



January 2010

Crossing Guards Changing Oversight

It was the changing of the guards - crossing guards - at a ceremony Jan. 29th held at the Monroe County Detention Center on Stock Island.

Monroe County Sheriff Bob Peryam and City Manager Jim Scholl were on hand to mark the transition of the Key West crossing guard program from county oversight to the City. Also on hand for the ceremony were friends and families of the crossing guards.

Crossing guards in Key West have been overseen by the Sheriff's Office for several years, and the city has been paying for their services. The City is in the process of creating a new parking department, and transitioning the crossing guard program into this

department is a move that city officials hope will save tax dollars and streamline the system.

In his welcome, Scholl told the crossing guards that they play a vital role in protecting the future by watching over our youth.

"I'm proud to be in the presence of so many dedicated public servants," Scholl said. He credited the retiring Vincent Catala with assuring

a seamless transition from the Sheriff's Office to the City Parking Department.

Though he has stayed on board to ease the transition, Catala, along with five other crossing guards, will be retiring.

Sheriff Peryam thanked each retiring crossing guard and handed them a plaque in honor of the years - some as many as 17 - dedicated to protecting the children of Key West.

"I want to thank these dedicated crossing guards for their many years of service. Their job is extremely important - safeguarding the lives of our young people - and they have done it well. I'm sure they will continue to do it well in their work with



Key West Police Officer George Villareal, Parking Manager John Wilkins, City Manager Jim Scholl, Sheriff Bob Peryam, and retiring crossing guard Vincent Catala.



Among the familiar faces who decided to retire was John Vidal (left), whose station was at the Glynn Archer school. Sheriff Peryam (right) presented all of the crossing guards with plaques.

the city of Key West," said Sheriff Peryam.

In addition to Catala, the retirees included: Mathew Clark, Manuel Lozano, William Russell, Marlene Rodriguez and Mario Vidal.

That will leave the city with a staff of eight crossing guards, plus substitutes, says Parking Manager John Wilkins.

Wilkins also noted that Key West Police Officer George Villareal is assisting with day to day parking enforcement duties while the new department is being formulated. In the past, parking has been a function of the Police Department. The new department will handle all aspects of public parking in the city, oversee budget and fee schedules, and coordinate short and long term plans for the best use of city resources as they relate to parking.

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Questions? Comments?

If you have information for the next City newsletter or would like to see something added to the publication, please contact Communications Manager Alyson Crean at acrean@keywestcity.com. This newsletter is a publication of the City of Key West.

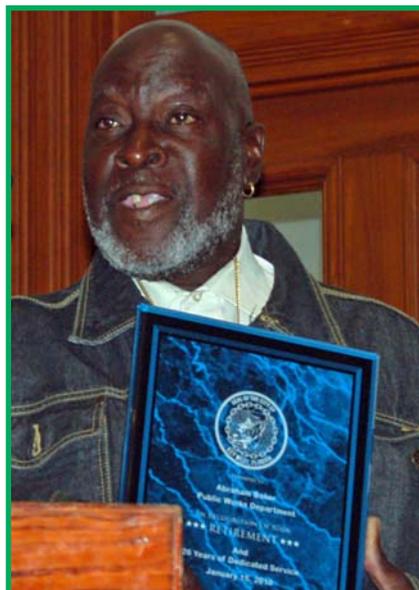
Big-Hearted Key Westers



When a magnitude 7 earthquake flattened much of Port-au-Prince on January 12, Keys residents wasted to no time in pulling together whatever aid possible. Among the efforts in Key West were those spearheaded by Community Services Superintendent Bill Rieck. On his own time, he coordinated the gathering of over 1000 pounds of goods.

“That included eight pallets of drinking water, and even antibiotics,” said Rieck.

He and several volunteers from the Community Services department took the goods over to one of Monroe County’s drop locations for shipping to Haiti the first week of February.



His signature style is, literally, part of the city's foundation, and his retirement raised a standing ovation at Old City Hall on Jan 19th. Abraham Baker, with 26 years of service under his belt, is laying down his trowel, leaving his position as mason with Community Services Department.

Key West City Manager Jim Scholl presented Baker with a plaque during a meeting of the City Commission, commending him on his dedication.

“He could always be depended on to provide his expertise on concrete-related projects,” Scholl said, “and complete a quality job with a style all his own.”

Baker's signature “fish tail” finish on concrete can be seen all around town.

Accident Victim Thanks Rescue Workers

He had a little difficulty walking into the room, but the mere fact that he could walk at all was amazing. In fact, many of the men gathered at the Key West Fire Station #1 were amazed he was even breathing. But the tenacious Richard Pischke came to personally thank the rescuers who saved his life after he fell into a cistern last summer.

“For all intents and purposes, he shouldn't be here now,” said Richard's wife Julie. She described the difficult medical miracles that brought her husband back from the brink of death, the weeks he spent in a profound coma, the gaps he still experiences because his brain was oxygen-deprived during the horrific accident.

It all happened in the blink of an eye on August 3, 2009. Pischke was working at a house on Elizabeth Street. Suddenly, the world dropped out from under him as a decrepit cistern cover collapsed, dropping Pischke 14 feet into a puddle of foul waters. Huge chunks of the crumbling

cement cover landed on top of him, crushing him.

Key West Fire Department Capt. Mark Sellers and firefighters Tyrone Cervates, Greg Gerez, Ed Sanchez and Sheldon Goodman,



Pischke was working on the home of City Commissioner Jimmy Weekley (who had not yet been elected) when the accident occurred.

went into the approximately 14-foot deep cistern. Chunks of concrete were on top of Pischke, and other portions of the cover threatened to fall in. But the four --

assisted by their fellow firefighters outside of the cistern -- were able to pull the huge slabs off the victim, stabilize him, and ready him to be raised from the hole.

The chunks of concrete that fell on Pischke were anywhere from three to four feet across and six inches thick.

Once he was out, Key West Rescue went to work - starting air back into his lung, readying him for trauma transport to Miami.

Even after the heroic rescue, it didn't look at all good for Pischke. Julie explained the severity of the damage and how, statistically speaking, infection should have taken her husband's life. But he surprised medical experts by healing, by waking from him coma, by walking again.

Amid tears and laughter, Pischke looked into the faces of the men that risked their own lives to pull him out of that hole. Then, one by one, he shook each man's hand, his face filled with a childlike joy.

The roomful of rescuers was modest about their role, but they

were clearly thrilled to see how far Pischke has come. One firefighter recalled his unsuccessful attempt to grab Pischke's severed finger before it disappeared into the muddy gunk at the bottom of the cistern. Another rescue worker recalled that, at that point, every second counted, and they had to get Pischke to the waiting airlift or he'd have no chance of survival. Pischke shrugged it off, saying he really didn't need that finger anyway.

Many of the men who were involved in the rescue were on hand that day for Pischke's visit to the station.

“How do you thank someone for saving your life?” Pischke wondered. “There are just no words.”



Pischke was delighted with the shirt presented by the emergency workers.

Ambassador Class 14 Begins!



An eager class of residents is gathering every Thursday to learn about city government. The Key West Ambassador Academy is an in-depth experience that introduces participants to every department of the city. Above left, Key West Police Chief Donie Lee talks about the role of the Police Department. In the photo on the right, volunteer Ambassador Academy coordinator Dave Oatway spells out the agenda for the next several weeks during his introductory remarks.

The list of past graduates is a who's who of people who have gone on to participate in the community in a myriad of ways.

City Transit Announces Final Phase of Real Time Passenger Information System

The Real Time Information System for public transit is up and running, and the first digital display unit is in the ground and operating at the of US 1 and 3rd Street bus stop on Stock Island. The city plans to install between 8 and 10 digital displays by the end of March 31. This system is entirely grant funded and provides public transit customers opportunities to access real time information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The scrolling digital boards display arrival and departure times for bus routes from any particular location on that bus route. The units are environmentally friendly, because each is powered by solar panels. The signs provide an LED display that reads out the next bus arrival time as well as the route identification information. In addition, units meet all ADA requirements with an audio access button that provides audio announcements.

The digital signs are part of an interfaced system that uses GPS units onboard all buses. The system communicates from bus to bus as well from buses to the signs so that all information is in real time, making the City's transit system as convenient as possible for its customers.

There are several ways to access the fully automated system:

- o By voice: simply dial (305) 600-1455 and follow the menu prompts;
- o By text message: 41-411, hit OK on your phone then enter KWEST, space, and the numeric bus stop ID code that corresponds to that pick up location. These codes are all available at the city's transit website: kwtransit.com
- o Via the internet, simply go to kwtransit.com and find everything, including mapping views of buses en route to their various destinations between Key West and Marathon daily. In addition, you can access, print, ready bus schedules at the city's main website via internet at keywestcity.com - along with other important city information.

For further information, call the Department of Transportation office at (305) 809-3910.



As Key West residents are working to increase the community's recycle rates, the students at Poinciana School are setting the standard. Every Tuesday afternoon, the Recycle Rangers collect recycle materials throughout the school.

Each classroom has a blue recycle bin. On Tuesdays, the kids set the bins outside the classroom doors, and the Recycle Rangers go through the hallways filling a big green bin with the materials. They sort through to make sure that everything is recyclable.

The kids have made a very real difference, says Key West Environmental Programs Manager Annalise Mannix.

"Since they started this last year," she said, "They have kept the equivalent of 40 Dumpsters worth of trash out of landfills."

And that means something even grown ups can understand: the program has reduced the school's solid waste bill by about \$500 a month - a 40 percent reduction, says Mannix. With rates like that, the future of Key West is in very good hands.

Channel 77 Meeting Schedule

- Feb. 2 City Commission
- Feb. 4 Bahama Village Advisory Committee
- Feb. 9 HARC
- Feb. 16 City Commission
- Feb. 18 Planning
- Feb. 23 HARC
- Feb. 24 Code Compliance

KWPD Pins New Sergeant and Lieutenant



Sgt. Areaka Jewell, Chief Donie Lee, Lt. JR Torres

Family and colleagues gathered at the Key West Police Department to witness the official pinning ceremony to honor the promotion of two department members.

J.R. Torres was promoted from Detective Sergeant to Lieutenant.

Lt. Torres has served in a broad range of capacities since he was hired by the Department in 1995. He began as a patrol officer and moved to the Detectives division in 1997. In 1999 he requested a move back to road patrols, then moved into street crimes in 2000. He was promoted to sergeant in 2003, then moved to the detective division shortly thereafter. In the past several years Torres has been working in criminal investigations, the clearance rate of cases has increased dramatically. Over the past year, the unit cleared nearly 60% of its cases, an amazing feat when compared to the 33% national average.

During his tenure with the Department, Lt. Torres has continuously expanded his skills through training, and serves as a training officer for many aspects of officer preparedness. Also during those years, Lt. Torres worked with a K-9 partner - Balou - who just recently passed away.

Also promoted was Sgt. Areaka Jewell.

Jewell started with the Department in 2002, working undercover in Special Ops. She then moved on to road patrol, and in October of 2004 she went to the Professional Standards Division as a training officer. In 2009 she took over the role of accreditation manager, a role she will continue in until the Department is reaccredited in the next few weeks, then she will move into a supervisory role on the night shift. Like Lt. Torres, Sgt. Jewell's experience as a training officer provides her with a broad base of knowledge vital for her new leadership position. She has worked closely with her fellow officers in a variety of training sessions, including the recent Taser training that involved every officer in the Department.

Chief Lee pinned new badges on each of the newly promoted officers, then introduced them formally to their colleagues with their new ranks.

"I know Lt. Torres's and Sgt. Jewell's professionalism and dedication will continue to make this Department one we can be proud of," he said.