

Chamber on the Road: With Sheriff Bob Gualtieri



Bob Gualtieri is the 14th sheriff of Pinellas County in its 104th year of history. Sheriff Gualtieri began his career with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office approximately 35 years ago in 1982 as a Detention Deputy. From there he was appointed Sheriff of Pinellas County in 2011, elected Sheriff of Pinellas County in 2012, and re-elected in 2016. He earned his bachelor's degree at Eckerd College and his law degree at Stetson University College of Law



Community Safety and the Guardian Program

We have a pretty safe county and safe community. Part 1 crimes (murder, rape, robbery, arson, etc) have been reduced by 44% and murders per year has gone down from 50 to 35 (this includes the 1 million residents in Pinellas County, as well as all of the tourists). For comparison Philadelphia is half the size with four times the murders. We have an average daily county jail population of 3100, and we provide police services for 13 of the 24 cities in Pinellas.

The city of Parkland was named the safest city in Florida 3 days before the shooting at Stoneman Douglas. 94% (43/46 school shootings) have been committed by insiders and former students. The majority are committed with handguns, over with in less than 4 minutes, and the majority are also stopped by school personnel. Schools are like their own communities, and because of that we can't have officers everywhere - Stoneman Douglas has 16 buildings and only one good guy with a gun. He was in building 1 when the shooting started in building 12. By the time he got to the building from his office, there were already 23 people dead. Now by the time the deputy at Stoneman Douglas, who was a failure and ran away, got to the door of Building 12 one of those people already shot and killed was a guy named Chris, who was the athletic director at Stoneman Douglas. Chris was a 20 year Navy veteran, was a military police officer with a conceal and carry permit holder, a guy who shot regularly, who was proficient in the use of a firearm, and who, according to everyone including his wife Deborah, that if he had a gun that day, there's no doubt that he would have tried to protect himself and those kids. But Chris, without a gun, went into that room because he knew he needed to do something to try to protect those kids. Cruz, the shooter, turned his AR-15 on him, and shot him the moment he walked in the building...So why shouldn't a guy like Chris be able to defend himself? Why shouldn't he have a fighting chance?

This is the reason I, and the Stoneman Douglas Commission, have endorsed the **Guardian Program**; the concept of allowing personnel who want to, who are willing to go through rigorous background checks and training, to be armed on these campuses because we want a different outcome. So the premise about arming school personnel, is based on the fact that there are people like Chris out there - whether they're athletic directors, or principals, coaches, whatever they are - we have people out there who are willing to be that force multiplier, and are highly qualified.

Bill 7026

On every charter, every elementary, middle, and high school campus in the state, there shall be a safety school officer on every campus. There would also be behavior threat assessment teams on every charter, elementary, middle, and high school campus in Florida to try to identify and address those behaviors, and intervene before they manifest into threats. Still not getting compliance in August of 2019. Also not receiving accurate SESIRs (School Environment Safety Incident Report) either; new law states this information has to be reported and reported accurately, or the commissioner of the Florida Department of Education has directed school boards to withhold superintendent's salary until it is. We'll likely get compliance now, but it shouldn't have to come to that.

Florida "Guardian" Law (not yet being accepted in Pinellas County, but has been implemented in other areas of the state)

Apply and volunteer

Full background check

Polygraph test

Drug screening

Everything a cop has to go through to get hired

Defensive tactics training

Legal training

All of the necessary skill sets - and then they have to qualify on the range at a higher percentage, and with more rounds than a police