



ST. JOHNS COUNTY **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

ROBERT A. HARDWICK, SHERIFF

2024

Annual Report



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MISSION STATEMENT

“SERVE WITH EXCELLENCE”

VISION STATEMENT
**“A TRUSTED TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS
ENSURING ST. JOHNS COUNTY IS THE
SAFEST PLACE IN THE NATION FOR
FAMILIES TO LIVE, WORK, AND VISIT
THROUGH COLLABORATION,
EXCELLENCE, AND LEADERSHIP.”**

AGENCY MOTTO
“ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION, ONE FUTURE”

Message from the Sheriff

Dear St. Johns County Citizens,

I must begin by thanking you for the overwhelming support you showed in the polls as I begin my second term as your Sheriff. We made a lot of changes and experienced significant growth both internally and throughout the county. You will see a glimpse into this exponential growth throughout the 2024 St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Annual Report. I welcome you to digest this report with the understanding that we are continually seeking to be one of the top tier agencies in the nation as this places us in the best possible position to serve you, our citizens, better every day.

My employees mean the world to me and they are the reason I keep fighting for the highest quality pay and benefits. We have resources on staff to support financial health, mental health, physical health and more. These deputies work hard every day to keep our citizens, children and visitors safe. As traffic has increased due to our booming population, we are seeking new avenues to respond quickly to every call. This may mean adjusting the number of deputies in a specific area or even changing the area of responsibility to ensure timely responses.

We have some of the most premier training in the nation and we continually seek opportunities to stay on the frontlines of trending crime and crime prevention through community engagement. These relationships with the community vary from our task force to our technology to our Youth Resource Deputies making grade level contacts, we are continually seeking the utmost safety for each of you.

There is still more to come in my second term as we build a new Headquarters to house our administrative staff and use the buildings at Lewis Speedway to finally afford our Jail the opportunity to expand in the future. Our Police Athletic League (PAL) Facility is in full swing and we are looking to build multiple fields for the youth of St. Johns County. Additionally, we are in the funding phase of building the Diamond of Dreams, an all-inclusive specially designed baseball field and playground for children of all abilities. My wife, Kendell's, dream is becoming a reality in this wheelchair accessible, carpeted baseball field that will create comradery in our community only possible with organized sports.

I continue to be incredibly humbled to have the opportunity to lead the finest law enforcement agency in the nation. As we look forward to another year, our commitment to providing first class customer service and keeping our citizens and visitors safe remain as top priorities as well as ensuring that our county is the best place to live, work, play, raise a family, and retire.

Should you have any questions, please always feel free to reach out. You can contact the Office of the Sheriff by calling 904-810-6605 or by emailing me at sheriff@sjso.org.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Hardwick
Sheriff



World Class Customer Service



"Youth Resource Deputy Mundy changed a flat tire for a parent in the car line at Julington Creek Elementary School. Great job to Deputy Mundy for stepping up to lend a helping hand and continuing to serve with excellence."

— Parent in Car line



"Just wanted to showcase the compassion Deputy Jarousse showed this lady today on the trailer fire. It wasn't a huge fire but, I am sure she made a big impact on this lady's day. Awesome Job Danielle! We were spying on you on the FHP cams and you immediately comforted that lady who was pretty distraught and gassed from getting that trailer disconnected! It was really sweet to see lol. Thank you for what you do!"

— St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
Public Safety Telecommunicator



"SJSO deputies responded to a neighborhood in North Ponte Vedra due to a missing 3 year old child. A tremendous law enforcement response was initiated, including activation of the SJSO Child Abduction Response Team (CART) as a precaution. The child was located safe by Major Crimes Unit Detectives. Thank you to the community, and our law enforcement and fire rescue partners for your support and assistance.

Pictured: Detective Cheyenne Kroul and Commander Tres Edenfield



"Deputies responded to a call for a missing child with down syndrome. SJSO Patrol and K9 Units responded to search, and fortunately, the boy was located safe by Deputy Romer and returned home."

— Grateful Citizen



"Deputy Shumaker went above and beyond walking along the interstate to help a citizen look for his cell phone which fell off his vehicle as he got back on the interstate from the rest area. The FHP camera operator also helped by using the cameras to look for the phone. ... the phone was found. It was a great moment to witness!"

— St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
Public Safety Telecommunicator



"As I was cleaning my car at Hurricane Car Wash this morning, I watched four very curious kids approach and ask questions to a police officer who was also cleaning his vehicle. He took the time to answer all their questions and to let them all look inside of his police vehicle, and he let them try on a police vest & turned on the lights for them. He was very patient and did not rush them off at all, and when I left the car wash, they were still standing there very excited talking to the officer. I don't know if he was just starting his shift for the day or coming off of a long night shift but I thought it was super sweet." Great job Corporal Westover

— Pleased Citizen

ST. JOHNS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

2024 REVIEW



CALLS FOR SERVICE

292,986

100,178

911 CALLS

1,654

VIOLENT CRIMES

Sex Crimes
Aggravated Battery/Assault
Battery Domestic Violence
Simple Battery/Assault
Burglary
Robbery



1 HOMICIDE/
ATTEMPTED
HOMICIDE

571

DRUG RELATED CRIMES

431

Average Daily
Inmate Population

5,444



TRAFFIC CRASHES

578

MENTAL HEALTH CALLS

1,102.2

FLIGHT HOURS

**RESPONSE TO
SWIMMERS/
BOATERS IN
DISTRESS** **75**

6,392

Arrests

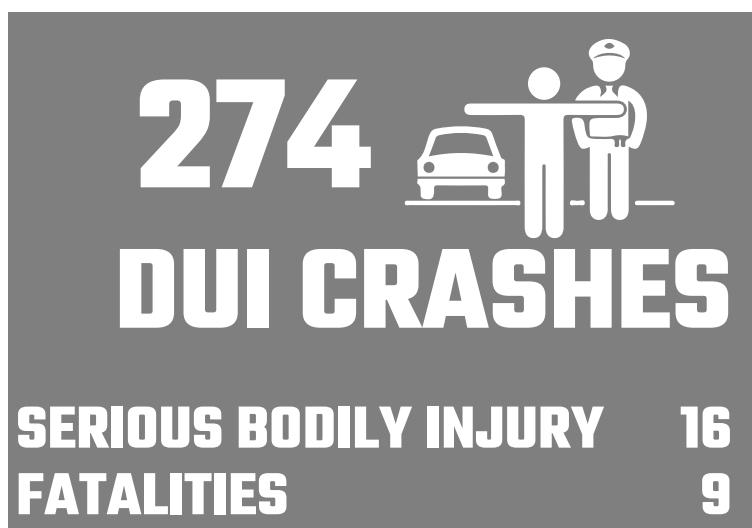
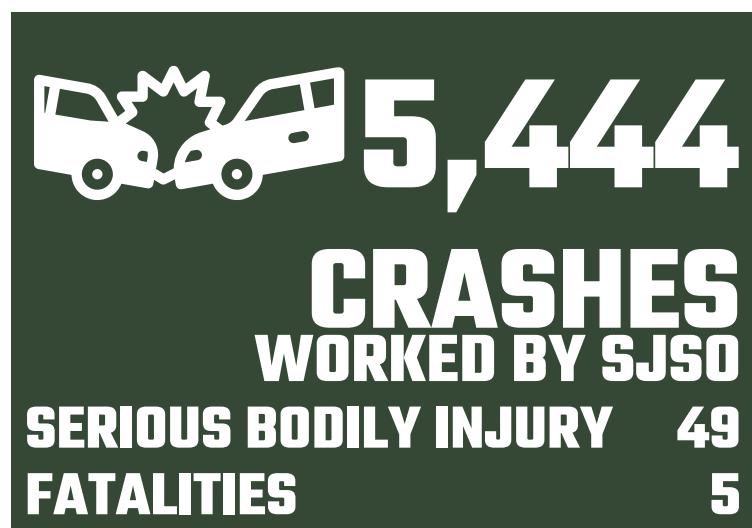
Patrol Division

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE (DUI) UNIT

The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office DUI Unit plays a critical role in enhancing public safety by actively working to reduce DUI-related crimes and fatalities. Through proactive enforcement, sobriety checkpoints, and targeted patrols in high-risk areas, the unit effectively deters impaired driving. Their efforts not only result in the arrest of intoxicated drivers but also serve as a powerful preventative measure, significantly lowering the chances of innocent families being harmed by DUI incidents.

In addition to enforcement, the DUI Unit engages in public education and community outreach, raising awareness about the dangers of impaired driving and promoting responsible choices. This combination of enforcement and education has led to a measurable decline in DUI-related crashes and deaths within the county.

The positive impact of the DUI Unit is clear: safer roads, fewer tragedies, and a stronger sense of security for St. Johns County residents. Their commitment directly contributes to protecting lives and preserving the wellbeing of families throughout the community.



Criminal Investigations Division (CID)

MAJOR CRIMES UNIT

The Major Crimes Unit (MCU) is tasked with investigating all unattended deaths, deputy involved shootings, in-custody deaths, suicides, fatal drug overdoses, robberies, missing endangered adults, as well as any other violent crimes within St. Johns County.

As a result of the opioid epidemic, fatal drug overdoses are increasingly affecting our society, including use of the powerful synthetic opioid Fentanyl, which is significantly stronger than heroin. Fentanyl is now being mixed with other potent drugs elevating the risk of a fatal drug overdose.

In 2024, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office responded to 65 drug overdose calls for service, 34 of which were fatal. As a result, the Major Crimes Unit spends a lot of time thoroughly scrutinizing these cases to take advantage of legislative changes which allow drug dealers to be held responsible and charged with a homicide related offense when the mixture of drugs they sold or facilitated caused a death. Wording updates in a 2023 legislative change enhanced prior legislation and added new strains of opium synthetics, such as Alfentanil, Carfentanil, Sufentanil to the homicide statutes.

Detectives have learned drug dealers often mix fentanyl with other substances to make their products more addictive and potent, in order to enhance profits. These mixtures are then sold to the end user who is unsuspecting of the increased potency of the drug and the fact fentanyl was used to enhance it. The end user then, often times, overdoses on these enhanced substances, sometimes with tragic outcomes.

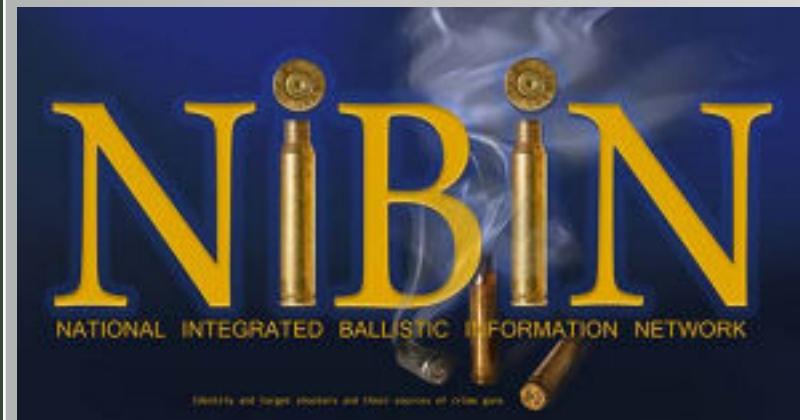
During fiscal year 2024, the exhaustive work conducted by Major Crimes Detectives resulted in multiple drug dealers in St. Johns County being identified and criminally charged with offenses ranging from narcotics sales to manslaughter in seven cases. This effort to combat the rising drug epidemic is intended to send a clear message to drug dealers that St. Johns County is not their playground and the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, with support from the 7th Circuit State Attorney's Office, will hold them accountable!

Spotlight: NIBIN Program

In June 2024, our agency officially launched its National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) program with the primary goal of reducing firearm-related crime through improved ballistic intelligence. NIBIN is a national database managed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) that enables forensic experts to compare ballistic evidence from crime scenes, linking firearms to multiple incidents and suspects across jurisdictions. NIBIN works by capturing highly magnified digital images to cartridge cases found at crime scenes or test-fired from recovered firearms. These images are entered into the NIBIN database where the images are compared to identify possible matches with other cases.



Spotlight: NIBIN Program Continued



Since its inception, the NIBIN program has made significant strides in a remarkably short period. What once took 12-18 months under Florida Department of Law Enforcement's (FDLE) processing backlog is now being completed in as little as 2 days. This improvement has allowed investigators to obtain actionable intelligence at critical points in their investigations, greatly enhancing casework efficiency as well as

bringing closure to families. As of May 2025, the NIBIN unit has entered 209 acquisitions, generating 16 leads.



A cornerstone of the program's success has been the development of strong inter-agency partnerships. We've begun sharing data and collaborating with key regional and municipal partners, including ATF, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), St. Augustine Police Department (SAPD), St. Augustine Beach Police Department (SABPD), Putnam County Sheriff's Office (PCSO), and Palaka Police Department (PPD). These partnerships allow us to exchange critical intelligence in real time, ensuring that serial shooters and firearms

used in multiple crimes are identified and addressed more quickly.

The impact of the NIBIN program can already be seen in several high-profile investigations. For example, a recent NIBIN lead connected a shooting our county with an earlier incident which occurred in Jacksonville, allowing detectives to quickly coordinate efforts and identify a suspect. Another case saw the rapid recovery of a firearm used in multiple gang-related shootings, just a few days after ballistic evidence was entered into the system.



These successes underscore the critical role that timely ballistic intelligence plays in modern policing, especially in reducing retaliatory violence and disrupting firearm trafficking networks.

The NIBIN program represents a critical evolution in our approach to violent crime. With improved turnaround times, strategic partnerships, and an engaged, skilled team, we are already seeing tangible results. As the program matures, we expect NIBIN to play an even greater role in crime reduction, helping us build safer communities through smarter, faster investigations.

Operations Division

SJSO TASKFORCE: INTEGRATED FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office (SJSO) Taskforce, operating under the Homeland Security Section, actively engages in collaborative operations with several federal agencies to address transnational threats affecting Northeast Florida. These integrated efforts are focused on:



1. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) – Border Narcotics Smuggling

SJSO partners with HSI to investigate and interdict complex narcotics trafficking networks that exploit the I-95 corridor and coastal maritime routes. Key focuses include:

- Identification and dismantling of drug smuggling cells
- Targeting narcotics tied to organized criminal enterprises
- Shared intelligence operations with national and international reach

2. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) – Air & Marine Operations

In coordination with CBP Air & Marine, SJSO utilizes aerial and maritime assets to:

- Monitor coastal waters for illicit vessel activity
- Support interdiction of contraband and undocumented migrant smuggling
- Conduct joint maritime patrols to protect critical infrastructure and natural resources

3. U.S. Border Patrol – Immigration Enforcement

SJSO works with Border Patrol to:

- Monitor and respond to immigration-related threats within the county
- Assist in locating and apprehending individuals unlawfully present in the U.S. who pose public safety threats
- Enhance community security through targeted enforcement operations
- Promote the Border Patrol mission under Operation Stonegarden (FEMA GRANT)

4. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) – Criminal Alien Apprehension

In conjunction with ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations, the taskforce helps:

- Locate and remove criminal aliens with convictions for violent crimes, narcotics trafficking, or gang activity
- Share booking and arrest data for priority immigration enforcement
- Conduct joint operations targeting fugitives and re-entry violators

Strategic Impact

These partnerships serve as a force multiplier for SJSO, enhancing:

- Border security enforcement at the local level
- Criminal interdiction capabilities
- Interagency communication and threat response coordination

Together, the SJSO Taskforce and its federal counterparts uphold a shared mission to protect public safety, maintain national security, and uphold the rule of law in Northeast Florida and beyond.

Operations Division Continued

TRAINING UNIT

The Training Unit goes above and beyond in generating training programs, which ensure personnel at every level receive comprehensive, effective, and realistic training.

Evolving Active Assailant Training

The Training Unit has significantly advanced the agency's approach to active assailant scenarios by involving multiple agencies and internal units. By integrating communications, intelligence, youth resource, patrol, fire/rescue, and the school district, training has fostered inter-agency collaboration, promoting a unified, multi-disciplinary response to critical incidents. This approach ensures that all responders are equipped to work cohesively and efficiently in high-pressure situations, ultimately improving the overall effectiveness of our community's safety efforts.



Expanding Leadership Training

The Training Unit has expanded its offerings in the leadership arena. By implementing a Leadership In-Service Training (IST) program, which targets the development of leadership skills at all levels of the organization. This proactive effort ensures our personnel are not only skilled in tactical operations but also in guiding and mentoring others in the field, which is crucial for maintaining order and ensuring the well-being of both deputies and the community.

Innovative Advanced Scenario Week for New Hires

The Training Unit introduced an advanced scenario week for new hire deputies. This hands-on training program places recruits in a real-world environment where they manage various calls for service, simulating situations they may encounter in the field. By incorporating communications, field training officers, CLEA (Citizens Law Enforcement Academy) volunteers, and IT personnel into these scenarios, training ensures new deputies are not only familiar with standard procedures but also have an understanding how different departments and units work together. This cross-functional approach makes them better prepared for real-world challenges.

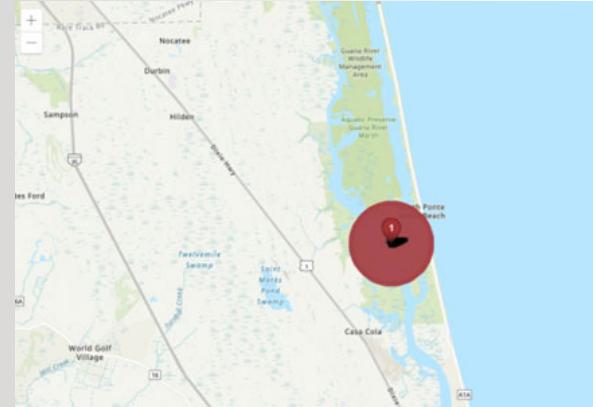
The Training Unit has demonstrated excellence in fulfilling their duties through unwavering commitment and conscientious attention to detail. Their work has positively impacted the agency, ensuring that all personnel are well-prepared, adaptable, and capable of responding to a wide range of situations to better serve the citizens and visitors of St. Johns County.



Operations Spotlight

In St. Johns County, a notable story unfolded on March 28, 2024, showcasing the power of technology in our Emergency Communications Center and its vital role in serving the community. A woman found herself lost in the dense woods of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas (GTM) Reserve, accompanied only by her loyal dog. In her moment of need, she reached out to the St. Johns County Emergency Communications Center for help.

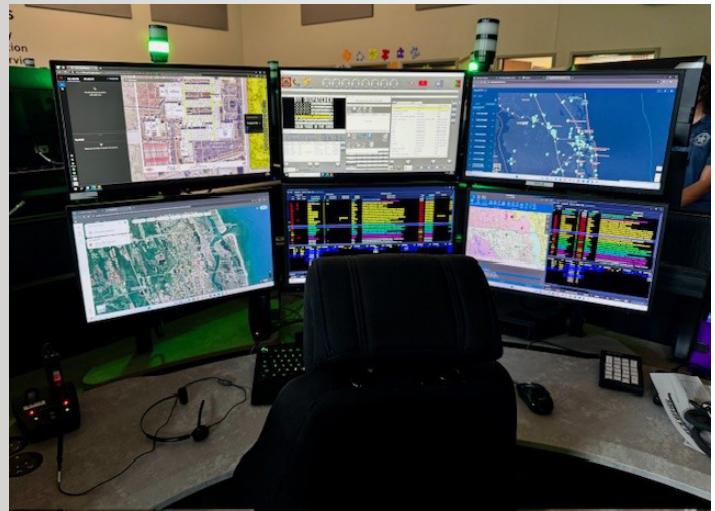
Thanks to the innovative 'RapidDeploy Radius Mapping' system, Public Safety Telecommunicators were able to swiftly locate her. This cutting-edge technology utilizes data signals from mobile phones to accurately pinpoint a caller's location on a map, tracking their movements in real-time. With this information in hand, deputies, along with a Park Ranger, were dispatched to the area. The telecommunicators continued to monitor the mapping system, guiding the deputies directly to the woman, who was ultimately reunited with her son, safe and sound.



The success of this operation is a testament to the teamwork between the SJSO Public Safety Telecommunicators and Deputies, highlighting how technology can dramatically improve emergency response times and save lives.

In 2024, the St. Johns County Communications Center took another leap forward with the introduction of our indoor mapping project, an innovative indoor mapping solution designed to enhance response times during critical situations. This project has successfully mapped over 67 buildings across the county, providing detailed floor plans which include essential information such as classroom labels, access points, and locations of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs). This ensures that 911 call takers can accurately identify a caller's location within complex environments, such as schools.

Additionally, the acquisition of portable crash kits for our 911 phones has revolutionized the way emergency calls are handled. These kits allow 911 calls to be answered from any location with an IP connection, ensuring that both the SJSO and St. Johns Fire Rescue (SJFR) can maintain communication even if their primary operations center is compromised. The portable phones come equipped with mapping features, displaying the caller's location, which is crucial for timely assistance.



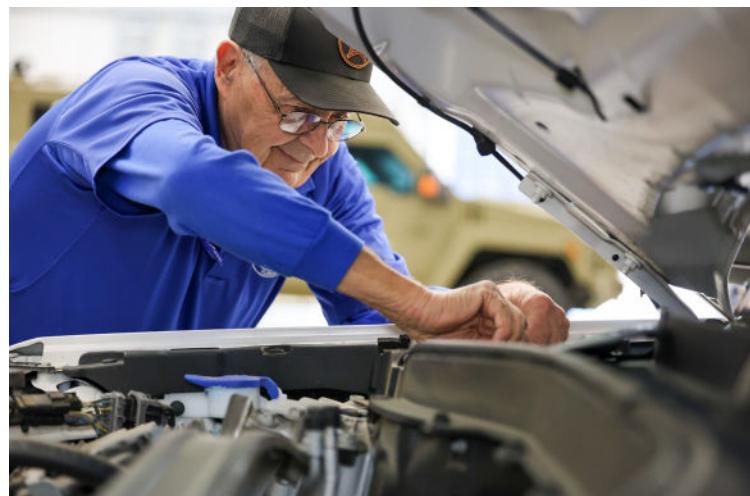
General Services Division

The General Services Division (GNSV) plays a vital behind-the-scenes role in maintaining the agency's readiness and operational continuity. It encompasses several key units and sections, including Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Fleet and Facilities, Procurement, Professional Standards, Publications, Records and Risk Management.

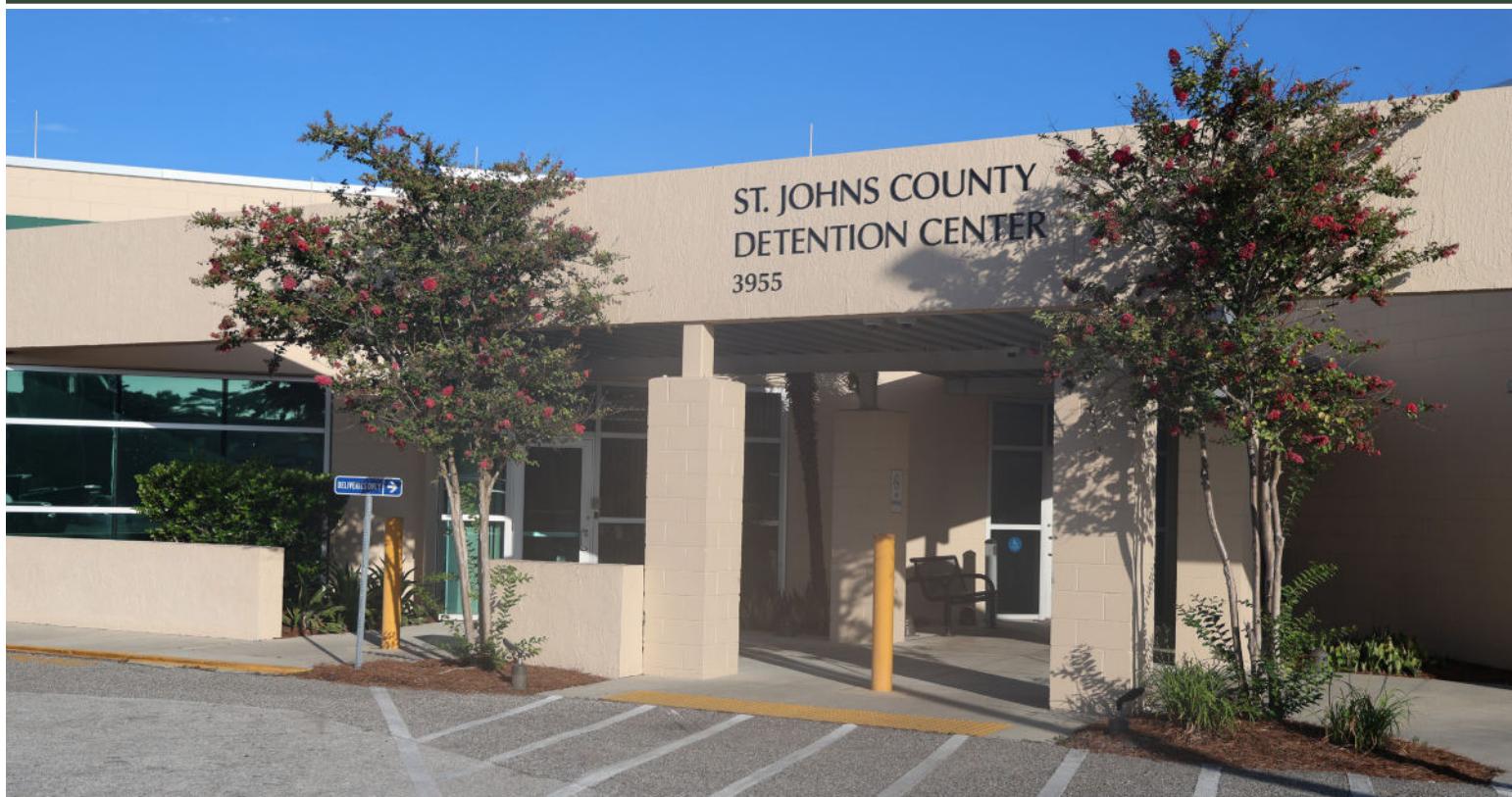
FLEET AND SUPPLY

In 2024, the General Services Division took a significant step forward with the completion and occupancy of the new Fleet and Supply building. This project is part of a long-term effort to relocate critical support services to a safer, more resilient site. The new facility replaces the previous location, which was situated in a designated storm surge evacuation zone and faced other environmental and operational challenges.

This purpose-built space now serves as a central hub for both fleet operations and procurement. By consolidating these services under one roof, the agency has streamlined operations, reduced logistical delays, and created a more efficient support environment.



Corrections Division



In 2024, the Corrections Division advanced significant improvements to the physical condition of the St. Johns County Detention Center. Painting and upgrades to inmate housing areas and facility floors were completed throughout the year, enhancing living conditions for inmates and creating a safer, more professional environment for staff and officers. These efforts remain ongoing as we continue to modernize the facility.

Additionally, construction began on a new recreation yard located on the south side of the facility. This space will increase our capacity to offer recreation to a greater number of inmates and improve opportunities for daily recreation, promoting better mental and physical health for those in our care.

We successfully launched a new K-9 unit focused on combating the influx of dangerous drugs — particularly fentanyl into the jail. The use of drug detection dogs has added a vital layer of security to our facility and helps safeguard both inmates and staff from exposure to illicit substances. The unit currently includes two German Shorthaired Pointers: Korra (right) and Raven (left) — who are sisters from the same litter. Both dogs have been specifically trained in drug detection and have already proved themselves as valuable assets in our ongoing security operations along with their handlers.



In an effort to protect the public, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office made the decision to shut down the online inmate jail log. This action was taken in response to an increase in scam activity, where scammers were using publicly available inmate information to prey on vulnerable citizens. Eliminating this access has helped reduce scam attempts and better protected our community. We are currently working with our jail management system vendor and IT department to develop a revised search platform. This new system will allow users to search for inmates by name only, rather than providing real time information. This change will help preserve transparency while significantly reducing the opportunity for criminals to misuse inmate data.



An All-Inclusive Baseball Field & Playground
Specially Designed for Children of All Abilities

Supported by St. Johns Police Athletic League. Not funded
by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office.
Managed through St. Johns – PAL 501(c)(3).

The Diamond of Dreams Project began in 2024 as a stand-alone project of the Historic St. Johns County Police Athletic League organization that will provide an all-inclusive specially designed playground and multi-purpose baseball field for children and young adults with social needs. The fields will be carpeted and ADA wheelchair compliant. Despite 17% of the county's Pre-K-12 population having special needs, only one ADA compliant baseball field and playground exists in northern St. Johns County. Having just one of these facilities in a county encompassing 601 square miles of land is unsuitable to meet the needs of our current population. Diamond of Dreams, which will be located in the southern portion on leased county land, will provide a much-needed resource to level the playing field for individuals of all abilities. Additionally, the location of this project targets the majority of our population that is at or below the poverty line.

To find out more about this amazing project, please go to: WWW.DIAMONDOFDREAMS.ORG



ST. JOHNS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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“SERVE WITH EXCELLENCE”



INTERNATIONALLY AND STATE ACCREDITED



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