

NEWS

You Can Use...

JACKSONVILLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT
Gene Paul N. Smith, Chief of Police

November 2023



Greetings,
November turned out to be a busy month for us. The month began with the retirement of three of our veteran officers: Senior Corporal Morris Ingle, Officer Tracy Hawes, and Officer Gregory Gordon. Each served over 20-plus years of service, and Senior Corporal Ingle served 30 years of service. They will be missed, but we are all very happy for them. (See Facebook).

We celebrated the accomplishments and contributions of our many wonderful volunteers during our annual volunteer banquet. The volunteers do so much for us and this community; this is one small event where we can show our appreciation to them for all they do. The volunteers are truly a part of our family, and they are some of the best people I have ever known. Thank you again, volunteers, for all you do! Thanks also to Sergeant Keith Shackelford and his wife Joyce for preparing the barbeque for the event. It is always a hit! (See Facebook).

Officers responded to a reported theft at Ulta Beauty in south Jacksonville Beach. As they arrived in the area, they witnessed a male, later identified as Joshua Hough, running out of Staples and throwing items into a vehicle parked in front of the store. When approached by police, Mr. Hough fled on foot, ultimately entering and attempting to hide from officers inside the Home Depot store. The driver of the vehicle, identified as Gilbert Simmons, and Mr. Hough were taken into custody without incident. Further investigation revealed Mr. Hough had stolen items from five stores in Jacksonville Beach, totaling approximately \$4,200. (See Facebook).

This incident was Felony Grand Theft, and these types of crimes have triggered a national discussion because of the chaos occurring at retail outlets in other cities. There are three main factors in this equation. The first are the policies of the national chain retailers. Most retailers are forbidden by company policy to detain, confront, or follow a customer committing a retail theft. Many retailers forbid employees from even calling the police. Three out of the five businesses involved this weekend did not call the police. They simply let the suspects walk out the front door. Once again, this is not the local employees, but rather the retailers' policies. Many companies will immediately terminate any employee who violates these rules. Many companies will also refuse to prosecute offenders. With no cooperating victim, the case is practically impossible to prosecute.

Retailers cite the high cost of litigation compared to the loss of merchandise. The other reason, often less stated, is the public-relations perspective of accusations of bias, racism, profiling, and false accusations. Now, many police departments are taking a hands-off approach because these situations often turn volatile. Chiefs ask the question, "Why put the officers and general public at risk if there is no cooperation from the retailers, resulting in no case to be made?" The second factor is state legislators, like those in California, raising the felony amount of grand theft (Proposition 47) to \$950 or more. The third factor is that even when a case can be made against a suspect, some progressive state attorneys are refusing to file charges. Fortunately, we do not have either of these last two problems in northeast Florida (or essentially anywhere else in Florida). There is a fourth factor, the public's attitude towards these thefts, both from the general public and from criminals (their attitudes toward these crimes). As you can see, police control very few factors in this equation. The Jacksonville Beach Police Department will continue to make every reasonable and legal effort to arrest these criminals now and in the future.

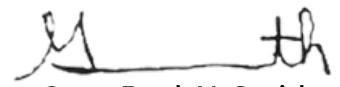
Downtown CAPE Officers, Traffic officers, and DUI officers held a traffic safety stand-down presentation at Naval Station Mayport last week for Naval Surface Squadron 14, focusing on driving under the influence. (See Facebook).

Thank you to all of our employees who worked over the Thanksgiving Holiday to keep us safe!

With the assistance of an Apple air tag, officers were able to locate two suspects from a string of vehicle burglaries along 4th and 5th Street North last week! Further investigation revealed credit card fraud from items taken during vehicle burglaries. Detectives and officers recovered over \$1,500 worth of stolen/fraudulently purchased items! This case spanned across two shifts and involved our detective unit as well. Fantastic police work, collaboration, and follow-up to A-Shift Days and Evenings and GIU! (See Facebook).

A routine traffic stop on a vehicle with an expired license plate led to the seizure of 15 packages of suspected Fentanyl pills weighing in at approximately 4.6 kilograms, with a street value of \$750,000. This was a large seizure of drugs, and the case is still under investigation. (See Facebook).

It is with great sadness and heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Officer Sam Owens (ret.). For those that did not know "Mr. Sam," he began his employment with the Jacksonville Beach Police Department as a police officer on December 25, 1968, and retired as an officer on November 1, 2001 (with only a ten-year break in service). After his retirement, "Mr. Sam" continued his employment at the department in a part-time capacity until October 6, 2020. The man is considered by many of us to be a legend. His service to our department and to the citizens of Jacksonville Beach will forever be remembered. Please keep "Mr. Sam" and his family in your thoughts and prayers during this most difficult time.


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