

NEWS

School resource deputies are eager for new year

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Students may not be looking forward to going back to school in about a week, but Deputy Carl Mader is.

Mader is a school resource deputy for the Alachua County Sheriff's Office at Santa Fe High School. When school is not in session, he - and the 14 other school resource deputies - coordinate youth programs and temporarily staff other divisions at the Sheriff's Office.

Most are eager to get back to their schools teaching traffic-safety classes, patrolling the hallways and breaking up fights, said Lt. Lori Fundenburg, Juvenile Relations Bureau supervisor. "These folks have a desire to work with youths."

For the summer, Mader said he investigates all the incoming child-abuse reports in the county from the state Department of Children & Families and from the child abuse hot line for the Detective Bureau.

"When you work a road, you get a call and never see the kid again," said Mader, who worked for the Detective Bureau until he switched to the Juvenile Relations Bureau four years ago. "Here, I get to see some of the positives of my job.

"The influence that you have on kids is a lot more than what you'd see on patrol," he said.

For example, Mader said when students and parents recognize him in the community, they call him by name, and he helps students when he is off-duty if they have a problem.

On Spring Break, school resource deputies go where a lot of the students go - Crescent Beach.

He said that as they patrol the beach, deputies are invited by students to play football, and some students let the deputies know where they will be hanging out so they can keep an eye on them.

"You become a lot more tuned in to the kids," he said.

Besides working in other areas, deputies can also attend youth programs.

The Florida Sheriffs Association hosts two, weeklong programs in the area - the "Youth Ranch" in Inglis and "Harmony in the Streets" in Waldo and Hawthorne - in which deputies interact with youths, Fundenburg said.

She said they teach leadership and self-esteem through non-smoking campaigns and drug education and prevention activities.

Eight deputies and two sergeants also participate in a bicycle team that patrols Hawthorne, Newberry and Archer three days a month during the summer, she said.

The 40 hours of mountain-bike school teaches the team how to ride up and down stairs, get off the bike at high speeds, use the bike to fend off an attacker, and what to eat and drink while on bike detail, said Deputy Jayson Levy, with the Juvenile Relations Bureau and on the bike team.

He said bikes are more practical than cars for events where blocking traffic and maneuvering crowds is important, like parades.

During the school year, Levy said, he is the coordinator of the Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program, or SHOCAP, which tries to prevent students who are already in trouble from getting in more trouble.

Levy said that as coordinator of SHOCAP, he works with all the school resource deputies in the schools, and like them, is eager.

"I'm ready to start a fresh, new school year," Levy said.