



# WILDWOOD CONNECTION



Above, Crystal "Ace" Acevedo, Wildwood's 2023 Officer of the Year, with Chief Randy Parmer.

Below, tending the grill at the city's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in January.



## CRYSTAL "ACE" ACEVEDO NAMED 2023 POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Crystal Acevedo was honored as Wildwood's 2023 Officer of the Year at the city commission's February 12, 2024, meeting. Her abundant successful extracurricular community outreach projects played a role in her selection.

According to Chief Randy Parmer, Ace, as Officer Acevedo is known, stood out on a strong force of many competent, skilled law enforcement personnel because of everything she does above and beyond her primary responsibilities as a police officer.

"We never once asked Ace to organize any of these events or gather food and supplies," Parmer said.

"She has taken it all on in her extra time through her own initiative, hard work, and passion for helping the community. She comes to us with ideas, asking for permission to proceed with planning, organization, and fundraising, and then she carries out every detail. Ace has repeatedly raised the bar when it comes to serving and protecting our citizens."

Among Acevedo's extra projects are an annual holiday food drive, an ongoing toiletries drive, a 5K race to benefit autism awareness and services, and the Donate a Phone (DAP) program, which collects unwanted old cellular devices, refurbishes them, and provides limited service to domestic abuse victims needing to access help.

She partners with other local and national organizations and businesses to leverage resources and maximize the benefits for Wildwood's residents.

When asked what motivates her, she explained her lifelong commitment to finding better solutions to situations she experienced as a child.

"Growing up in a family with domestic violence, I saw the police come to my house often, and I didn't like the way they treated us," she recounts.

"Many times officers would simply address just the call itself, not the entire situation, and then that situation would just repeat itself over and over again. I have always wanted to find a way to provide people with the help they need to get out of those situations."

*(continued on Page 2)*

**CRYSTAL "ACE" ACEVEDO NAMED 2023 POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

*(continued from Page 1)*

Although the motivation was there, the path was neither straight nor simple. Acevedo knew she wanted a career in law enforcement, but sidelined those aspirations to raise her young children and finish her education—understanding those primary commitments were fundamental to achieving secondary goals. She spent time working in the healthcare industry before she felt it was time to pursue her true passion.

After graduating from the police academy in July 2021, she successfully applied for a position on Wildwood’s newly reorganized force under Chief Parmer, first serving on night and day patrol, gaining as much experience as possible before shifting focus to traffic enforcement as her next assignment.

In an effort to further her knowledge and understanding of both the law and the city’s department, she sought out additional training. Among the long list of courses and certifications she has earned since completing her basic law enforcement curriculum:

- Speed Measurement, Radar and Laser Devices
- First Aid/CPR
- Medical Marijuana
- Rescue Task Force Operations
- Autism Spectrum Disorder and Interview
- Use and Control of Informants
- Physiological Response Dynamics
- FEMA Incident Command, Management and Framework Systems and Management (ICS 100, 200; IS 700, 800)
- Risk Protection Orders
- Victims of Sexual Offenses
- Juvenile Sex Offender Investigation
- Eyewitness Identification
- Interviews and Interrogation
- Advanced Reporting Writing and Review

Last year, Acevedo was offered and accepted a new position planning and enforcing public safety for the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation.

While working there, she also responds to calls from fellow officers needing assistance or backup, and takes action whenever she observes a crime, accident, or potential danger, regardless of where she may be stationed that day.

“It’s never dull,” she explained. “I might be intervening between overzealous parents at a youth game or patrolling the grounds for suspicious activity when I get a call to assist with a domestic violence situation. Many times, because of my background and advanced training, I can talk with people involved in a way that establishes trust and deescalates the situation.”

Building trust is one of the pillars of her approach to holistic enforcement. Living in rougher neighborhoods of New York City when she was young, Acevedo learned early that many people—including victims as well as perpetrators—don’t believe the police have their best interests in mind.

She works hard to meet as many residents as possible throughout the city and interact with them as a compassionate person, not just an enforcement figure. Her community initiatives and outreach give the public an opportunity to better understand that regardless of the situation, Acevedo wants the best long-term outcome for everyone involved, even those under arrest and headed for incarceration.

*(continued on Page 4)*



The poster features the Wildwood Police Department logo at the top center, which includes the text "WILDWOOD POLICE EST. 1877" and "FLORIDA POLICE ACADEMY". Below the logo is a graphic of four runners in green, orange, yellow, and blue against a city skyline. To the right, there is a logo for "5K TIMED RUN RUN/WALK For Jack and Allie, Inc." with a "race timesports" logo below it. The main text reads: "WILDWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESENTS OUR 5K AUTISM TIMED RUN/WALK SATURDAY, 20 APRIL 2024". Below this, it states: "Starting Point: Wildwood City Hall (100 N. Main St, Wildwood, FL) EVENT STARTS AT: 7:15 AM / RACE KICKS OFF 9:00 AM Register start date: February 8, 2024 Ends: April 5, 2024 Register before March 1st and get a Wildwood PD Autism T-shirt Price will change as we get closer to the date so register ASAP". The poster also features logos for "LHBC", "THE VINES HOSPITAL", "Rotary Club of The Villages NOON", "WEST FINANCIAL GROUP", "Village Discount PHARMACY", "GOOD NEIGHBOR PHARMACY", "ROBERTO'S RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA", and "WM WASTE MANAGEMENT". Pricing is listed as "\$30 PER ADULT-18 & UP" and "\$10 PER CHILD-17 & DOWN". A note says "\$30/\$10 dollars \* includes timer/ BIB". It also mentions "Top 3 runners receive medals for each division." and "This run helps raise funds for the Jack & Allie Foundation, a non profit through ABELS Learning Academy for Autism". At the bottom, it says "REGISTER @ (RUNSIGNUP.COM)" and "Any Questions contact Cacevedo@Wildwood-FL.Gov".

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A UTILITY WORKER

There are no shortcuts to quality and safety.

Below, Eli Darnell and a Wildwood utilities team work on a section of an ongoing initiative to continually update and upgrade the city's water system. Older galvanized pipes are being replaced with new polyethylene ones to prevent discolored water that can occur from galvanized lines, improving the aesthetic quality of the city's entire water supply.

Soil around the piping is all carefully excavated and refilled by hand, smoothed when finished, and then reseeded. Even though the area disturbed is in the city's right-of-way, the team takes great pains to make it look as well manicured as the adjacent private property.

The work requires patience and attention to detail as well as strength, endurance, and dexterity, even when partially submerged in near-freezing temperatures.

Crews work together in all weather conditions to make sure customers have clean, safe water at all times of day and night.



### CRYSTAL "ACE" ACEVEDO NAMED WILDWOOD POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR 2023

(continued from Page 2)

"I know firsthand that events will repeat themselves if the root cause is never addressed," she continued. "You can't expect someone in a dire situation to behave differently unless you offer access to the help they need to alleviate their ongoing or recurring crisis."

She said whether it involves connecting them with nutritious meals, mental health or addiction treatment resources, or services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, seeing the bigger picture and treating everyone as a human being—rather than just a call or statistic—is the only way to break the cycle.

Acevedo sees the need for resources in all parts of the city. Despite urban myth that crime is concentrated only in certain neighborhoods, she responds matter-of-factly that the suggestion is untrue.

"We respond to calls in every zip code and neighborhood, and encounter common situations everywhere, from domestic violence, suicide threats, theft, accidents, fraud, and more," she explained. "It could be in a rural area one minute, a commercial site the next, and a gated community after that. People are people everywhere."

After only two and a half years with the force, Acevedo has established herself as a model officer, said Chief Parmer. "With a city growing as fast as Wildwood, opportunities abound for those who want to continue learning and working to grow. Ace demonstrates such passion for understanding the entire field of law enforcement and the people we serve; I'd say the sky really is the limit as to what she's capable of achieving in her career."

As for her own vision of success, Acevedo sees herself taking on a supervisory role at some point and leading a team that broadens the reach of what she's doing now. "It's hard to do everything myself," she commented. "There is so much more I want to do, but only 24 hours in each day. I'd love to build out a team."

Still, her interests are deep and wide, and she hasn't ruled anything out. "I'm learning every day," she added. "All these extra projects are pushing me outside my comfort zone and requiring me to develop new skills. I'd never done any event planning, public speaking, or fundraising before, and have had to learn as I go."

At the end of the day, she says, law enforcement is still law enforcement, regardless of assignment or title.

"It doesn't matter if you are a patrol officer, a detective, or on traffic detail," she said. "We are all police officers, we have all been pepper sprayed and tased, and we all put our lives on the line every day we put on this uniform to perform our duty to serve and protect."

### CITY OF WILDWOOD WINS BUDGET AWARD FOR SIXTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

The City of Wildwood has been honored with its sixth consecutive Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association.

According to the association, the award reflects a commitment to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting.

Wildwood again satisfied all 14 mandatory criteria assessing how well the city's budget serves as a policy document, a financial plan, an operations guide, and a communications device.

"We take pride in our budget as a tool for not just ourselves but our community," said Assistant City Manager and Chief Financial Officer Cassandra Smith. "We use GFOA's best practices in order to provide a comprehensive document for our residents."

Assistant CFO Lynzey McClellan explained the progression of the city's budgeting in the seven years she has worked in the Wildwood's finance department.

"Our goal is transparency in everything we do," she said. "We owe our citizens access to clear, concise information about how their money is used to provide them with services. With that in mind, we have sought to better organize our documentation and enhance the way it is shared."

While the award helps city officials confirm their efforts are effective, they continue seeking improvements in their financial planning, processes, and presentation.

"Over these past six years receiving the award, the city has made significant strides toward that goal," Smith said, "but we are always working to get better."

Wildwood's award-winning budget can be found at <https://www.wildwood-fl.gov/finance>.



The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada

presents this

#### CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION FOR BUDGET PREPARATION

to

Finance Department  
City of Wildwood, Florida



The Certificate of Recognition for Budget Preparation is presented by the Government Finance Officers Association to those individuals who have been instrumental in their government unit achieving a Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. The Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, which is the highest award in governmental budgeting, is presented to those government units whose budgets are judged to adhere to program standards.

Executive Director

*Christopher P. Merrill*

Date:

November 14, 2023

**Art in the Park**  
 SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2024  
 9AM TO 12NOON

City Hall  
 100 N. Main Street  
 352.461.0134  
 parksandrec@wildwood-fl.gov

WILDWOOD FLORIDA PARKS & RECREATION

**\$20 ARTIST REGISTRATION**

**KIDS**  
 SPRING BREAK CAMP

MARCH 4-8, 2024

HAVE SOME FUN,  
 MAKE NEW FRIENDS,  
 AND LEARN NEW SKILLS!

AGES: 5-12

REGISTER:  
 WILDWOOD-FL.GOV  
 OR CALL 352-461-0134

COST: \$20/DAY OR \$90/WEEK

Jackson Street Youth Center  
 650 Jackson St.  
 Wildwood, FL

WILDWOOD FLORIDA PARKS & RECREATION

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Find more activities and events on the city's community calendar at [www.wildwood-fl.gov/calendar](http://www.wildwood-fl.gov/calendar).

WILDWOOD FLORIDA PARKS & RECREATION

**WILDWOOD'S EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA**

12 YEARS AND UNDER

SATURDAY  
 MARCH 30, 2024  
 10AM - 12NOON

MILLENNIUM PARK  
 Baseball Fields  
 1300 Huey Street

Egg Hunt, Prizes, Bounce House,  
 Petting Zoo, and More!

Sensory-Friendly Hunt  
 9:30AM-10:00AM

(352) 461-0134

WILDWOOD FLORIDA PARKS & RECREATION

**ADULT FLASHLIGHT EGG HUNT**

We can't let our kids have ALL the fun!

March 22, 2024 | 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Wildwood Community Center  
 6500 Powell Rd.

Prizes include: hotel stays, spa days, movie tickets, restaurant gift cards, and MORE.

Adults 18+  
**Tickets: \$10**  
 Scan below to sign up!

For more information,  
 call 352-461-0134

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

#### Code Compliance

March 5, 2024  
1:00 p.m.

#### Local Planning Agency

March 5, 2024  
2:00 p.m.

#### Planning and Zoning

March 5, 2024  
2:15 p.m.

#### City Commission

March 4, 2024 (workshop)  
9:00 a.m.

March 11, 2024  
9:00 a.m.

March 25, 2024  
7:00 p.m.

#### Project Review Committee

March 12, 2024  
10:00 a.m.

#### General Information

Unless otherwise specified, all meetings are held at City Hall, 100 N. Main St.

Agendas and minutes are posted on the city's website. Go to [www.wildwood-fl.gov](http://www.wildwood-fl.gov) and click on [Agenda](#).

Meetings are open to the public. Attend in person or remotely by going to the city website and clicking on [Government > Attend a Meeting Virtually](#).

Anyone wishing to speak during Public Forum should submit a comment card before the meeting begins.

### ANNUAL HYDRANT FLUSHING WORK TO CONTINUE IN MARCH

Sumter County's fire department is expected to continue its annual fire hydrant maintenance into March.

While this maintenance is taking place, lower-than-normal water pressure and/or discolored water may occur. These issues should clear up within a few hours.

If you experience water issues that do not resolve quickly, during hydrant flushing or otherwise, please call 352-330-1336 and a water technician will be dispatched to your area.

### LOCAL ROADWORK TO BEGIN

Pavement rejuvenation is scheduled to begin on designated city roads in mid-March. These treatments enhance surface quality and extend asphalt life, resulting in considerable cost savings for taxpayers.

The city's pavement contractor will notify affected residents before beginning work in each neighborhood.

### STAY UP TO DATE ON CITY HAPPENINGS

1. Check [wildwood-fl.gov](http://wildwood-fl.gov) for general information.
2. Sign up for **notifications** at [wildwood-fl.gov](http://wildwood-fl.gov).
3. Follow us on **Facebook**:
  - [facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida](https://facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida)
  - [facebook.com/WildwoodParksRecEvents](https://facebook.com/WildwoodParksRecEvents)
  - [facebook.com/WildwoodPoliceFL](https://facebook.com/WildwoodPoliceFL)



### A LOOK AT WILDWOOD HISTORY

This photo from the Zip Stearns collection shows W. B. Harrison and Jimmy Owens with members of the American Legion.

The date is unknown.

### CITY INFORMATION

#### Commission

Ed Wolf  
Mayor  
[ewolf@wildwood-fl.gov](mailto:ewolf@wildwood-fl.gov)

Pamala Harrison-Bivins  
Mayor Pro Tem  
[pbivins@wildwood-fl.gov](mailto:pbivins@wildwood-fl.gov)

Joe Elliott  
Commissioner  
[jelliott@wildwood-fl.gov](mailto:jelliott@wildwood-fl.gov)

Marcos Flores  
Commissioner  
[mflores@wildwood-fl.gov](mailto:mflores@wildwood-fl.gov)

Julian Green  
Commissioner  
[jgreen@wildwood-fl.gov](mailto:jgreen@wildwood-fl.gov)

#### City Hall

100 N. Main St.  
Wildwood, FL 34785  
352-330-1330  
[www.wildwood-fl.gov](http://www.wildwood-fl.gov)  
[facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida](https://facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida)

#### Directory

City Manager  
Jason McHugh  
352-330-1332  
[jmchugh@wildwood-fl.gov](mailto:jmchugh@wildwood-fl.gov)

Development Services  
352-330-1334

Human Resources  
352-330-1340

Parks and Recreation  
352-461-0134

Police (Non-Emergency)  
352-330-1355

Police (Emergency)  
911

Public Works  
352-330-1343

Utilities  
352-330-1336