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Attorney General Ashley Moody News Release

Victim Advocate Award Winners Announced this National Crime Victims' Rights Week



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced the winners of the Attorney General’s 2020 Distinguished Victim Services Award as part of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Each year, the Florida Attorney General’s Office honors victim advocates and law enforcement officers for their efforts in assisting crime victims. Attorney General Moody presented the awards during a video conference call ceremony with the winners and their respective departments.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Many of our state’s victim advocates and law enforcement officers go above and beyond their job description to assist crime victims and their families. Amidst uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a rise in violent crime this past year, these heroes held strong and assisted people suffering at the hands of criminal behavior and tragedy, from caring for injured children, to making breakthroughs in incredibly complex cases and much more.

“I am proud to recognize this year’s winners of our Distinguished Victim Services Award, and I want to thank these winners and all our victim advocates statewide for their continued commitment to serving crime victims.”

The following victim advocates received the Attorney General’s Distinguished Victim Services Award:

- Jude Castro—Sarasota Police Department
- Sandy Ezell—Florida Highway Patrol
- Chaplain Jason Low—Lake County Sheriff's Office

The following law enforcement officers also received the Attorney General's Distinguished Victim Services Award:

- Deputy First Class Daniel LaVerne—Flagler County Sheriff's Office
- Detective Tiffany Barry—Citrus County Sheriff's Office
- Detective Maria Santos—Sunrise Police Department
- Detective Michelle Gindlesperger—Sunrise Police Department

During the ceremony, Attorney General Moody presented a Cabinet resolution to the award recipients.

To read the resolution, click [here](#).

This year marks the 40th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Since 1981, NCVRW helps citizens and advocates reflect on commitments to serving victims of all crime.

To learn more about NCVRW and this year's theme, *Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities.*, click [here](#).

The Florida Constitution and Florida Crime Victims' Bill of Rights give crime victims or their lawful representatives, including the next of kin of homicide victims, many rights, including the right to be informed, to be present, and to be heard when relevant, at all crucial stages of criminal proceedings, to be free from harassment, intimidation or abuse, and to have the safety of the victim and the victim's family considered when setting bail or pretrial release conditions.

The Florida Attorney General's Division of Victim Services serves as an advocate for crime victims and administers a compensation program to ensure financial assistance for innocent victims of crime. For more information on crime victim services offered by the Florida Attorney General's Office, click [here](#).