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**Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)**

**Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse**

**Advisory Board**

**In-Person Meeting**

**Friday, June 7, 2024**

**9:00 AM to 4:00 PM (EST)**

**Mission Statement:** Together with the citizens of Florida, we promote the safety of children and other vulnerable populations through public and private collaborations.

**Meeting Minutes**

**Chairperson: Karen Mazzola**

**Welcome**

**Meeting begins at 9:17 AM.**

**Roll Call**

**FDLE Attendees:** Ashley Bullard, Mehgen Peoples, Megan McDonald, Quentin Harris, Abdel Cortez, Kandace Zachary, Philip Lindley.

**Board Members:** Chairperson Karen Mazzola, Vice-Chairperson Darry Lloyd, Dan Campbell, Bill Corfield, Stephanie White, David Brand, Major Jerry Hensley, Jessica Janasiewicz, Sheriff Walt McNeil, John Pitta, Peggy Pitta, Brandi Manley, Rochelle Kemple, Dr. Kim Spence, Mark Young, Terri Lynn, Frank Williams, Fran Carlin-Rogers, Julie Collins, Dr. Katherine Gomez, Travis Paulk, Kristin Morgan, Captain Peter Bergstresser.

**Organizations and Individuals Represented:** Florida PTA, Office of the State Attorney 8th Circuit, Target Corporation, Florida Outdoor Advertising Association, Public Safety Institute, St. Petersburg Police Department, Florida Association of School Administrators, Leon County Sheriff’s Office, Florida Governor’s Legal Office, UCF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, The Jimmy Ryce Center for Victims of Predatory Abduction, Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Florida Department of Children and Families, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, impacted missing families, and private citizens.

**Approve 5/9/2024 Meeting Minutes**

* Ms. Pitta moves to approves the minutes; Mr. Young seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor; the minutes are approved.

**Strategic Plan Comments and Approval**

* Chairperson Mazzola asks the board for discussion of the Strategic Plan one page at a time.
* SMAS Bullard clarifies that currently, the strategic plan is only provided to Board members and that the Board’s mission statement is not written in statute.
* Mr. Corfield requested changes to how his name is listed on page 5 of the document; these are accepted by the Board.
* Chief Lloyd moves to approve the Strategic Plan with discussed changes. Mr. Corfield seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor; the Strategic Plan is approved.

**Florida Missing Children’s Day Award Nominations**

**Everyday Hero Award Name Change Discussion**

* Due to the award being created to recognize K9 Maple’s heroic actions which did not fit any award criteria, Ms. White suggests changing the name of the award to “Maple’s Everyday Hero Award”.
* Ms. White moves to change the name of the Everyday Hero Award to Maple’s Everyday Hero Award. Mr. Pitta seconds the motion.
* Ms. Lynn disagrees and explains that attaching a K9’s name to the award may cause confusion as to what the award is for.
* Ms. Morgan suggests “K9 Maple Memorial Award” in the style of the Evelyn Williams Memorial Award.
* Mr. Corfield and Ms. Lynn suggest a new award category.
* Ms. Kemple speaks in support of the motion to change the award name to “Maple’s Everyday Hero Award.”
* Major Hensley suggests that the Board agree on criteria for the Everyday Hero Award.
* Chairperson Mazzola calls for a vote. The Board votes in favor of the motion by Ms. White; the motion carries.
* Major Hensley suggests the change be included in the next newsletter.
* Chairperson Mazzola suggests this for all special awards; SMAS Bullard suggests breaking these up across multiple newsletters.
* Clarification that the Maple Everyday Hero Award is intended for the Board to fill through nominations for other awards and is not advertised to the public.

**Citizen of the Year Award**

* Chief Lloyd moves to accept nominee A-1 for the award. Mr. Corfield seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.

**State/Federal Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award**

* Mr. Corfield moves to accept nominee E-2. Dr. Spence seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.

**School Bus Driver of the Year Award**

* Mr. Corfield requests additional information if available on nominee B-3, regarding the suspicious individual. SMAS Bullard was not able to find further information.
* A motion is made for B-3; the motion is seconded and the Board votes in favor.

**Local Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award**

* Clarification regarding nominee D-1: this is the officer from the same incident as the Citizen of the Year Award.
* Chief Lloyd moves to accept nominee D-4; he explains that the work done by this officer was far above and beyond what was required. Ms. White seconds the motion.
* SMAS Bullard explains that rather than receiving the nomination from the agency as is usual, the nomination was received from DCF due to their recognition of the level of work done. Ms. Morgan confirms this and explains further how far the officer went beyond what was required of her.
* Mr. Corfield suggests nominating the officer for a different award if applicable.
* Dr. Spence suggests moving nominees from this category to suggestions for special awards.
* Chairperson Mazzola suggests holding off on this award and moving on to another award.
* SMAS Bullard clarifies that nominees suggested to the Commissioner for special awards are accepted most of the time.
* SMAS Bullard suggests identifying nominees to consider for special awards, then selecting special awards, then moving back to the categories for any nominees rejected from special awards.

**Break at 10:30 AM.**

**Meeting reconvenes at 10:53 AM.**

SMAS Bullard confirms that the Board still has a quorum.

**Task Force/Team of the Year Award.**

* Mr. Williams explains to the Board that he was involved in the investigation regarding nominee G-3.
* Peggy Pitta moves to accept nominee G-3. Chief Lloyd seconds the motion.
* The Board votes in favor of accepting G-3.

**Jimmy Ryce K9 Trailing Team of the Year Award**

* Ms. Lynn explains that the reason that one of the nominees is from a county Department of Corrections is because K9 handlers often use their K9 to assist other law enforcement agencies when needed.
* SMAS Bullard requests context from Ms. White as to the difference in capabilities of bloodhounds and beagles; Ms. White explains that bloodhounds are slightly better at scenting and beagles are slightly easier to handle, and both are often used as K9s to excellent effect.
* There is a question as to whether a missing person is required to be a child per award criteria; the criteria does specify children. Given this, nominee F-3 is removed from consideration as it does not appear to describe a child.
* Chairperson Mazzola requests that a review of the award criteria be added to the agenda for the next meeting.
* Regarding difficulties faced by the K9s, Ms. White explains that high wind presents a massive obstacle to tracking, that water holds a scent, and that grass and wooded areas hold scent more easily than pavement.
* A motion is made for F-1; the motion is seconded and the Board votes in favor.

**Combatting Human Trafficking Award**

* There is a question of what qualifies regarding the time period given for nominations; if the nomination must be for an event that occurred within the time period or if investigation occurring within the time period qualifies. The Board concludes that either qualifies.
* Regarding nominee C-4, Chairperson Mazzola asks if there is information on where the traffic stop was conducted; it was local to Tallahassee.
* Mr. Williams brings up the federal definition of human trafficking; he believes that C-6 does not qualify and that it is important to show a consistent definition of human trafficking to the public.
* Chairperson Mazzola provides additional clarification that the definition written in Florida statute states that human trafficking is: transporting, soliciting, recruiting, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploiting that person. This is broader than the federal definition and under this definition, nominee C-6 qualifies.

**Break at 12:07 PM.**

**Meeting reconvenes at 1:30.**

**Presentation by Leigh Clark with FDLE on Missing and Unidentified Persons Perspectives**

**Combatting Human Trafficking Award (Continued)**

* Chairperson Mazzola suggests addressing commentary for each nominee voted for in the preliminary vote.
* Dr. Gomez clarifies the Florida Statute definition of human trafficking as it is relevant to the Board. The federal definition and state have different definitions and some conflicting terminology. Weight given to Florida Statute definition.
* Regarding nominee C-2, Ms. Morgan explains that it’s not usual for a runaway case to be taken this seriously by law enforcement from the beginning.
* Mr. Corfield comments that nominee C-1 represents good work in that the detectives kept following leads from victim to victim to include an international trafficking ring, instead of stopping at one victim.
* Dr. Spence moves to accept nominee C-2 for the award. Major Hensley seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.

**Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award (Continued)**

* The motion currently on the floor is to nominate D-4 for the award. Mr. Corfield moves to amend the motion in order to suggest D-4 for the Commissioner’s Award. The motion is seconded by Dr. Spence. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.
* Ms. White moves to nominate D-1 for the LEO of the Year Award. Dr. Spence seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.

**Maple’s Everyday Hero Award**

* Dr. Spence moves to accept nominee C-5 for this award. Mr. Corfield seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor; the motion carries.

**John and Revé Walsh Award**

* Mr. Corfield moves to accept Ms. Morgan for this award. Dr. Spence seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.

**Evelyn Williams Memorial Award (Unsung Hero)**

* Dr. Gomez explains the extent of work that Michaela Darty did for the operation for which she was nominated.
* Major Hensley motions to accept Michaela for the award. The motion is seconded by Ms. White. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.

**Young Hero Award**

* No Young Hero Award nomination received.
* Kristin Morgan describes the story of 16-year-old Jamichael, who found a toddler left alone in his car seat in the hot sun and brought him home to his family to receive care and alert law enforcement. Article was located online at meeting.
* Ms. Lynn makes motion to accept the potential young hero award if approval can be given from jurisdictional agency. Dr. Spence seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor and the motion carries.

**Summer Newsletter Article Discussion**

* The Board agrees that a draft of the newsletter will be sent out for commentary, to be followed up by the finalized version after FDLE has had it reviewed, for final approval.

**Upcoming Board Tasks and/or Discussion**

* Chairperson Mazzola asks members to consider if there are areas of missing persons issues that the Board could better address.

**FMCD Update-**

* The Foundation currently has the funds to cover the 2024 ceremony and about half of what will be needed for the 2025 ceremony.
* Regarding the contract with Staybridge Hotel: SMAS Bullard will speak with the families regarding whether they will stay at Staybridge or Drury Hotel; the primary contract is still with Staybridge and the room blocks may be modified depending on what is decided.

**Legislative Update and Questions**

* PPA Faulkner explains that the SAFE Act provides drivers the ability to disclose certain mental health conditions affecting themselves or their children, such as Autism, ADHD, and Down Syndrome in their motor vehicle records. This will show up when police access the records during traffic stops and other interactions where the records are viewed, so that they will be aware that the persons they are dealing with are affected by these disorders.

**Other Business**

* Dr. Spence shares information on a training she is involved in giving for autism; this will also be included in the MEPICAB Newsletter.
* SMAS Bullard explains that FDLE’s purchases are frozen until the end of the fiscal year at the end of June, and that travel reimbursements will be processed as soon as possible after July 1st.

**Adjournment**

* Without any further business to discuss, the meeting adjourns at 3:58 PM.

After Meeting Notes: Awards were changed to different categories after the sworn law enforcement certificate checks were completed and it was discovered that Tyron Crook were not sworn even though they had detective in their title. Please note that the Maple Everyday Hero Award, Local Law Enforcement Officer Award, and Human Trafficking Award winners had to be shuffled around 7/11/2024 and were approved by the Board via Surveymonkey in order for all award winners to be recognized while still meeting award criteria.