



CITRUS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
A Nationally Accredited Law Enforcement Agency

SHERIFF
MIKE PRENDERGAST



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Annual Senior Summit

(Citrus County) Citrus County has a unique population in that sixty-five percent of our residents are fifty years of age or older. In fact, our population's median age is 55.4 years. That makes our county the third oldest in the state and fourth oldest in the nation. This creates a need to be cognizant of the needs of our senior population. In order to meet these needs, Sheriff Prendergast has given direction to the staff to seek out ways we can better serve this group and help address the issues they face on a daily basis.

One of the greatest issues facing our seniors, not only here in Citrus County but around the world, is the increasing impact of the many forms of Dementia. The definition of dementia is "A chronic or persistent disorder of the mental processes caused by brain disease or injury and marked by memory disorders, personality changes, and impaired reasoning". The most commonly recognized form of dementia is Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. and of the top ten causes of death it is the only one that cannot be slowed, treated, or cured. Estimates show that 1 in 10 individuals over the age of 65 suffer from some form of dementia. As a result, Sheriff Prendergast has taken the steps to begin the process to coordinate law enforcement handling of situations involving dementia sufferers and their families.

On Friday, May 4, 2018, the Citrus County Sheriff's Office co-sponsored an event with the Alzheimer's Family Organization (AFO) and Coping Dementia LLC to bring together the sheriff's offices of the eight counties covered by the AFO. The purpose of this event was to share the "best" practices used by each jurisdiction and begin looking at how to develop a coordinated response. The event, however, did not stop with just law enforcement agencies. Representatives from Nature Coast EMS, Citrus Memorial and Seven Rivers Hospitals, Citrus County Health Department, and many other organizations were invited to participate in this one of a kind event.

Two key elements of the one-day summit was the presence of the Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT) trailer presented by Senior Helpers and the Bloodhound demonstration done by Linda Boles of Find-M-Friends. The VDT experience provides the participant with an inside look at what it is like to suffer from Alzheimer's. Individuals whom have had the opportunity to step into the shoes of an Alzheimer's sufferer by taking the tour have come away with a new understanding of



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what this disease does to those it inflicts. Linda Boles demonstrated how to deploy a scent kit and how it integrates with the use of the bloodhounds of Find-M-Friends.

This summit was just the first step in a process to help relieve some of the stress endured by caregivers and sufferers of the disease. Sheriff Prendergast said, "We must put forth every effort to do what we can to address this generational phenomenon." Each participating agency is a critical part in finding the answers needed to implement a strategy to address this growing impact of dementia. The Citrus County Sheriff's Office and its partners are committed to succeeding in this effort.