



Sheriff's Office wins prestigious award

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OCALA — The Marion County Sheriff's Office is one of five Florida organizations that have won the Governor's Sterling Award for 2008. Marion's is the first sheriff's office in the state to receive the prestigious honor.

The Sterling Award goes to a company or organization that shows excellence in business practices. The Governor's Sterling Council's mission is to enhance Florida's competitive edge and quality through promotion, assessment and recognition of performance excellence. The award was established in 1992.

"I am extremely proud of the men and women of the Marion County Sheriff's Office and all our volunteers," Sheriff Ed Dean said.

In April 2006, the Sheriff's Office participated in the Sterling Performance Excellence Challenge, which meant sterling officials came in, assessed the agency, and provided feedback on what to prepare for to compete for the Governor Sterling Award.

Sheriff's officials had to undergo a series of steps to be recognized as one of the best organizations in the state. The application fee and the assessment to enter the event cost the Sheriff's Office \$9,524.37, according to officials.

"It's not about the award. It's about achieving organizational performance excellence," sheriff's Chief Tom Wilder said.

First off, agency officials had to submit a 50-page application that was used to gauge the agency's performance in seven categories: leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurement, analysis and knowledge management, work force focus, and process management and results.

The sterling examiners reviewed the application and spent six days visiting the Sheriff's Office interviewing the staff and volunteers and listening to feedback.

At the conclusion of the visit, the sterling assessment team compiled its report and

presented it to the Serling Council judges.

The four other winners: the Hillsborough County Tax Collector's Office, the Orange County Clerk of Courts, Shands Healthcare and the Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota.

The Sheriff's Office isn't the only law enforcement agency to be recognized for doing an outstanding job: The Ocala Police Department on Feb. 20 was accredited through the Commission of Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

"It was a great process to go through, and it's further proof that we're a professional law enforcement agency," Deputy Chief Greg Graham said.

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