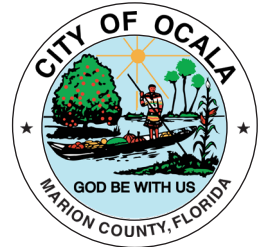




News Happening Around Town

Dec. 2020 Newsletter



City of Ocala
Office of the Mayor

Message from the Mayor



“As an Ocala native, I deeply care about what happens in our city. The people and places that make up this town are an important part of our community. Serving as your mayor for nine years is both an honor and a privilege and I remain committed to staying connected to our citizens. My hope is that through this monthly newsletter, you will see the continuous progress of our city as we work together to make this city a great place to live, play and prosper.”

Calendar | Upcoming Events

5
Jan.

**City Council
Meeting**
5 p.m.

13
Jan.

**Chief Greg
Graham 24-Hour
Legacy Walk**
Starts 6 p.m.

19
Jan.

City Council
Meeting
5 p.m.

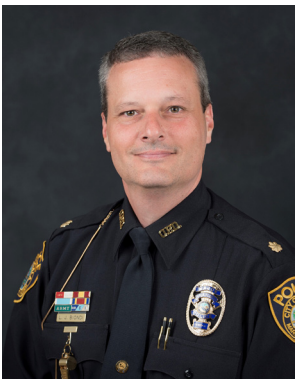
Updates from the Police Department

Sharing the Christmas Spirit

OPD helped out Santa this year by shopping for stocking stuffers for 140 lucky Ocala kids. Our patrol officers delivered the stockings throughout the week before Christmas.



Congratulations to our new Deputy Police Chief



On December 6, 2020, Major Biondi was promoted and assumed his current role as the Deputy Chief of the Ocala Police Department. Deputy Chief Biondi began his policing career with OPD in September 1993, following a four-year stint in the U.S. Army as a Military Police Officer. He served in several capacities before being promoted to Sergeant in the early months of 2002: Patrol Officer, Field Training Officer, Detective, SWAT Operator, and worked in

the Department's Street Crimes Unit.

Upon promotion to Sergeant, he served in several additional capacities including Patrol Sergeant, Traffic Sergeant, and Public Information Officer. In January 2010, he was promoted to Lieutenant and was assigned as

a Watch Commander in the Patrol Division. There he received further leadership training at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s Senior Leadership Program. Later in his tenure as Lieutenant, he supervised the Technical Services Section (Evidence) and was appointed the Commander of the Department’s SWAT Team. In January 2016, he was promoted to Captain and was assigned to the Office of Professional Standards (Internal Affairs). While in that capacity, he was selected to attend the FBI National Academy – Session 267. In March 2018, he was promoted to Major and oversaw the Patrol Bureau and, later, the Special Operations Bureau—Traffic Unit, K9 Unit, School Resource Officers, and Training Unit.

Congratulations Deputy Chief Biondi, we are honored to follow your leadership and know that you and Chief Balken will continue to protect and love this community!

From Around the Community

Safe Haven Baby Box, Inc.

About Safe Haven

Safe Haven Baby Boxes’ mission is to prevent illegal abandonment of newborns by raising awareness, offering a 24-hour hotline for mothers in crisis and offering a last resort option for women. Founder, Monica Kelsey, started Safe Haven Baby Boxes, Inc. after learning she was abandoned as an infant and after seeing a “baby box” in operation at a church in Cape Town, South Africa. She has made it her personal mission to educate others on the Safe Haven Law and to do whatever it takes to save the lives of innocent babies from being abandoned. The organization also offers services that go beyond the installation of a baby box in a fire station and/or hospital. Raising awareness, training first responders and providing support to mothers-in-crisis prevents illegal infant abandonment. Having a baby box in a community provides a focal point to support the Safe Haven Law and allows our first responders and community a proactive method to eliminate illegal abandonment.*

Ocala’s Safe Haven Baby Box

On December 15, Ocala Fire Rescue unveiled Florida’s first Safe Haven Baby Box (SHBB), built into the lobby of the fire station at our new first responder campus on Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. When a mother surrenders a baby, an alarm will sound alerting the first responders to the child who they will then take to





the hospital. The box is equipped with heating and cooling features and locks once the lid is closed. Because of Ocala's central location, it is a great place for a SHBB where people can come to safely, anonymously and legally surrender a child.

When I first learned about this organization and that Ocala had the chance to be the first to take advantage of this program, I didn't hesitate. I am proud of our City for leading the way in Florida, and I hope other communities will be encouraged to follow suit in support of the Safe Haven Law.

* information on the mission and history of Save Haven Baby Boxes, Inc. was derived directly from their website: shbb.org/about-us

Golf Cart Parade

At the start of the holiday season, the Ocala Golf Cart Club hosted a golf cart Christmas parade that started at City Hall and made its way around downtown Ocala. We had nearly 150 decorated golf carts lined up to participate. What a fun and safe way to celebrate this Christmas!



7th Annual Christmas Party

Each year it is my honor to host a Christmas Party for residents at The Center's. I was inspired to start this tradition years ago after helping someone get out of a bad place. No one should feel alone during the holiday season. We provide a holiday lunch, a speaker and sing Christmas carols, along with just striving to bring some holiday cheer to those in need.



Left to right: Mayor Guinn; Meghan Huff, with the Centers; Michael Pirotti, Associate Pastor Church of Hope; Sandra Guinn

Happy Holidays and on to the New Year

I hope you enjoyed the many holiday events that took place leading up to Christmas. We had a great line-up of events like Santa on the Square, movies in the park and a traditional Menorah lighting, among others. Thank you to the City's Recreation and Parks Department for putting on these events for our community. I look forward to the new year with joy and anticipation for good things to come.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Celebrated throughout the nation, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day will take place on Monday, Jan. 18. This annual holiday recognizes the achievements of Martin Luther King, Jr., with local residents and leaders honoring Dr. King with events in our community including a march through downtown. Due to precautionary measures by event organizers, this year's activities will be postponed until a later date. The hope is that the community will still take a moment to honor Dr. King on his day until we can join together as a group to celebrate his lifelong achievements.

World Equestrian Center

The World Equestrian Center (WEC) is ready to welcome spectators to Ocala's newest equine and event facility grounds. With events beginning in January, the facility will place a spotlight on Ocala and the potential to increase the use of our local airport. Located just a few miles from WEC, the Ocala International Airport, will continue to serve the aviation needs of current and future pilots and visitors. The airport currently houses a terminal, meeting space and rental car companies. New airplane hangars are being constructed through Sheltair, as well as plans for a new restaurant that will become a part of the terminal. Ocala is booming and we are excited for the new additions that are coming our way for the year 2021.

Beacon Point Tree Planting

In honor of Chief Graham's legacy, a ceremonial tree planting will take place at Beacon Point, a substance abuse and mental health facility. Keep a lookout for more details on the event, which will take place in January 2021, as we continue to honor a man who meant so much to this community.



Homelessness Task Force

We are working to better our community. As your mayor, I will be appointing a task force comprised of people with expertise and experience in helping the homeless community. As this task force continues to grow, we

will keep you updated on the progress as we strive to help our vulnerable citizens.



**CHIEF
GREG GRAHAM
LEGACY FOUNDATION**

**SHOW YOUR
SUPPORT,
GET
INVOLVED**



**GIVE A LITTLE. HELP A LOT
DONATE NOW!**

This event is to Celebrate and Honor the life's work of the Honorable Chief Greg Graham

Please contact Angie Clifton
352-895-4162 or Ben Marciano
352-438-7924 for more information



EVENT OUTLINE

January 13 6pm start (24 hours)

- 6PM** | kickoff of the Chief Greg Graham Legacy Walk (SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY)
- 10PM** | Pajama Party (SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY)
- 5AM - 7AM** | Coffee Break (SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY)
- 11AM - 12PM** | Legacy Lunch (SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY)
- 4PM - 6PM** | Legacy Walk Celebration (SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY)

CHIEF GREG GRAHAM LEGACY WALK

Opioid and Amnesty Information

The Ocala Police Department (OPD) has multiple protocols in place to help alleviate addiction in our community.

All officers in the field are equipped with Narcan® to aid during a response to a possible opioid overdose call. Narcan® is an FDA approved nasal

spray that counteracts the life-threatening effects of an opioid emergency or overdose. OPD's Opioid Amnesty Program began in January 2018 and continues to be a prominent factor in the reduction of overdose deaths and crime throughout Marion County. If someone is struggling with addiction and needs assistance, upon request by the individual, an Ocala Police Officer will transport them to a local health treatment facility, free of charge. The officer will also take and properly destroy any drugs and/or drug paraphernalia surrendered to them by the individual without the fear of arrest for possession of those items. The goal of the Amnesty Program is to encourage individuals to seek treatment without the barriers of cost or arrest. It is the belief of the Ocala Police Department that together, as a community, we can combat this crisis.

OPD Numbers* 2020 Year to Date	
Overdoses (OD)	343
OD Deaths	41
Narcan® Saves	142
Amnesty Program	
Total Participants	352
2020 Participants	156

*Numbers are as-of this writing and are subject to change.

About the Mayor



Kent Guinn assumed the office of Mayor in December 2011 after serving the City of Ocala for 12 years as the Councilman representing District 4. Mayor Guinn is in the financial services business and is a representative of the Guardian Life Insurance Company of America as well as owner of the firm Guinn & Company, LLC.

For the past 29 years he has served on the Board of the Children's Home Society Mid-Florida Division which covers North Central Florida. He served on the CHS State Board of

Directors for 26 years. CHS is a 112-year-old not for profit child welfare agency in the State of Florida. Mayor Guinn was adopted through CHS.

Mayor Guinn is a 5th generation Ocalan. His family has been in Ocala since 1850. He and his wife Sandra have been married for 39 years and have two sons.

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www.ocalafl.org



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Office of the Mayor