Detective Levi Cobarras has been serving the St. Petersburg Police Department since 1991. As a new officer, he worked as a patrol officer in many of the neighborhoods throughout the city. It was during this early part of his career that he was commended for his actions during a just occurred armed robbery to a business. While diligently patrolling his assigned patrol zone, Detective Cobarras observed an individual running out of the front door of an occupied barber shop. The suspect, who was carrying a revolver in his hand, ran into a housing complex after seeing the police. Detective Cobarras immediately radioed an armed robbery had just occurred and gave detailed suspect information to responding units. He exited his patrol car and chased the suspect on foot where he observed the suspect force his way into an apartment. Remaining calm, he directed back-up units to the exact location of the suspect, thus providing valuable information to the other units arriving on scene. The suspect was subsequently taken into custody without harm coming to any civilian, police personnel or to himself. His bravery and dedication to service resulted in a successful closure of this armed robbery.

Being a problem solver, Detective Cobarras found creative ways to tackle the drug activity and worked hand in hand with city officials to address the many code violations associated with vacant drug houses in his assigned area. He worked with community police officers to not only identify these vacant nuisance properties in his area, but to have them condemned and later demolished. During his four years as a uniformed patrol officer, Detective Cobarras received many letters of commendation from residents for his exceptional work and extraordinary professional courtesy.

See Officer of the Year on page 12

No images of Detective Cobarras are shown due to his assignment.
Greetings!

I am both proud and pleased to be speaking to you as Interim Chief of Police. The process to select the next Chief of Police is progressing daily. Mayor Kriseman is actively seeking input from many sources as he moves closer to making his final choice for a police chief. He has already acknowledged that it is very important choice.

This issue of Behind The Badge focuses on the many recent awards of the Department. You will see articles on the recipients of the Ned March/Bud Purdy Awards, Officer of the Year, Unit of the Year, Civilians of the Year, and Employees of the Quarter. I’d like to congratulate all the award recipients as well as all those employees nominated for these important awards. We have a great agency and it is always a pleasure to announce these awards. All of our employees throughout this organization work hard and contribute in valuable ways to our mission.

Mayor Kriseman unveiled his vision for the City on April 2nd at the Mahaffey Theatre. He and Deputy Mayor Kanika Tomalin outlined the core values needed to achieve the vision for the city. Strategic Pathways were provided to give direction for achieving the vision. The selection of a new police chief will be another great opportunity to advance our department under this vision!

There have also been many fun and newsworthy events recently. The Special Olympics’ Torch Run, Hoagies for Heroes sponsored by WaWa’s, and the First Annual Gridiron Family fun Day were just some of the recent events. St. Petersburg truly is the city of events!

I’d like to also take a moment to mention the loss of our friend Detective John Letcher. John’s sudden passing deeply affected his friends and coworkers throughout the Department. We are also aware of the loss of retired employees, family members of employees, volunteers and others remembered through their dedication and work with our department. We must always remember and value our friends.

Finally, we just had our Second Annual Memorial Service at Demens Landing on May 19. Once again, it was a great event which truly honored our fallen officers. Fourteen law enforcement agencies were represented by members of their honor guard. The Mayor and every member of City Council were present. Prior to the service, there was a 3K Walk for COPS (Concerns of Police Survivors), which brought additional awareness to the commitment of law enforcement.

Thank you again for your hard work and dedication. Together we can continue to move our department forward!

On March 10, 2014 Detective John B. Letcher, 46, Burglary Squad, Investigative Services Bureau, suffered a medical episode at his home and passed away.

John joined the St. Petersburg Police Department as a Police Cadet on 2/27/89 and he became a sworn Police Officer on 9/1/90.

Detective Letcher will be greatly missed by all of his friends at the St. Petersburg Police Department.
The men and women of this highly specialized unit work in tandem with all of the specialized units within the St. Petersburg Police Department to include the Homicide Squad, the Robbery Squad, the Burglary Squad, the Auto Theft Unit, the Domestic/Personal Violence Unit, the Economic Crimes Unit, Intelligence, the Vice and Narcotics Division, the Youth Resources Division, and the Uniform Services Division.

The trio of Crime Analysts working in the C.A.S.E. Section daily churn out BOLO’s, auto theft lists, probable cause arrest bulletins, and crime pattern sheets; not just for the C.A.S.E. Section, but for other units within the Department as well. The analysts take into account our current activities, crime patterns, and gathered intelligence information and react accordingly. Their primary objective is to further our abilities to successfully investigate, apprehend, and prosecute serious felony or habitual offenders or any incidents involving crimes of violence.

Not only do the C.A.S.E. detectives daily assist members of the St. Petersburg Police Department in surveilling and apprehending dangerous and wanted criminals, but the unit is frequently utilized by numerous other federal, state and local agencies, as we are considered one of the premier surveillance units in the southeastern United States. The unit, through surveillance and arrests in 2013, has assisted members of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (A.T.F.), the Secret Service, the U.S. Marshall’s Office Tampa Fugitive Task Force, the State Attorney’s Office, and several local municipal police agencies as well as local sheriff’s departments. Additionally, the C.A.S.E. Section has been contacted by out-of-state jurisdictions and asked to assist in tracking down, locating, and arresting wanted fugitives who have somehow migrated to this area.

The very nature of the job faced daily by the men and women of the C.A.S.E. Section entails surveilling armed and wanted felons, desperate career criminals, serial rapists and burglars, armed robbers, and murderers. To show the danger inherent in the duties encountered by the detectives within the unit, two of our C.A.S.E. detectives have been shot in the past few years while actively arresting violent armed robbers who were engaged in the act of committing the forcible felonies.

The men and women of the C.A.S.E. Section play a key and significant role in the day-to-day activities of the St. Petersburg Police Department’s criminal operations. They put in long hours without complaint, knowing that upon their transfer to this specialized unit, their working hours can (and do) change at the drop of a hat. This can put an extreme burden on their personal lives and families, however they never hesitate to volunteer for any assignment as they consider it all “in the line of duty.”

These are the types of people who are the consummate “team player” and who are the backbone of any good organization. Intelligent and motivated, they can always be counted upon to immediately forge ahead and tackle any assignment, issue or problem head-on and make common sense decisions and produce quality results. The detectives within the C.A.S.E. Section are an asset to a unit that is constantly on the go at a moment’s notice and sometimes has to abruptly change course or quickly adapt to a different set of circumstances presented in the middle of an operation or investigation.

See CASE on page 11
DeteC tive Ja Cque S Lamonde and d eteC tive  k enny m iLLer   reCeive n ed m arCh/bud Purdy  a ward

Detective Jacques LaMonde

Detective Paul “Jacques” LaMonde, 46, became a sworn police officer with the St. Petersburg Police Department on November 17, 1990. He is currently a detective with the Department’s undercover surveillance team (Crime Analysis, Surveillance and Enforcement (CASE) Unit).

Jacques and his wife of 14 years, Laurie, are raising a basketball team: five boys – including a set of 12 year old triplets.

In nearly 24 years with the Department, Jacques has served with distinction as a patrol officer, a Community Policing Officer, a brief stint with the Downtown Deployment Team, and as a Detective with the CASE unit since 2008. An avid athlete, he regularly plays golf, basketball and flag football and prides himself on staying in excellent physical condition.

Jacques daily work consists of conducting covert surveillances, undercover operations and arresting wanted felons. He is one of the best in terms of equating suspect and vehicle movements to real time, which is critical to the movements and positions of other detectives.

He has compiled a lengthy list of accomplishments during his career and has arrested murderers, serial armed robbers and a host of wanted felons involved in a variety of crimes.

On January 26, 2009, Jacques surveilled a suspicious trio of individuals in the Kenwood area and then observed them rob at gunpoint a convenience store. During the takedown after the robbery, one of the suspects shot Jacques several times, causing life threatening injuries.

See LaMonde on page 9

Detective Kenny Miller

Detective Kenny Miller, 36, became a sworn police officer with the St. Petersburg Police Department on June 11, 2001. He is married to Angela.

For thirteen years, Kenny has served the citizens of St. Petersburg as a Patrol Officer, a Community Police Officer and a member of the Street Crimes Unit before moving to investigations as a Burglary Detective. He is currently a detective in the Homicide Unit.

As a Homicide Detective, Kenny has exemplified the highest level of investigative proficiency by maintaining a 100% homicide case closure over the past 2 ½ years. His supervisor, Sergeant Terrell Skinner, believes Kenny’s unrelenting investigative techniques rank him among the greatest homicide investigators in the history of the Department.

In April of 2011, Kenny investigated a home invasion robbery homicide where three armed, masked men kicked in the door of a home and demanded money from a victim, shooting him several times. The man survived, but the assailants shot and killed a woman in the home who was the mother of two adolescent boys. Kenny held the crime scene for two days until the man was able to be interviewed, providing additional information that led him to find forensic evidence at the scene – a speck of blood from one of the suspects – that provided the vital clue to close the case.

In June of 2012, Kenny investigated another home invasion robbery homicide where four armed, masked suspects kicked in a front door and killed the homeowner. Through his hard work and the use of confidential sources, Kenny linked this case to another

See Miller on page 10
MARY SPIVEY

Mary Spivey has been with the St. Petersburg Police Department since October 1999. In December of 2001 she became the Executive Secretary to the Chief of Police and is still serving in that capacity today.

While working in the Uniform Services Bureau as the secretary to the Assistant Chief, Mary was extremely busy keeping up with more than 360 employees who were assigned to that Bureau. Although it was a daunting task to stay on top of things, Mary was exemplary. She developed systems to be more efficient, put in methods to track items and, most of all, communicated with people in a kind, professional and non-confrontational way.

When she moved into the Chief’s Office, her duties changed somewhat but she faced those new responsibilities with the steadfastness that those of you who know Mary have come to know.

Some of the calls she received in the Chief’s office were very challenging, but her tone and calm demeanor always served best even on the most difficult and demanding individuals.

Mary is a person who can easily work with a diverse group of people and come up with collaborations and compromises that seem to work for everyone. When she takes on a task, it is complete and accurate in a timely manner, even when she must take the time to research for necessary information.

Mary has always given one-hundred percent of herself to this organization. She is a consistent, hard-working, dedicated and loyal employee.

She cares about the department and most importantly, the people it takes to make St. Petersburg Police what it is today.

Ms. Spivey was nominated by Chief Chuck Harmon. This is an excerpt from that nomination.
Jo-Anne Swensson began her career with the Department in 2008, when she was selected from a pool of 130 candidates for the position of Training Specialist in the Training Division.

Jo-Anne acclimated easily in her new role. Her creativity, expertise, experience and efficiency in customer service and general administration were readily apparent. Even as a new employee, she was known as a self-starter who kept her supervisor updated and needed no prompting. She quickly proved herself as a very dependable employee.

In 2009, Jo-Anne accepted a transfer to the role of payroll clerk and worked in the Fiscal Services Division until 2011. In this role, she quickly became the “go-to” person who had answers and a friendly smile. In 2011, she accepted a challenging assignment as Safety and Training Officer in the Training Division. Jo-Anne remained in that position until May 2013 when she was transferred back to the Fiscal Services Division part time as Accountant I to assist the Acting Division Manager. She later accepted that position on a full-time basis. Jo-Anne also continues to assist the Training Division with the Safety and Training Officer duties until the position can be filled.

Jo-Anne is one of the most pleasant individuals anyone could meet; she is always helpful and friendly. Her work quality, regardless of her assignment, is always polished. She exhibits refreshing creativity and energy in all of her assignments. She collaborates well with others to combine ideas and develop plans, and she understands the importance of diverse points of view in decision-making. Jo-Anne works quickly on assignments and produces high-quality work in a short amount of time. She is an extraordinarily hard worker. Oral communication is one of her strongest skills. She is an articulate speaker and skilled teacher, and her presentations are forthcoming, clear, concise and energetic.

During 2013, Jo-Anne wore numerous hats, to include coordinator for the Department’s 2013 Torch Run,
CANDLELIGHT VIGIL MEMORIAL SERVICE

On Monday, May 19, 2014, the Department held a Candlelight Vigil Memorial Service at the Heroes of the St. Petersburg Police Law Enforcement Memorial at Demens Landing Park.

CIVILIAN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

Sheila F. Cunningham

Shannon L. Novitz

Marilyn Rivera

William F. Warner
The Police Department announced a new, innovative program to deter kids from bringing guns to schools.

Following the success of the Department’s Gun Bounty, members of the Department conceived of an idea to help deter kids from bringing guns to schools. They were awarded a grant from the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Fund for two Firearms Detection K-9 teams, one team staffed by St. Petersburg Police and the other by Pinellas County Schools Police.

Unlike standard police K-9 teams that are trained to perform a variety of functions, these dogs are trained to search exclusively for guns and shell casings.

The Firearms Detection K-9 team at the Department is K-9 Officer Chris Ladd and his partner, Macy, a chocolate Lab. Macy was donated to SPPD by Southeastern Guide Dogs.

For the first time in St. Petersburg, Krispy Kreme Doughnuts and the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics teamed up to raise awareness and funds for Special Olympics Athletes in Florida.

St. Petersburg Police Officers and Chief DeKay took to the roof at the new Krispy Kreme Doughnut shop at 9100 4th Street North to lower buckets with coupons to customers in the drive-thru and at each entrance to collect donations for Special Olympics. “I encourage the public to come out to Krispy Kreme and support our Special Olympics Athletes. We can have fun and support our athletes together!” said Interim Chief of Police David H. DeKay.

The St. Petersburg Police Department’s Mounted Patrol (Officer Ron Try and Brooklyn) and the Department SWAT Team’s new Bearcat (Armored Rescue Vehicle driven by Officer Jason Deary) were in the Krispy Kreme parking lot to encourage everyone’s support for this worthy cause.
He received the Department’s Purple Heart and Medal of Valor for his actions. After months of rehabilitation, he returned to duty on October 20, 2009 and chose to return to his high-risk job in the CASE unit.

In August of 2010, Jacques and other detectives surveilled a serial armed robbery suspect responsible for many robberies in the Tampa Bay area. After the suspect robbed a store in Pinellas Park, Jacques chased the man through an industrial complex, vaulting four fences in the dark to keep the suspect in sight and ensure his capture.


Jacques’ supervisor, Sergeant Rick Shaw, relies heavily on him to make sound, split-second decisions regarding surveillance tactics, take-down procedures and strategically placing other detectives into the best position to further the objectives of the unit. He also teaches these skills to other law enforcement agencies such as the Tampa Police Department and the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Department.

Detective Jacques LaMonde’s selfless devotion to duty and love for his job, his good-natured style and work ethic, all join together to make him most deserving of this prestigious award.
home invasion and a double homicide in Tampa earlier the same year. Kenny has arrested two of the individuals and gained full confessions from them.

In October of 2013, Kenny investigated a homicide where the victim and the suspect brushed up against one another as they were entering a convenience store. Words were exchanged and the suspect shot and killed the victim. Kenny obtained video from the store that showed the shooting and several witnesses to the crime – none of whom were cooperative. Kenny used confidential sources to identify the suspect’s first name and gathered forensic evidence that enabled him to identify the suspect. Kenny arrested the suspect and he is now awaiting trial on a first degree murder charge.

Detective Kenny Miller’s relentless pursuit of justice gives a voice to the victims of homicide – for those silenced by their killers through senseless acts of violence – and brings closure to the families of the victims. Kenny’s passion and skill make him most deserving of this prestigious award.
FORMER CHIEF “BUD” PURDY PASSES AT 94

Former Chief of Police and Rotarian, E. Wilson “Bud” Purdy, 94, passed away on February 13, 2014.

Despite being told he was too short to pursue a career in law enforcement, he went on to become one of the most recognized professionals in the field. His career path was ‘fixed’ at age 12 when he caught a coal thief stealing from his one-room country school. Bud was a janitor’s helper and arrived early each morning to stoke the fire. He summoned police, who captured the desperado, and a career was born.

His service spanned over 60 years, and included positions at local, state, and national levels. Following his years as a Military Police Captain in the Philippines during WWII, he was hired by J. Edgar Hoover as an agent with the FBI, where he worked for 12 years.

He left the FBI to fill the position of Chief of Police in St. Petersburg. He was proud of his efforts to professionalize the department and initiate long-overdue reforms. The “Purdy” green uniforms and cruisers have endured to this day.

In 2011, the Rotary Club renamed the Ned March Award as the Ned March/Bud Purdy Award for Bud’s many years of dedication and service to the Rotary Club and the St. Petersburg Police Department.

His legacy includes a ready smile, a witty sense of humor, and the ability to put a positive spin on anything. If he couldn’t remember a person’s name, “Howdy” would suffice and serve to fill any awkward silences. He sought opportunities to help young people who strived to help themselves. He anonymously provided funds for such things as dental work, clothing, and schooling for abandoned teens in his daughter Pam’s group home facility (Brookwood). Bud believed there was no such thing as an unsalvageable child. He also insisted you could never have too much education; and that everyday was an opportunity for something positive. He was always available to listen and offer sage advice; encouraged everyone to be all they could be; and reminded each of us of the importance of pride in a life’s contribution.

CASE from page 3
These detectives consistently strive to make the Crime Analysis, Surveillance and Enforcement Section the premier specialized unit within the St. Petersburg Police Department. Their efforts and contributions reflect well not only for the Department, but for the community and citizenry of St. Petersburg for whom they so proudly serve.

For these reasons, the devoted men and women of the Crime Analysis, Surveillance and Enforcement (C.A.S.E.) Section were named the Elk’s Lodge 2013 Unit of the Year Award.
Detective Cobarras always has had a passion for drug enforcement. Because of his aptitude in this area, he was transferred to the Vice and Narcotics Division on April 10, 1995. It didn’t take him long to get comfortable in this position. In his first year as an undercover detective, he took part in a crack cocaine investigation with the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office which led to the arrests and convictions of 13 individuals in Pinellas County. Then Sheriff Everett Rice expressed his gratitude to the St. Petersburg Police Department for their willingness to work with his agency. Furthermore, Sheriff Rice acknowledged Detective Cobarras’ undercover efforts were vital in the overall success of the operation. In a separate investigation in 1996, he was recognized by the United States Department of State for his “exceptional work” in an arrest and search warrant investigation. This investigation involved two subjects who were arrested and charged with passport fraud, weapons possession, and possession of narcotics. The Special Agent in charge of the operation commented on Detective Cobarras’ professionalism and “can-do” attitude.

Because of his undercover status, the citizens of this community may have not had the privilege of meeting Detective Cobarras. However, they should feel confident he is doing his best to take dangerous drugs off the street and put violent drug traffickers behind bars. Based on consistent and outstanding performance throughout the years, along with his devotion to duty, Detective Levi Cobarras is clearly deserving of being named Officer of the Year.