



Merritt Island

News & Views



Sheriff's Aviation Unit Recognized

The Brevard County Sheriff's Office's Aviation Unit was recently awarded **2nd place** in the FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) Vision Awards Ceremony hosted at the 2009 Annual Airborne Law Enforcement Association Convention. The FLIR Vision Awards are presented annually to the airborne law enforcement teams with the best video footage of a rescue, chase, apprehension or surveillance mission. Only one video per airborne team can be submitted for award consideration and the videos are judged based upon the degree of difficulty, crew coordination and quality of work.

Corporal/Pilot Chris Sands and Deputy/Tactical Flight Officer George Theofanous were among the top three finalists selected from hundreds of video submissions from Airborne Law Enforcement teams around the world. Corporal Sands and Deputy Theofanous were recognized for demonstrating their outstanding coordination and quality of teamwork while assisting, tracking and apprehending a shooting suspect in the Cocoa area of Brevard County in May 2009.



The Brevard County Sheriff's Aviation Unit is the only Airborne Law Enforcement Unit in the world to be recognized as a finalist in five out of the last eight years for the FLIR Vision Awards. Sheriff Jack Parker stated, *"The FLIR Vision Award record speaks for itself... Our Aviation Unit is OUTSTANDING, and I'm extremely proud of the entire Unit."*

As part of the FLIR Vision Award, Corporal Sands and Deputy Theofanous received a \$1,000 donation to a charitable organization on behalf of the Sheriff's Office. The United Way of Brevard will be this year's recipient of the \$1,000 check.

Commissioner Nelson presented the Aviation Unit with a Resolution recognizing them for their dedication to duty, professionalism and commitment to saving lives, property, and the prevention of crime in Brevard County at the November 10, 2009 regular meeting of the Board of County Commissioners.

The Brevard County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit video which was recognized at the 2009 FLIR Vision Awards Ceremony can be viewed over the Internet at www.bcsovideo.com.



Commissioner Nelson presenting Pilot/Aircraft Mechanic Mike Ryle, Corporal/Pilot Chris Sands and Chief Pilot John Coppola with the Resolution on 11/10/09.



The Aviation Unit's Water Rescue Team

Snapper Ban

In response to a Federal proposal to make a huge span of ocean off limits for fishing for red snapper, Commissioner Nelson presented a Resolution at the November 10, 2009 Board of County Commissioners meeting urging the Department of Commerce to delay this decision until additional data and further research is conducted. The federal stock assessment used as the basis for such a devastating recommendation is out of date and contains flawed data identified by scientists and academicians not employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (a division of the Department of Commerce).

The ban would include all red snapper fishing, recreational and commercial from Key West to the North Carolina/Virginia line. The proposed ban on red snapper fishing will be followed by another request to close much of the ocean on the east coast of Florida, especially off Brevard County, to all bottom-fishing by recreational and commercial fishermen to avoid catching red snapper while fishing for other fish species.

Commissioner Nelson recognizes such an action would destroy jobs and businesses at marinas, seafood markets and other marine related industries as well as reduce tourism and jobs for hospitality workers in Brevard County by shutting down charter-boats and party-boats thereby keeping thousands of tourists from visiting our county, eating at our restaurants and utilizing our lodging options.

On November 11, 2009 Commissioner Nelson spoke to the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council at a public hearing asking them to maintain status quo until further scientific research is performed to satisfactorily justify the need for additional measures. For more information visit www.eastcoastfishingsection.com.

Community Center gets O.K.

On November 10th the Board of County Commissioners approved construction of the Mitchell Ellington Park Community Center. Mitchell Ellington Park sits in the northern most part of Merritt Island where you get a feel for what old Florida is all about. Nestled in what is fondly known as North Merritt Island this 18,000 square foot community building and gymnasium will host an abundance of activities for all ages. Senior lunch programs, after school care, summer camp programs and kids of all ages can utilize the gym and game room. Meeting rooms will be available for rentals and used for scheduled activities, community events and group gatherings. This building is also hurricane hardened and will be used as a recovery site after storms. As you remember after Fay, the nearest recovery site was located in Cocoa. This project will complete the enhancements to Mitchell Ellington Park as a direct outcome of the commitment made by our community to support the Parks Referendum.