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MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF HERNANDEZ

My entire career has been spent helping victims in some form or fashion. I truly believe it's my calling to seek justice for people whose lives have been forever changed due to the criminal actions of someone else. Along the journey, I've had the distinct honor of working alongside Ellen Halbert.

In 1986, Ellen was brutally assaulted and left for dead by her attacker. A short time later, still recovering from the devastating physical and emotional damage wrought upon her, Ellen stood on the steps of the Texas State Capitol and shared her experience. She found her voice, and her calling. In 1991, she was appointed by Governor Ann Richards as the first victim to serve on the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. She also served as the Director of Victim Services at the Travis County District Attorney's Office. That's where the two of us had the opportunity to join forces.

I was an investigator for the District Attorney's (DA) Office and as my team poured our efforts into every fine detail of preparing a case for trial, Ellen's voice for the victims assured we never got so caught up in the process that we forgot the purpose. For many years beyond the DA's Office, Ellen and I made annual appearances in local high schools, speaking to students about assault; what it is, how it can happen, and what to do about it.

For me, Ellen was, and always will be, the first person I think of when I think of Victim's Rights, but she's certainly not the only hero who comes to mind. Your Travis County Sheriff's Office is staffed with an exceptional [Victim Services Unit](#). This group of staff and volunteers serve at all hours of the day and night, offering comfort, solid answers and resources to victims and their families.

April 24 - 30 was [National Crime Victims' Rights Week](#). As the events of that week unfolded, I was reminded how grateful I am for victim's advocates. I have deep respect for their voice. As your Sheriff, it is of the utmost importance to me that we put victims first and do everything we can to get justice for them.



WOMEN'S CONFERENCE



As part of their professional development, several TCSO Corrections Officers recently attended the [2022 Women in Criminal Justice Conference](#). The event was produced by the [Correctional Management Institute of Texas](#) in Galveston, TX. This year's conference topics included leadership, legal issues, wellness, and current industry trends. Keynote speakers included motivational speakers Charlotte Stallings and Anne Grady. The conference allowed these officers a chance to get to know their colleagues in a different setting and provided an opportunity to network with other professional women from all over Texas.

RAMADAN CELEBRATIONS



The Islamic holy month of Ramadan is a time for Muslims to renew their focus on spiritual life and its practical application in daily life. Earlier this month, our [Building Bridges](#) program hosted our very own TCSO Senior Engineer Aftab Sheikh for the community dialogue "Ramadan: A Month of Love, Patience and Mercy." We closed the monthly celebrations with our annual observance of iftar with the [Raindrop Foundation Austin](#). We value cultivating these friendships and encouraging the understanding of diverse cultures.



URBAN SHERIFFS' CONFERENCE



Sheriff Hernandez had the honor of hosting the 2022 Texas Urban Sheriffs' Conference on April 21st. This group of 12 Sheriffs serve most of the population in our state. They shared their common challenges and explored exciting opportunities for the future. Of particular interest were ideas on recruiting, new technologies for improving efficiency, and strengthening compliance with state regulations. These collaborations are vital to our ability to stay up-to-date and serve our communities to the best of our abilities. We are thankful to everyone who was able to join us.



COMMUNITY TOWN HALLS



TCSO hosted two community town halls this month. We had the pleasure of visiting with the Easton Park and Thomas Springs neighborhoods. These meetings inform citizens about emerging issues, gauge where a community stands on certain subjects and serve as a place to identify and implement solutions to a problem. If your community is interested in partnering with us to host a town hall, please contact our [Community Outreach Unit](#).



SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH



April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and TCSO is dedicated to raising awareness about sexual assault and educating our community on how to prevent sexual violence. On April 5th, we joined community partners as the [Travis County Commissioners Court](#) recognized the awareness month with a proclamation. From our first responders to our Criminal Investigations Division and Victim Services Unit, TCSO works diligently to hold criminals accountable for their actions, while providing support to victims.

Additionally, at the [International Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Reimagining Justice](#), TCSO Detective Tim Parrish was awarded the [Megan Rondini Scholarship](#) for his commitment to enhancing his skills in responding competently, and compassionately, to sexual assault victims. Congratulations, Detective Parrish!

VIRTUAL TRAINING SIMULATOR



TCSO recently adopted a new, immersive way to enhance its training capabilities — the [VirTra](#) V-300 scenario-based training system. It uses five video projection panels, each of which are independently capable of displaying dozens of possible situational branches during training scenarios. The building that houses the simulator is designated a "weapons clean" facility — no usable firearms are allowed inside.

There are over 20 different training scenarios: De-escalation, Active Threat, and even Autism Awareness are just a few. Officers can improve decision-making and stress level control during intense situations, and trainees, who may be new to law enforcement, will be able to familiarize themselves with protocols in a safe, controlled setting.

TCSO's use of the VirTra system is meant to supplement existing training techniques, not to replace them. The different scenarios offered in the curriculum will continue to grow over time.

LAKE & BOATING SAFETY



Last summer, 10 people lost their lives on Lake Travis. We want you to enjoy the lake, but more importantly, we want you to be safe. Please remember to wear a life jacket when you're out on the water. In an emergency remember these tips:

- Throw a flotation device to distressed person
- Know where you are on the lake - Use maps & landmarks
- Don't assist anyone unless you're wearing a life jacket
- Alert boaters around you - Yell • Whistle • Horn



PUBLIC SAFETY CADET'S SUCCESS



Soren Norquay was a member of our [Public Safety Cadets](#) from 2017-2021, and for his last two years he led our cadets as First Commander. He recently attended the Naval Technical Training Center at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX and graduated from the Master at Arms A School. Later this year, Soren will be stationed in Manama, Bahrain where he will serve his country with pride. Way to go, Soren - we're so proud of YOU!

TELECOMMUNICATIONS WEEK



We celebrated [National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week](#) April 10 - 16. TCSO first responders show up for our community 365 days a year. They are the guiding light for so many during some of the darkest moments in their lives. We cannot thank them enough. Units throughout the agency stopped by to honor our team and add a little extra joy to their shifts. If you would like to join our amazing group of telecommunicators, please take a look at our job openings at [tscocareers.com](#).