

● AWARD WINNER — CRIME VICTIM SERVICES AWARD

Orange County, Florida, Sheriff's Office

The 2013 Crime Victim Services Award is presented to the Orange County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Jerry Demings. Add: From left to right: Tom Seigle, President, Public Safety Services Group, Appriss; Laurie McKenna, Victim Advocate; Sheriff Jerry Demings; NSA President Larry Amerson



The NSA Crime Victim Services Award was established in 2005 with funding support from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Since 2008 the award has been generously sponsored by Appriss, Inc. NSA's Crime Victim Services Committee administers this award program which recognizes "outstanding achievement by a Sheriff's Office in support of victims." The award recipient for 2013 is the Orange County, Florida, Sheriff's Office (OCSO), headed by Sheriff Jerry Demings (pictured).

Victim Services at OCSO include a Victim Advocate Unit, Tourist Victim Advocate Unit, Senior Crime Prevention Unit, and Foreign Notifications Unit.

The Victim Advocate Unit successfully served over 1,500 victims in 2012, including more than 700 victims from 13 other municipalities and state agencies that do not have an advocate program. Also, this unit, in partnership with Bereaved Survivors of Homicide, Inc., offers bi-monthly support group meetings for crime victims and hosts the local National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims on September 25th. In addition, the Victim Advocate Unit facilitates the Hispanic Senior Crime Prevention Academy which is conducted in English and Spanish in partnership with local churches and other organizations. Finally, the unit assists in Sheriff Demings's "Offering Children Successful Outcomes" program, which mentors youth in the Orange County public school system.

OCSO created the Tourist Victim Advocate Unit, which maintains professional relationships with area businesses, to give special attention to tourists who are victims of traumatic crime scenes and to attend emergency hospital visits with law enforcement to perform crisis intervention.

The Senior Crime Prevention Unit is coordinated by a senior advocate who works with the Uniform Patrol Division to identify physical, mental, and financial abuse of the elderly. This unit also coordinates Senior Crime Prevention Academies and, in 2007, began working to change how law enforcement responds when seniors are missing. "Silver Alert," patterned after the Amber Alert system for missing children, was established in Florida by an Executive Order of the Governor in 2008.

The Foreign Notifications Unit notifies an embassy or consulate when a citizen of its country is arrested, detained, placed with the Florida Department of Children and Families, receives injuries that result in death, is at risk of death, or suffers serious trauma.

In summary, these OCSO units are making great efforts to prevent victimization and care for crime victims in Orange County and the surrounding communities. The professionalism and diligence to duty of unit staff are commendable and make the Orange County Sheriff's Office very deserving of the 2013 NSA Crime Victim Services Award.

This year's award is sponsored by Appriss, Inc.