



NEWS

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LOCAL FDLE AGENT HONORED FOR RESPONSE TO CHILD ABDUCTIONS

ORLANDO — After witnessing the abductions of Elizabeth Smart in Utah in 2002 and Carlie Brucia in Sarasota, Florida in 2004, Florida Department of Law Enforcement Assistant Special Agent in Charge Jay Etheridge began envisioning a more proactive approach to child abductions. He realized that the challenges of responding to child abductions were overwhelming for agencies, regardless of their size or experience.

After studying the enforcement responses to the Smart and Brucia abductions and bringing his years of law enforcement experience with violent crimes to the mix, Agent Etheridge created the Child Abduction Response Team (CART). CART is an innovative program that engages the resources of law enforcement personnel from every discipline in central Florida—investigators, analysts, staff assistants, data entry, computer support, forensics, crime scene, volunteer coordinators, Amber Alert Specialists, Emergency Management, and many more. It provides every tool needed to tackle child abduction cases.

Etheridge will be honored with a Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Award at a luncheon Wednesday, (June 21) in Orlando for his achievement in going above and beyond the call of duty and saving the state money in the process.

“Jay’s proactive approach insures our readiness to respond—pre-assembled and trained. His innovation is a direct result of ‘thinking outside the box’,” said Robert “Wayne” Ivey, Special Agent Supervisor. “CART assures us that our investigation covers all jurisdictional boundaries.”

CART is the first of its kind, not only in the state of Florida, but in the nation and is now an integral part of training by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. It was recognized by the International Chiefs of Police as the most innovative program in the country, heralded as a cutting edge program by John Walsh of *America’s Most Wanted*, and mandated by Governor Bush to be implemented statewide.

“Through this cooperative, inter-agency approach, not only are agents prepared to respond immediately and effectively to child abductions, it has saved \$200,000.00 in resources and salaries for the taxpayers of Florida,” said Dominic M. Calabro, President of Florida TaxWatch.

In October, 2004, the Orlando Region's CART was called into action for the first time. A six-year-old girl's parents discovered she was missing when they went to awaken her for school. Although she was assaulted during the abduction, the team's efforts led to her rescue,

The Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards program is a major government improvement initiative sponsored by Florida TaxWatch, The Florida Council of 100 and the State of Florida. In its 18th year, the program recognizes and rewards state employees who clearly exceed their job descriptions and performance expectations in ways that improve service delivery and save money for Florida taxpayers.

The 2006 awards competition honored 555 winners across Florida for innovations and productivity improvements worth \$340 million in cost savings, cost avoidances, and increased revenue for state government. Since 1989, more than 12,000 individuals, teams, work units, and partnerships have been honored for saving the state \$5.3 billion.

Etheridge's award is one of 59 individual state employees and teams in Central Florida recognized for cost savings in the course of their jobs. Other honorees include:

► The FDLE Orlando Narcotics Team, which dismantled several drug organizations trafficking cocaine, heroin, cannabis, MDMA and GHB/GBL. Members of the squad voluntarily participated in lengthy surveillances, undercover activities, training and planning sessions in order to ensure the success of their investigations.

The ten-member team of Francisco Hidalgo, George Duke, Jack Massey, Kathy Stokes, Mike Lanfersiek, Chuck Broadway, Danny Warren, Cindy Stone, Jeff Timmons, and Magda Martinez established and surpassed its goal for number of arrests and seizures.

"Each member of the Narcotics Team was a major contributor to the team's investigative success during the year—truly defining the meaning of the word 'team,'" said Special Agent Supervisor, Danny Banks.

The team's investigative efforts resulted in a total added value of \$7,279,864.

► Bill Wood, a Toll Equipment Systems Engineering Specialist with the Department of Transportation, who developed and was the driving force behind the SunWatch Operations Center, a centralized tolls equipment maintenance operations center. This technology decreases maintenance response times, decreases lane down times and increases the level of service to toll plaza personnel.

It is the first of its kind for the toll industry in Florida. The SunWatch Operations Center can monitor toll equipment performance statewide to insure toll revenue is accurately collected and down time of traffic lanes is minimized for motorists.

Mr. Wood's SunWatch Operations Center saved the department and Florida taxpayers almost \$242,000 a year.

► Joseph Graham, Administrative Assistant for the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, who developed and implemented the Detention Facility Management System. This is a data management system, currently being used in all 25 of the department's Juvenile Detention Centers.

Graham initiated the work on his own and presented it to his supervisors for approval. It is the first computerized system in Florida Detention Centers designed to assist the front line staff in completing their day to day work, which has always been done manually with pen and paper. It tracks data documenting the daily operations of the centers, including security, supervisory, medical, mental health and administration, dramatically improving accountability and communication.

The system allows front line detention staff to complete routine paperwork on a computer, which saves approximately 30,000 man hours that go directly back into supervision of youth in the centers.

Graham's system is estimated to have saved the department and taxpayers \$150,000.

► FDLE Special Agent, David Lee, who is being commended for his exemplary investigative efforts, with an outstanding year exceeding all expectations and having a major impact on violent crime investigations in the Orlando area.

Lee's accomplishments include recovery of Cesar Jacobo, a four-year-old boy abducted from California in 2002; the rescue of Cyle Thomas, an 18-month-old child reported endangered by the Division of Children and Family Services (DCF) after his mother abducted him from their custody; solving the first homicide in the history of the University of Central Florida; and serving as case agent for the Helping Endangered Adolescents Return to Safety Team (HEARTS), the newest initiative to locate and recover cold case missing children.

Lee did the work that would normally require three fulltime agents His efforts are valued at \$169,047 in cost avoidance.

"Agent Lee works every one of his cases with the same enthusiasm and effort. He never complains about assignments and comes to work each day with an excited attitude. He is well deserving of recognition for his extra efforts and the added contributions that he alone has made to the state of Florida," said Special Agent Supervisor Robert "Wayne" Ivey.

A luncheon honoring area winners will be held Wednesday June 21 at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista. The complete list of winners can be viewed at www.floridataxwatch.org.

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[Click Here to View the 2006 Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards magazine](#)

MEDIA NOTE: The Awards Luncheon Ceremony will take place Wednesday, June 21, at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort, 1751 Hotel Plaza Boulevard, in Lake Buena Vista from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Presenting the awards will be Tom Riggs, Manager, Financial Services, Orlando Office of Prudential Financial and Clarissa Dunlap, director of the Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards.

Florida TaxWatch is a private, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 25 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Our mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and education on government revenues, expenditures, taxation, public policies and programs and to increase the productivity and accountability of Florida Government. On the web at www.floridataxwatch.org