



SAO Profile in Profile – Luis E. Martinez

For Luis E. Martinez being able to help others and make a difference in people's lives has been a calling since he was a small boy. "I always wanted to be a police officer. It was fun to see the sirens and it all was so intriguing. When you are out on the road, every day is different, and you have to think on your feet. Dealing with the public, you get to help people and make a difference in a variety of ways," says Luis.

"Since first meeting Luis, I have always been impressed by his willingness to lend a hand," said State attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. "Whenever a problematical situation arises, be it a victim needing help or an emergency setting needing intervention, Luis has always been one of the first to help. His commitment to serving others is the foundation for so much of what he has done throughout his adult life, as seen throughout his work within our community. That is certainly what makes him such a trusted and valued member of our State Attorney Office team"

Born in Manhattan, Luis was the only child of parents who fled Cuba in the 1960s. At the age of five, his family moved from the Big Apple to Miami Beach where he grew up. "My parents owned a clothing store in Allapattah on NW 20 street. By age nine I was already working at and helping around the store after school and whenever needed. One of the things that I really enjoyed was dealing with the public," he recalls.

After graduating from La Luz School on Flagler Street, Luis went on to attend Miami-Dade College where he received an Associates Degree in Business Administration. The plan had been to continue in the family business but then destiny and a twist of fate changed the course of his career and life.

“I have a nephew who is older than me and was an officer at the Miami Dade County Police Department (MDPD)”. I did ride along with him, and I knew that that was what I wanted to do. The spontaneity of the job, going from one place to another, and the many different concerns in different areas throughout our community were things that attracted me to law enforcement. You couldn’t change what happened to people but you could give them hope and help calm them down just by being personable and bringing some humanity to their situation.”

So, Luis told his parents that he was not continuing his degree in accounting but instead was going to attend the Miami Dade College North Police Academy. It was 1991 and Luis’ family was concerned about the danger of being an officer and his safety. But they eventually came around and fully supported him in his passion of being in law enforcement. He later went on to earn a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Union University.

“I was sponsored by MDPD to go to the academy and nine months later I was a patrol officer for MDPD in the Midwest District which is now Doral,” he explains. “In 1995, I transitioned to Sweetwater Police Department when they made me a great offer to be a Community Officer.”

Luis later went to the Detective Bureau and eventually became their Commander. “I had four part-time detectives, and we investigated all types of cases. I remember two very difficult child abuse cases. One of them was a child who was targeted by his parents and would be locked up in the bathroom for 45 days at a time in horrific conditions without adequate food or water. That is when I really began working with the State Attorney’s Office (SAO) and especially with ASA Laura Adams. In 1998, I became the Commander of the Internal Affairs Bureau.”

It was working closely with SAO that led Luis to apply to the office in 2000 and he was hired as an investigator. Then in 2002, State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle created the Community Outreach Division (COD) and recruited Luis to the unit. “It was an honor to be selected by her to work with the public. We covered the entire county and began the Justice In Motion program.”

“In 2008, the Doral Police Department made me a great offer. It was a new police department, but I had already covered that area when it was Midwest District under MDPD. At first, I was assigned to road patrol and then Neighborhood Resource Unit, which is like community outreach because you are a liaison with the public.”

But in 2022, Luis felt the yearning to return to the SAO. “I wanted to come back because of the mission of the office and what we do. I like the problem-solving and informing the community of how the SAO can help them. I applied and the State Attorney welcomed me back as an Investigator and Community Outreach Representative.”

“The work environment at SAO is wonderful and working with the State Attorney, KFR, is life changing. She is brilliant and committed to our community. I am always captivated by her, and I learn something new from her every day. It is amazing to me to see how she balances all the responsibilities of the entire office. She also has a great team around her. She knows how to identify the right people for the right positions, for example, her Chief Assistants. We are a diverse area of the country, and we have to provide services for all and meet their diverse needs. It is our responsibility, and we do the very best we can.”

Luis has successfully reincorporated into the Best Team in America. As part of his duties, he was selected to be part of the State Attorney’s security detail. As part of COD, he has presented various topics to community groups regarding how to protect themselves from fraud, election integrity, and elder exploitation. He has also been a part of the Second Chance Sealing and Expungement program. Luis has also been the point person for the Women of Tomorrow field trips to the SAO.

Two important groups for Luis are the young and the elderly. He has gone above and beyond in helping our Elder and Vulnerable Adult victims. In a few situations, he has reached out to a former police academy colleague who now owns the Good Greek Movers to assist with moving the victim’s belongings from a deplorable situation to a safe situation. “I was very touched that he chose to help our victim at no cost.”

Aside from his daily responsibilities at SAO, Luis’ passion for helping children is expressed through his work with “Disney on Wheels”. “I became a part of this program when I was with Doral PD. It started in 2015 and has an investor who is the owner of NHT Ambulances as well as other

businesses. He is the major donor and there is fundraising throughout the year for the program. We take medically fragile children on a weekend trip to Disney World. It is no small feat as there are a myriad of details relating to their physical and emotional well-being that need to be taken into consideration. We also have to plan 24/7 availability of medical attention. Many of the children cannot walk and are wheelchair-bound. They have a variety of issues like severe autism, cerebral palsy, birth defects, etc. Some of them have feeding tubes or respirators.” These are children who could not qualify for other organizations and at the same time would never be able to safely or afford such a trip.

This year “Disney on Wheels” took 50 children and 200 volunteers. Luis and his wife lead a group of 10. “Each child has their guardian accompany them plus we have helpers, paramedics, nurses, etc.... We go up in a caravan of vehicles. This year we had four buses, 10 ambulances, and a police escort. The charity pays for travel, transportation, hotel, food, planning, rides, and entrance to the theme park.”

The Friday through Sunday trip is meticulously planned to meet the medical and physical needs of children and their guardians. They have opportunities to meet and take pictures with the characters and ride certain rides at Disney. The Children also receive gifts, hats, fans, and water bottles provided by the charity.

Luis loves being a part of “Disney on Wheels” because of what they can provide for medically fragile children and their families. “We give to them but in reality, they give much more to us. When you see what these children and guardians go through every day, you appreciate what you have even more.”

Not only will Luis continue to make a difference in the community through his personal charitable work but also through his role as a proud member of the SAO family. “I enjoy having face-to-face contact with the public and meeting the dynamic of the community as we make a difference in their lives. We are public servants, and we serve the public. It is truly an honor.”