



CITY OF PUNTA GORDA

A Florida Accredited **EXCELSIOR AGENCY**

**POLICE**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

August 10, 2016

### **Punta Gorda Police Department Provides Additional Information on Incident**

On August 9, 2016, the Punta Gorda Police Department hosted approximately 35 civilians from the community for Chamber Police Night, a two hour presentation of the Punta Gorda Police Department. The presentation was similar in topics and activities to the Citizen Police Academy night we provide to both Leadership Charlotte classes as well as the Punta Gorda Citizen Academy.

The shoot/don't shoot role playing portion of our presentation has been a popular activity in the program, fostering communication between the community and officers about quick decision making and determining use of force options. We have conducted this exercise for many groups over the past two years without injury or incident. This type of scenario-based role play is not only well-received in our community, but has grown in use across the country.

This horrible accident has significantly affected our entire community. Our primary concern is the well-being of Mrs. Knowlton's family. As we continue to respect their grieving process, we have extended resources, including the presence of our department chaplains.

Recognizing that this incident also affected the other participants in the program, as well as many others in our community, the City of Punta Gorda has been in contact Tidewell Hospice who has arranged for grief counseling at no cost. Tidewell is requesting anyone wishing to receive counseling attend a meeting on August 17<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm at the Lashley Community Room in Lashley Marina.

To maintain the well-being of our first responders; which includes officers, dispatchers, and fire department personnel, the Critical Incident Stress Management Program has been activated to address their needs.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is still in the process of conducting their independent investigation, as requested by Chief Tom Lewis. This investigation began immediately following the incident and has continued throughout the night. Our department is currently fulfilling all requests that we receive from their investigators.

## Media Release

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Our department will continue to keep our community informed through news releases to the media and on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/pgpdfl](http://www.facebook.com/pgpdfl). To eliminate duplicate requests for information, please continue to send requests only to Lieutenant Katie Heck at [kheck@pgorda.us](mailto:kheck@pgorda.us). Your requests will be addressed as quickly as possible.

*Prepared by:*

Lieutenant Katie Heck

Community Services

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Release 2/2.