

**MARTIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
ROBERT L. CROWDER, SHERIFF**

**STATEMENT FROM SHERIFF ROBERT L. CROWDER
MARCH 18, 2011**

I am taking this opportunity to announce that I will not be seeking re-election at the end of my current term as your sheriff. My last day in office will be Monday, January 7, 2013. This will end my tenure of twenty years as your sheriff, and a total of forty-eight years pursuing my career in law enforcement.

I am making this decision known at this time in order to give ample time to others who may be interested in seeking election to this office. I know of several individuals who are interested in seeking the office of sheriff, but they have stated that, out of respect, they would not announce their candidacy until I had decided that I would not run. I truly appreciate their respect, and do not wish to hinder their efforts.

I am very proud of my career and the many accomplishments and contributions along the way. I first began in February, 1965, as a dispatcher for the Martin County Sheriff's Office when Roy C. Baker was in office, serving the fourth of his five terms. I worked at the Stuart Police Department as a patrolman and, later, as the first detective and identification officer for the city.

In 1972 I was, at the age of 26, appointed by Governor Askew to complete the sheriff's fifth term when Sheriff Baker was suspended. I was succeeded by James Holt who was elected in 1972 and took office in January of 1973. After a twenty-month stint in charge of security at the Saint Lucie Nuclear Power Plant, I returned to the Martin County Sheriff's Office and served as the Chief Criminal Investigator until 1984 when "Bobby" Knowles, the newly elected sheriff in St. Lucie County, asked me to become his Chief Deputy, or Undersheriff. I served in that capacity from the beginning of 1985 through the end of 1992 when I became the sheriff of Martin County. I was elected in November of 1992 and was appointed by Governor Chiles to assume office two weeks early subsequent to the death of Sheriff James Holt who died of cancer while still serving as sheriff.

Within my first term of office every campaign promise I had made during the election campaign was completed. We improved the working standards for the deputies and increased productivity as we reduced the crime rate. We re-introduced a K-9 program that has won many awards along the way. We introduced the DARE program within our local school system to help our children resist drug abuse. We provided a comprehensive training program for our volunteer posse, making it the envy of sheriffs' offices around the state. Communications and computerization were increased and enhanced to bring the Martin County Sheriff's Office into the 21st century.

Community Oriented Policing was instituted to improve law enforcement services to some of our troubled neighborhoods. This included the implementation of bicycle patrols and increased neighborhood watch programs. We also implemented athletic programs for at risk youngsters in several of our communities and formed an award-winning Explorer post.

When gasoline prices began rising ten years ago, we became the first law enforcement agency in the world to begin utilizing fuel efficient hybrid autos, receiving world-wide recognition for this innovative program.

When the County Government requested that the Sheriff's Office take over the Animal Control function, we agreed and transferred that operation into our organization and greatly improved services to the citizens as well as the animals.

Although we are innovative in many respects, one of the most successful was our Juvenile Offender Training Center, known as the "boot camp." This became a best practices model for programs of its type, and was one of the most successful juvenile treatment programs in Florida, if not the United States. In spite of its effectiveness, the program was insufficiently funded and could not continue.

There are many other improvements I could mention.

I have been very blessed, and very fortunate to have been elected for five terms by the people of Martin County to serve as their highest law enforcement official. I am very proud to have also served on the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board, the Juvenile Justice Blueprint Commission, President and Chairman of the Board of the Florida Sheriffs Association, Chairman of the Board of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches, and a number of other posts.

I look back on my career with a sense of having served well and accomplished much. I have tried to always speak my beliefs, even if I knew some people might disagree. I think the public deserves to know what their officials really think and really believe. Leadership is much about telling people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear.

I appreciate the loyalty and dedication of the men and women of the Martin County Sheriff's Office, and I treasure the memories I will always have of serving with them. I have known some of them all their lives. I have watched with pride as they have grown and developed professionally. They are truly the best. I will miss working with them, but we will still have nearly two more years together, protecting the people of this county. I am proud of the improvements I have been able to make in their salaries and working conditions. When I took office there were some members of the agency who qualified for food stamps. I thought that was a disgrace and worked to change it. I certainly make no apologies to anyone for that, even if it did increase the budget.

I pray for the future of this agency, and for each member and their families. My entire adult life has been dedicated to the traditions and the mission of the sheriff's office. It will be difficult to leave, but I will remain available to assist or advise my successor, whomever the public elects.

In the meantime, we still have much work to do, and I will remain at the helm. Make no mistake; I WILL be at the helm.

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