

THE LOWDOWN

Sheriff Charles S. Blackwood

My office is undergoing a systematic shift in how we envision our service to Orange County. This change is represented by a new organizational chart, one which places the employees working closest with the public at the top. This is a visual representation of my belief that the deputies and staff who have the most contact with the people we serve accomplish the bulk of our work seen by the community. They are, therefore, the face of the sheriff's office, and placing them at the top reflects the important role they play in our agency.

This fundamental shift in our chart obviously means that the command staff and I are at the bottom of the chart. This positioning is intentional— it is a visual reminder that we are here to support the staff of the Sheriff's Office as they go about their work.

A Sheriff's Office provides many forms of service; in fact, it is more accurate to think of us as a comprehensive community support and safety agency than as just a law enforcement one. Our new chart also visually groups related functions into four main areas. These functional areas help highlight how "law enforcement" is too narrow of a term for the work we do.

A major leads each of the four divisions, as follows:

- Major Tina Sykes is the first female Major in the agency's history. She leads the division responsible for Professional Standards/Training and Support Services. This division organizes the basic law enforcement academy for new cadets, arranges classes and tracks compliance with the yearly required in-service training for existing deputies, supervises the resource officers supporting the public school community, and oversees crime prevention and community outreach activities so vital in supporting special populations within our county.
- Major Tim Jones administers the Detention and Courts Division. Four shifts provide for around-the-clock care of the people ordered into our custody by the courts. He also has responsibility for the deputies providing security at our courthouses and for the team transporting inmates between other detention and medical facilities across the state. We will soon move into a new detention facility several miles north of the current jail; Major Jones will oversee this enormous transition, including orienting and training the staff for the new space, finalizing the acquisition of equipment and supplies, and planning for new procedures to transport inmates to court (the new facility is not directly across the street from the courthouse as the current one is).
- Major Nate Fearington oversees the Patrol, Civil, and Administrative divisions. The patrol division has four shifts responding to 911 calls and proactively providing safety and security services to people and property within the county. Patrol

deputies perform the duties most people envision when they hear the term “law enforcement officer.” Major Fearrington also has the responsibility for the vehicles, uniforms, and equipment these deputies need. Radios, body cameras, cell phones, and in-car computers continue to become exponentially more sophisticated; the logistics involved in maintaining and updating these systems are likewise more complicated.

The civil division serves all court papers, collects money, and carries out orders of the court, such as executing evictions, while the administrative division has a myriad of functions, including providing services to the public such as fingerprinting, record keeping, and processing weapons permits. Specialized members of this division also counsel domestic violence survivors, while others provide the complicated computer and information technology (IT) services needed by a modern agency.

- Major Josh Wood leads the teams responsible for criminal and narcotics investigations and the related duties of evidence collection and analysis. Related to these realms is the supervision and administration of the K9 unit, several state and federal multi-agency task forces, and the Special Response Team. The latter includes expertly trained and specially equipped officers who carry out high risk arrests and building entries, and use their experience in hostage and barricaded subject situations.

From our position at the lowest level of the agency organizational chart, the rest of the command staff focuses on delivering the support the majors need to enable the members of their respective divisions to maintain, elevate, and adapt our service to a constantly changing landscape. Our overarching goal is to build confidence in our primary roles as a public safety and community support agency; thus, we hope we can maintain the community’s trust when law enforcement actions are necessary.

We believe our new organizational chart better represents the operational efforts and structure we employ to guide this work and target our goals.