



*Stephanie
Womble
Dade County
PBA
Director of
Communications*

*“The shortest way to live with honor in the world is to be in reality what we appear to be.”
~ Socrates*

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”
~ Margaret Mead*

“Fallen Officer Tribute” **Guest Commentary**

Fallen will never, ever be forgotten **Exhibit dedicated to memory of slain cops**

***“It was their duty to serve.
It is ours to remember.”***

The Dade County Police Benevolent Association, representing 37 cities and towns outside the city of Miami, commissioned a unique tribute as a reminder that law enforcement officers are committed to their calling, and are willing to lay down their lives at any given moment so that others may live in peace.

The PBA’s month-long “Fallen Officer Tribute” was exhibited in the lobby of the Stephen P. Clark Government Center and was composed of 133 mannequins, each wearing black T-shirts with white lettering reading “I Died for You” on the front, and the fallen officer’s name and date of death appear on the back of the shirt. The names of their departments were symbolically left off to represent unity and a shared calling.



The exhibit’s intent was to also raise awareness about the daily risks and challenges that law enforcement officers face.

“We’ve seen an increase in assaults against officers,” noted **PBA President John Rivera**. “Officers are getting shot in alarming numbers, AK-47s are the weapon of choice and even police stations have become a target.”

In the past three years, Florida has ranked in the top three states throughout the nation for law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. “There has never been a more poignant time than now to honor and pay tribute to the sacrifices our law enforcement officers make while protecting our community,” Rivera continued.



In addition to the mannequins, enlarged pictures from law enforcement funerals and memorials were interspersed throughout the exhibit along with large informational displays which provided visitors more information about the increase in job hazards and the harsh realities that officers and their families endure.

The PBA president said the reaction from the public was overwhelming. “As people moved through the tribute, shirt by shirt, name by name, many were moved to tears by the sheer magnitude of loss represented,” he said.

The tribute also provided a special place for families, where instead of names on a wall, or a statistic, the shirts represented something real, something tangible. Family members visited to remember those they love and lost, and some returned, more than once, to hug their loved ones shirt.

“This was special, seeing their names on the shirts,” said **Terry Miyares**, widow of **Hialeah Police Officer Emilio Miyares**. “It doesn’t matter how long it’s been—it’s like they were there, remembered and not forgotten.”

The Dade County PBA has made the commitment to make this an annual tribute.

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Stephanie M. Womble and can be contacted by e-mail at Stephanie@dcpba.org.



Elaine Gonzalez, mother of fallen Miami-Dade Police Officer Giovanni Gonzalez, is consoled by PBA President John Rivera as she sits along with other survivors during the unveiling of “Fallen Officer Tribute.”