cigarette companies that were recruiting young smokers. "Smoking is cool," he thought as he accepted their free samples. Their propaganda worked, and Blanchette smoked a pack or two a day for the next 25 years.

He tried quitting several times over the years, but nothing worked – until he tried Chantix. With the prescription medication, Florida's Get Quit Program, subliminal CDs, worry stones and strong resolve, he finally kicked the habit in 2009. Now he wants to share his success story with anyone who will listen.

Blanchette contacted Pfizer and was surprised when marketing reps showed up on his doorstep five years later. They brought in a film crew, sound specialists, background actors, hair stylists, makeup artists, and some extra dogs. After shooting some test shots, they filmed Blanchette, his wife and dogs at Barkley Square Dog Park, Forno Bello and Lake Woodruff National Refuge. They also shot him working on his photography and artwork in his home. (See his photography at [www.grymwish.com](http://www.grymwish.com).)

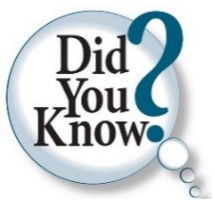
Two of the commercials they shot are airing nationally on major networks, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. You're likely to see his spots during NFL games, primetime shows and game shows. Print ads may be on the horizon.

His advice for other smokers? "You have to commit to quitting. Throw everything at it. Not everything works for everybody. Chantix worked for me, and I'm very pleased it did." He added that he still carries his worry stones for extra resolve.

Blanchette has been an analyst with Volusia County's Information Technology Division for the past five years.

Check out the commercials at <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/ws46/chantix-mark> and <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/wWKi/chantix-mark-dogs>.

## Fast facts



Since opening in 2002, the Marine Science Center has cared for more than 19,000 sea turtles and more than 1,300 gopher tortoises and freshwater turtles. The center welcomed its 1 millionth visitor in August.

Community Information distributed more than 1,000 news releases last year. The releases go to newspapers, radio and TV stations, and other outlets, keeping the public informed about county services and events.



# Around the County



## In the spotlight: Ron Falanga

**Job:** As a senior purchasing agent, Falanga handles technical and specialized assignments in the centralized procurement of all types of commodities, services, capital goods and leases. He reviews and processes requisitions, manages the solicitation process, facilitates negotiations, prepares contract documents, and provides customer service for internal and external customers.

**What he likes about his job:** “Everything!” he said. “Purchasing has a great team that works well together. Our leadership encourages professional growth by providing resources, time, patience and guidance. I recruit friends for open positions because it is such a great place to work.”

**Hire date:** He began his career with the county in 2011.

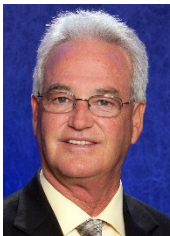
**Education:** Falanga has a bachelor’s degree in public administration from Flagler College.

**Hometown:** He was born in Fort Lauderdale and has lived in Mississippi and all over Central and South Florida.

**Spare time:** Falanga has played the drums professionally off and on since 1980. He also enjoys car and home restoration projects and is starting ballroom dancing lessons with his wife.

**Personal:** “I’m married to the most delightful person in the world – Cindi!” Falanga said. Their three children are in college. Justin, 22, is pursuing a second bachelor’s degree at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Katie, 21, will graduate from the University of North Florida in April. Connor, 20, will graduate from the University of North Florida in April 2019.

## Mark Swanson publishes autobiography



**Mark Swanson**, deputy director of Public Protection, recently published a book titled “Mark My Words: Career of a Public Servant.”

The autobiography is about Swanson’s path as a public servant. His career has included stints in fire rescue, emergency medical services and law enforcement.

The book includes illustrations and situational experiences that can be used by others to guide them in their careers. Swanson shared the challenges he experienced in an effort to assist others as they venture through a career as a public servant.

“This type of career is a calling for those who want to help others in many types of emergent and non-emergent situations,” Swanson said.

The self-published book is available on Amazon.com.



*VCFR members Bill Medlin, John Kyp, Karl Froling, Chase the mascot (aka Kara Miller), Dave Kuypers, Tim Martin and Ed Zona.*

## Firefighters help two charities

Volusia County Fire Rescue’s technical rescue team assisted with a three-day charity event in November to benefit the NASCAR Foundation and Easter Seals.

The event was hosted by Over the Edge at One Daytona, the headquarters for NASCAR and International Speedway Corp. Participants donated at least \$1,000 to rappel 102 feet over the edge of One Daytona. Team members assisted with edge, belay and safety positions.

More than \$200,000 was raised for the two charities. Top county participants were County Manager **Jim Dinneen**, who raised \$7,422; and County Council Member **Heather Post**, who raised \$1,005.

# Around the County

## EM app available for download

Emergency Management staff has created an app to keep residents and employees informed during disasters.

The app includes weather alerts, checklists, shelter status, sandbag locations, evacuation routes, push notifications, links to county sites, and a location indicator that can be sent to family and friends. It also aids in damage assessment as residents can submit damage reports along with photo documentation.

"We worked extensively with our partners in Information Technology and the Property Appraiser's Office to ensure the app has as many advanced tools and features as possible so it would be a relevant preparedness tool for residents," said Senior Planner **Larry LaHue**.

The app is available in the Google Play store at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ocv.volusiacountyema&hl=en> and the App Store at <https://appsto.re/us/MBOYib.i>.



## Employees 'feed the need'

Public employees throughout Volusia County joined forces for the seventh year in a row to feed the needy. The annual Feed the Need food drive took place in November, netting more than 127,000 pounds of food. That brings the total of the seven-year program to 718,000 pounds.



Participating organizations included Volusia County Government; Daytona State College; School Way Café; Florida Health Department in Volusia County; Phillips and Jordan; Thompson Engineering; and the cities of Daytona Beach, DeBary, DeLand, Deltona, Edgewater, Holly Hill, New Smyrna Beach, Orange City, Ormond Beach, Ponce Inlet, Port Orange and South Daytona.

For the second year in a row, School Way Café was the top collector with 22,854 pounds of food and the most food per full-time employee – 162.09 pounds. For Volusia County Government, Budget and Administrative Services collected the most pounds of food per employee again – 123.6 pounds per full-time employee. Human Resources came in second, and Revenue was third.

The food and funds were distributed to local food pantries, soup kitchens, senior centers, churches and other nonprofit organizations that are working to fight hunger.

## NEA Big read celebrates 'True Grit' by Charles Portis



"True Grit" is coming to Volusia County – in a big way! The Volusia County Public Library system will celebrate the American classic with more than 140 programs that run from Jan. 15 through Feb. 28.

The NEA Big Read, which encourages community reading through programs designed around a single book, offers grants through the National Endowment for the Arts. The Volusia County Public Library received a \$14,000 NEA Big Read grant and selected Charles Portis's 1968 novel as its title.

The library system's branches and other venues will host book discussions, author talks, concerts, crafts and children's programs based on the novel. They also will show the film versions of the book and present performances of an original play written by **Karen Poulsen**, activity project manager for the Volusia County Public Library.

Each library branch will hand out free copies of the novel and calendars of events on Jan. 20. Visitors may enter a drawing to win a prize basket that includes a copy of the film and gifts from community merchants.

Book lovers can celebrate "True Grit" during the Honky-Tonk Kickoff from 2 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 27, at the Deltona Regional Library. The event will feature family games, carnival activities, crafts, food trucks, costume and "yeehaw!" contests, a showing of the 2010 movie, and performances by Mountain Brew and Boggy Creek.

Hats off to our library staff for coordinating this massive effort! For a complete list of Big Read programs, visit [www.volusia.org/bigread](http://www.volusia.org/bigread).



## Employees earn degrees



**Sean Maroney**, special projects coordinator for Public Works, recently received a master's degree in public administration from Arkansas State University. He graduated cum laude. Maroney also has a bachelor's degree in geography with a minor in business administration from the University of

Florida. He has worked for the county for 11 years. In his current position, he oversees the work order management system and GIS for the Road and Bridge and Stormwater divisions. He also manages special projects, including land purchases for drainage projects and grant management for a variety of projects.



Library Services employee **Sarah Capps** completed her master's degree in library and information science from the University of South Florida in December. She also has a bachelor's degree in communication studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Capps has worked for the Volusia County Public

Library for five years, most recently as the head of circulation at the Deltona Regional Library. Before joining the county's team, she was a resort recreation coordinator and training coordinator at Walt Disney World.



Human Resources Officer **Javier Ruiz-Perez** received a master's degree in public administration from the University of Central Florida in December. He also has a bachelor's degree in political science from Stetson University. Ruiz-Perez joined the county's staff in April 2017 after working for Seminole County

for two-and-a-half years. He handles job announcements for open positions, performs promotion processes, and works with managers to bring new employees on board.



**Matt Clark**, a treatment plant operator for Water Resources and Utilities, earned a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from the University of Central Florida. He also has Department of Environmental Protection Class A licenses in Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment. Clark joined

the county's staff in 2010 after working for the Florida Utility Group. He works with the team responsible for five West Volusia water systems that deliver safe water to customers and reliable water pressure for fire protection.



Mosquito Control Director **Dr. Jim McNelly** received his Ph.D. in entomology from North Carolina State University. He also has a master's degree in ecology from Rutgers University and a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Delaware. Dr. McNelly came to Volusia County Government in 2011 with 31 years of experience in mosquito control. He oversees a division of 25 full-time employees who provide an integrated pest management program for mosquitoes.



**Tim MacHardy**, a trades worker with Mosquito Control, received a bachelor's degree in supervision and management from Daytona State College. He has worked for the county for more than six years, previously as a deputy for the Volusia County Sheriff's Office. In his current position, he is responsible for the upkeep of equipment and facilities at Mosquito Control. He also performs computer-based support tasks and plans and maps ULV adulticiding operations.



**Jesse Julien** recently earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Central Florida. He is a former employee of Boston Whaler and served in the U.S. Navy for five years as an avionics technician. As an environmental specialist with Mosquito Control for the past five years, he

manages the division's GIS and CMMS data, plans truck adulticiding and aerial treatment operations, and assists **Dr. Hong Chen** with the bioassay program.

## Marlett promoted to sergeant



Congratulations to Senior Lifeguard **Joshua Marlett**, who has been promoted to sergeant. Marlett began his career with the Beach Safety Division in 2000 as a lifeguard. After graduating from the Firefighter Academy at Daytona Beach Community College, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Upon his return, he was rehired as a seasonal lifeguard.

Marlett was hired as a beach safety specialist in September 2006 and was promoted to senior lifeguard in July 2008. Since then, he has been an in-house instructor for numerous topics and is an adjunct for Daytona State College. He's working toward a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Daytona State College.

## Get the facts on prediabetes



Having prediabetes means your blood glucose level is higher than normal, but not quite as high as someone who has diabetes. It's possible to have prediabetes and be completely unaware of it because there are no obvious signs or symptoms.

### Are you at risk?

People who have prediabetes are likely to develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years unless they make healthy lifestyle changes. The sooner you find out, the better chance you'll have to protect your health.

Your doctor may run tests to measure your blood glucose levels to determine if you have prediabetes or diabetes.

**Ask your doctor if you're concerned about diabetes, or if you have any of the following risks:**

- Being overweight and having extra belly fat
- Inactive lifestyle
- Age 45 or older
- Family history of type 2 diabetes
- African-American, Latino, American Indian or Asian-American ethnic origin
- Gestational diabetes or giving birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds
- Sleep problems such as sleep apnea
- High blood pressure
- Low levels of HDL "good" cholesterol and high triglycerides

### Control your risk

Having a higher risk for prediabetes doesn't mean you'll end up with type 2 diabetes. You may be able to prevent or even reverse prediabetes by making simple lifestyle changes.

**Try these steps to help reduce your risk:**

- 1. Get more exercise.** Try to get 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity on most days.
- 2. Eat right.** Go for foods that are low in fat and calories and high in fiber.
- 3. Lose weight.** If you're overweight, losing 5 to 10 percent of your body weight may help you delay or avoid getting diabetes altogether.
- 4. Talk with your doctor.** Discuss your risk factors for prediabetes and whether you should be tested. Your doctor can help you decide what lifestyle changes may be right for you.

**Source:** Mayo Clinic. Prediabetes.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/prediabetes/basics/definition/con-20024420>



*Lisa Somers, R.N., is a Cigna employee who coordinates health programs and promotions to help employees and their dependents lead healthy lifestyles. Employees can contact her at ext. 13249 or [cignaadvocate@volusia.org](mailto:cignaadvocate@volusia.org).*

## County introduces Diabetes Management Program

Florida Hospital and the Volusia County Health Plan administered by Cigna are providing a Diabetes Management Program for Volusia County employees who have a diagnosis of diabetes. Employees, retirees and COBRA participants who are enrolled in the county's health plan are eligible for the free program, which includes blood tests, nutritional counseling and educational classes.

Those who complete the requirements will receive a prescription copay reduction and free blood tests every three months.

Human Resources and your supervisor will not be informed of your personal information or participation in the program.

For more information, visit [www.volusia.org/benefits](http://www.volusia.org/benefits).



# For your Benefit

## County employees show their Christmas spirit!

Volusia County employees used the holidays to spread goodwill in the community.

**Debbie Somerford** of the County Manager's Office coordinated a countywide effort for the Salvation Army, arranging for employees to adopt 110 Christmas Angels and donate food, clothing and toys to the needy.

Numerous departments and divisions took part in the Angel Tree Program, but our top participant was Growth and Resource Management, which accepted 33 angels. Runners-up were the Property Appraiser's Office with 12 angels and Corrections with 10 angels.

Many departments and divisions launched their own giving programs, collecting items for the Guardian ad Litem program, DeLand Family Renew Community, Holly Hill Elementary School, University Center East, the Neighborhood Center of West Volusia, Council on Aging, and other charitable organizations.

The Volusia County Sheriff's Office had three giving programs this year. Shop with a Deputy sponsored 27 families, each of whom received \$250 to shop at Walmart. With the Bike Shop Program, 79 schools each received one bike for a student who had shown improvement in attendance, grades or citizenship. And 100 families received bags of toys from the Deputies Toy Shop.



## H.R. develops new Diversity and Inclusion Program



2017 was a significant year for the county's new Diversity and Inclusion Program, which was developed and implemented by Human Resources. The program is part of the Diversity and Inclusion Dynamic Master Plan, which provides the program's structure and the specific strategies and goals aimed at strengthening

and complementing the practices already in place in our organization.

A key component is the Diversity and Inclusion Champions Team, which is a direct link between department/division directors and employees. The team promotes diversity and inclusion concepts at the division level, offering practical measures to reinforce the master plan.

The Champions Team is composed of 40 employees, picked specifically to be facilitators. Team members work to spread the diversity and inclusion message throughout the county, guiding and demonstrating the essence of diversity and inclusion within their respective divisions.

Supporting the champions in their goal is a training program featuring innovative foundational workshops, classroom trainings and diversity dialog opportunities.

In addition, all county employees will be involved in the diversity and inclusion fundamental training class, already underway. More than 1,200 employees have completed the class so far, and the feedback and participation from staff has been outstanding.

New developments and improvements of the Diversity and Inclusion Program will continue this year.

## Have you heard about the county's partial tuition refund program?

Earning a college degree while working is a smart career move. It increases your value to your employer and can improve your career trajectory.

Full-time, permanent employees can take part in Volusia County's partial tuition refund program after they complete their probationary period. If their application is approved by Human Resources, participants can receive a 50 percent refund for courses they complete with grades of A, B, C or "pass."

The reimbursement covers tuition only. The maximum reimbursement for each fiscal year is \$1,250.

Courses must be offered by an accredited school and must bear a relationship to the employee's current job, possible immediate future assignment or promotion, or be a part of a degree that is related to the employee's current job.

Employees who participate in the program must agree to remain in the county's employ for at least one year following course completion.

To see the full policy and the two required forms, visit [www.volusia.org/benefits](http://www.volusia.org/benefits).

## VCSO achieves high marks in accreditation process



Sheriff **Mike Chitwood** and the entire Volusia County Sheriff's Office are proud to announce the agency's latest award of accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), which visited Volusia County in 2017 to conduct an in-depth review of the agency.

The Sheriff's Office has achieved CALEA accreditation every year since 1991. This year, the agency achieved an impressive 97 percent compliance with "other than mandatory standards" – far above the 80 percent required for accreditation and a sign of the agency's continued commitment to CALEA's gold standard of excellence.

"I'm beyond proud of this great agency and all it's accomplished for the citizens of Volusia County," Sheriff Chitwood said. "We're just getting started, and we're looking forward to an even brighter future for our agency and our entire county."

It was the VCSO's ninth on-site visit from CALEA since 1991. The review resulted in high marks across the board for an agency that spent 2017 implementing Sheriff Chitwood's new vision for the future. The assessors noted that any transition from a previous administration brings inherent challenges – but "fortunately this potential was not realized during this transition" at VCSO.

"Now that the transition concludes into a period of stability under new leadership, the agency may now seek to improve these systems as it prepares for the future – a future that will likely continue to utilize the standards set forth by the commission to perpetuate the sheriff's already demonstrated commitment to advancing the philosophy of community policing and inclusion to solving community issues regarding quality of life in Volusia County," CALEA Team Leader William Dean Jr. wrote in a 28-page assessment report.

One of the many programs highlighted by CALEA was the agency's adaptability in changing its hiring and recruiting model to address staff vacancies. VCSO received high marks for professionalism, social media presence, community engagement, juvenile programs, training, de-escalation and crime-fighting models. These successes were due to the leadership within each of these areas and the commitment of every VCSO employee.



*Lt. Omar McKnight with his wife and children. McKnight was promoted from the rank of sergeant to lieutenant.*

## Chitwood promotes four

Two Volusia County sheriff's deputies were promoted to sergeant, a sergeant became a lieutenant, and a trainee became a latent print examiner during a special ceremony conducted by Sheriff **Mike Chitwood**.

Promotions went to Lt. **Omar McKnight**, Sgt. **Jacob Kraker**, Sgt. **Charles Hillyard** and Latent Print Examiner **Candice Marie Sieg**. Join us in congratulating these members of the Volusia County Sheriff's Office.

## VCSO renews efforts to attract diverse deputies

In a renewed effort to increase diversity among Volusia County sheriff's deputies, the VCSO has put the word out about its Deputy Sheriff Sponsorship Program. For qualified candidates who dream of becoming a deputy sheriff but can't afford it, this program pays all costs associated with attending the Basic Law Enforcement Academy at Daytona State College.

Besides paying for tuition, books and lab fees, the program also offers candidates a full-time job at the Sheriff's Office as a special worker, earning \$10 an hour for 40 hours a week while they are enrolled in the academy. Once a deputy receives law enforcement certification, he or she will be appointed as a reserve deputy at the VCSO, receiving benefits and pay equal to the reserve deputy classification.

To apply for the sponsorship program and learn about requirements, go to [www.volusia.org](http://www.volusia.org) and click on Career Opportunities. Applications must be received by Feb. 5.