

CITY, COUNTY and LOCAL GOVERNMENT Law Section

A Section of The Florida Bar

Member Spotlight

Meet **Sheriff Hoffman**, a longstanding member of the Section who has dedicated his prestigious career to public service. Before attending law school, Sheriff Hoffman served as a Deputy Sheriff for Charlotte County. After graduating law school in 1997, he served as an Assistant State Attorney. He then joined the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office in 2005 as general counsel, and was subsequently promoted through the ranks to Captain, Major, Colonel, and Chief Deputy before being sworn in as Sarasota's newest Sheriff on January 5, 2021. Let's hear what Sheriff Hoffman had to say during our Member Spotlight interview!



What inspired you to pursue a career in the legal field? I spent more than seven years as a deputy sheriff in Charlotte County prior to attending law school. I lost a trial where I believed the victim didn't receive justice and that is what finally motivated me to attend law school and become a prosecutor. I was an assistant state attorney for eight years, eventually becoming a supervisor with the State Attorney's Office, 12th Judicial Circuit.

How has the practice of law prepared you for your current role? It is the best preparation one could possibly have for a CEO role like Sheriff. I have more than 1,000 employees and a 125-million-dollar budget. We deal with worker's compensation, employment and labor issues, multimillion-dollar contracts, and interagency agreements between other police agencies. We litigate most issues in conjunction with the County Attorney's Office and routinely appear in county, circuit, and federal courts. Policy development is also a significant portion of what we do at the sheriff's office and a legal background is extremely helpful in those areas.

What are you looking forward to the most in your current role? At the end of the day, it's about helping people. We have a very forward-thinking agency that has embraced our community and we work every day to make it a better place to live and work. While police/community relations around the country has deteriorated in many areas, ours has flourished. Whether it is our Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), our more than 50 programs in our jail that help inmates better their lives and not recidivate, or our Rightful Policing philosophy, we are making a difference in our community and that is a rewarding feeling. Our addiction recovery pod in the jail was the first in the state, and we now have hundreds of inmates who have turned their lives around; many of whom come back to the facility to help other inmates. We also have a veterans pod helping veteran inmates deal with the issues unique to military service, particularly those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

What is one thing someone meeting you for the first time would never suspect, or be surprised to find out? Probably that I have been a lawyer for more than 22 years. I wear a uniform every day with a gun and a badge and most don't realize I am also a lawyer. I remember one time when I went over to cover a forfeiture hearing and I didn't have time to put on a suit, I think opposing counsel was wondering why a deputy sheriff was up there arguing case law on the seizure of his client's vehicle. The judge happened to be a former colleague of mine at the State Attorney's Office and I think she got a kick out of watching the other side figure out who I was.

If you could go back in time and speak to yourself at 10 years old, what would you tell yourself? I would tell my 10-year-old self to stop doing things that are giving your mother gray hairs!

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