**Episode 5 -Sheriff Wayne Ivey**

Welcome. This is Jen Lee, the host of I Need Blue. I came face to face with danger. Now I spend my time giving back to survivors and the heroes that saved us. If this is your first time listening, you are in for a special guest interview. To listen to previous episodes, visit [www.ineedblue.net](http://www.ineedblue.net). I need Blue can also be found on all your favorite podcast platforms. Why a podcast? I miss talking, I miss meeting and connecting with people. The means in which to do this have changed, especially with COVID. I decided it was time to use a different platform to share my victim turn survivor story. When you come face to face with danger you learn not to take for granted safety, and especially those who keep us safe. Now more than ever, it is important to use facts and real-life situations to reinforce our law enforcements valuable need, not just for our individual safety, but the safety of our communities. The goal of I Need Blue podcast is to have healthy and respectful conversation.

I Need Blue does feature graphic themes, including but not limited to violence, abuse, murder, and may not be suitable to all listeners. Some episodes also contain things which may be triggering. Please take care of yourself and don't hesitate to ask for professional help if you need it.

I'm going to introduce to a very special guest, Brevard County's Sheriff Wayne Ivey. He is here to share information, answer questions, and allow the listeners of *I Need Blue* to hear firsthand from our Sheriff. Sheriffs hold an elected position and are responsible for maintaining law and order and enforcing the law. Sheriffs are accountable directly to the citizens of their county, the constitution of their state, and ultimately the United States' constitution. I did research on Sheriff Ivy and I must say his contributions are vast on a local, national and international level. He has been recognized twice during his career, by the International Association of Chiefs of Police for his innovation and partnership approach to fighting crime. He is a product of Green Cove Springs Florida. His wife, Susan was born and raised in Titusville, Florida.

He began his law enforcement career with Putnam County Sheriff's office and Clay County Sheriff's office. Once he began working for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, he worked in all 67 counties, including the Brevard field office around June of 2007. He was elected Sheriff in 2012, almost a decade ago. Sheriff Ivy, and like all sheriffs and our law enforcement are part of our community. They are our neighbor, a friend, a family member, and we are thankful for you. With great pleasure, I would like to introduce to you Brevard County’s, Sheriff Wayne Ivey.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Thank you, Jen. Thank you for having me today and I need to get you to do my intro at anything I'm going to. I mean, that was good. I was thinking, "Man, that makes me sound like I've really done something."

**Jen Lee:** You have.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Thank you.  You know, I was listening to how the show started and I think people lose sight a lot of times of the victim. The victim is the one that has been impacted the most by the crime that has occurred, and regardless of what that crime is, it changes people's lives. It impacts them not only emotionally, but in their thoughts of feeling safe. It can be something as deep as a violent crime or something as identity theft, that victimizes you and completely changes your life. So, I'm very, very fortunate in our agency, we have our victims' advocate team that works closely with our victims of crime. The State Attorney's office, Phil Archer, our state attorney does a great job in their victims', advocacy outreach.  I will tell you so much focus gets put on the suspect and even law enforcement when they're making the arrest that often the victim is not thought of in that capacity. But our team does a great job in making sure we stay in touch with the victim, making sure that we get them the resources they need and helping them through this process, the criminal justice process.

**Jen Lee:** You are right about it. Being a victim firsthand, you don't know how you're going to react in this situation. Nobody ever does until you're actually faced with it. For me, I dealt with a lot of questions afterwards of "what if this happened". There are so many scenarios that can happen, could have happened. It didn’t just affect me, but it also affected my coworkers. It affected my family. It affected the community. The effects are widespread and I'm hoping to bring awareness to what happens to victims.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** My wife used to work in the banking industry, and she was a victim of several armed robberies at the banks. It's kind of ironic, she and I met when I was investigating a bank robbery in Titusville. We did not realize that we met until years later when we went out on our first date and we started talking about her experiences in the banking industry, and we connected those two things. But hearing her talk about how that impacted her, having people come in and jump up on the counter and point guns in your face and threaten violence to you. Some of her coworkers never came back. That was their last day of work because they could not emotionally handle any more and understandably so.

Whether it's an armed robbery at a bank or you're the victim of identity theft, there's a study out there that says the average victim of an identity theft comprehensive takeover, where they totally steal your identity, get jobs in your name, buy homes in your name, whatever it is they're doing, will spend up to 400 hours of their life trying to get back to where they were. Now put that on steroids with a violent crime, something that does physical harm or makes you constantly feel unsafe everywhere you go.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** You used a couple of words a little while ago, that really go into playing an important role in how we address victimization, goes into playing an important role and how we address protecting ourselves. You used the term, "what if". We spend most of our lives asking ourselves "what if." What if I got fired? What if I got a new job? What if I bought a new car? What if, what if, what if? We never pause to say, what if this happens to me? What if, what if, I'm at a gas station and somebody comes up to try and rob me? What if somebody is breaking into my home? And so "what if" becomes very important in how we prevent crime and how we deal with the aftermath of crime as well.

**Jen Lee:** I like most people, lived in a world of “that would never happen to me.” But it did.

**Jen Lee:** Because of that, I am telling you that is exactly why we need our law enforcement and our police officers. We are not trained to handle those types of situations. I don't know what I would have done because we were locked in a room and a lady had a medical emergency. I know how to put on a band-aid. So watching this lady on the ground, not knowing how to help her, created a feeling of vulnerability, responsibility which I wasn’t trained to handle. I needed law enforcement to arrive to take the responsibility off me. When the police officers finally rescued us and opened that door and got the lady the medical help that she needed, it was such a relief. I don't know what I would have done if I didn't have the law enforcement and police officers as a resource. Therefore, I am so passionate about *I Need Blue* because I know we need you.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** We're very blessed. And Brevard County, our citizens love us. You see what's taken place across the rest of the country and you feel horrible for the law enforcement officers that are having to work in communities and for managers and elected leaders that don't appreciate what they do. You look at us, we have just the opposite. We have elected leaders that support everything we do. We have a community that loves us, that trusts us, that protects us, just as much as we love trust and protect them. My deputies tell me that they can barely pay for their meal anymore in a restaurant because either the restaurant has told them their meal is taken care or in most cases, an anonymous citizen has gone and paid for it. Some of the restaurant owners that I have great friendships with, tell me that whenever a law enforcement officer comes in, people will line up two and three deep to pay for their meal. And so that's what we have here.

So, the term *I Need Blue* is recognized so well here in our community. We're blessed, we really are to have that feeling. Especially in today's time, when there's talks of, you can't even say it's talks, it's insanity of defund the police. Now the big push is defamed the police and they are trying to destroy the brand. What they're ultimately going to do is, and you're seeing it happen, I just saw yesterday in Asheville, where 40% of their law enforcement officers have left because they defunded the police department. You're seeing these areas that are defunding and not supporting their law enforcement officers, they are not going to be able to recruit law enforcement.

And we will see two different things happen. The first thing is because they can't recruit good quality, best of the best people, they'll lower their standards of employment. And when you recruit mediocre, the absolute best you're ever going to get is mediocrity. We recruit the best of the best. And if our person's having a bad day, we're still getting above average. When you recruit mediocre, that's the best you're going to get. So, they'll lower their standards, that'll be mistake number one. Mistake number two is they won't even be able to fill their spots then and law and order will be gone in those areas. We're fortunate, we have again, a State Attorney that puts bad people away when we take them to him. We have a State Attorney that understands we're out here working hard every day to make good, strong cases, to give them the teeth they need. And then we have a community that rallies behind us and that's the blessing for us in law enforcement here in Brevard County.

**Jen Lee:** I've lived here for two years now, and I love it. I want to go back to something you said, because there are a lot of people who say, I want to do something for our law enforcement, but I don't know what to do. One time we were in Virginia, and I just happened to see behind us, there was a Sheriff's car. So, we went up to pay for our Chick-fil-A, everybody loves Chick-fil-A.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Everybody.

**Jen Lee:**  We call that “paying it forward.”

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** I will tell you some of the things which we see, some of the neat things, and probably the absolute greatest thing you can do is just walk up and say, "Thank you" or "I appreciate you". We get that on a constant basis and it never, gets tiring. It feels just as good the 10th time as it did the first time, to have one of your citizens that you're out there protecting, walk up and tell you, "Thank you". One of our deputies told me about a lady, when he was pumping gas in his cruiser, this lady stopped and said, "Pump your gas, I've got your back." She stood on century while he was pumping his gas to make sure that nobody came up behind him.

A lot of people will bring donuts to the precincts. We call them “power rings”, it sounds so much more nutritious. And the eclairs are “power sticks” or “power bars.” You can frame those either way you want. We had a little girl that made cupcakes for deputies and just randomly, as she would see a deputy, she would give him the cupcakes. I got a little bit upset about that one because I mean, I was out everywhere and she never found me and gave me a cupcake. Her mom heard me tell that story and joke and her mom had her make cupcakes and bring them to me. I didn't share them with anybody, I took them all home. We have such a great community, when you look at Brevard County as a home, if you're thinking about moving here, two years ago, I guarantee you, when you started looking at moving here, you wanted to know what the crime rate was.

**Jen Lee:** Yes.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Our crime rates dropped 47% in the last eight years, here in Brevard County, because of an aggressive law enforcement agency, and because of the partnership we've been able to create with our citizens. We can get them vital crime prevention information before they become a victim, not after. When you're thinking about moving to an area, you look at the education system. We're blessed. We have a great education system here in Brevard County. You look at the availability of jobs. You look at the housing market, you look at all of those things. You even look at animal welfare. How do we take care of animals? I think how a community takes care of their animals is a strong indicator of how they take care of their citizens. And so, when you look at all those things combined, what you see as Brevard County stands out. There's a reason why we're seeing an amazing amount of growth in our community. People are moving from these other areas where law and order is not in check. They're moving from these other areas where education is not in check and they're coming here to Brevard County to be part of us.

**Jen Lee:** That's great. I have a question for you. There is a lot of people moving here. How do you, ensure our current residents remain confident that the riots and the violence are not going to be here as well?

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Sure. I think our best play there is, we make it very well known. I make no apologies that we target criminals. If you're a criminal, you came here to commit violence. You came here to steal; you came here to do drugs. You came here to harm a puppy. Whatever it is, we are going to put your butt in jail, we pull no punches. We made it very clear that we invite anyone to peacefully protest. You can stand out there and peacefully protest about whatever your passion is. But you pick up a brick and you're going to jail. And so, I think you have to prevent actions like that in a day-to-day activity. You can't wait for the emergency to happen and then say, "We're tough on crime." You have to lay down that mantra across the board every day, making sure that everyone, your citizens and those that may appear upon your community, know you have zero tolerance for crime. And that's the key.

If you go back and you look at where things started to fall apart for Seattle and Portland and these other areas that are being impacted, New York and everywhere else, you go back and start tracking that, put it on a timeline, what you'll see is they had tolerance for crime. Crime will rise to any level a community will tolerate. If you say, we're no longer going to enforce this crime because perhaps it's a petty crime, or "let this one be okay" crime will rise. Look at Seattle, they have public access areas where you can go, even though meth and everything else, fentanyl is against the law, you can go to a safe zone where you can do drugs. And to make sure you're okay, they have fire rescue people staged there to deploy Narcan, should you overdose. Well, you're tolerating crime.

We've made it very clear from the very moment I became Sheriff; our agency has made it very clear; we target criminals, and we have zero tolerance for crime. The reassurance to our citizens is that we're never going to back down from that. We're not going to stand by and watch them burn down buildings and flip over cars and everything else. That's not going to happen here. If you come here and you do one thing destructive, violent, or that steps outside the boundaries of the law, we're going to lock you up.

**Jen Lee:** Four years ago, I lived in Seattle.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** So you know exactly what I speak of.

**Jen Lee:** I know exactly what you're talking about. And we lived on the outer skirts of Seattle in a nice area, but we would go into Seattle. Everybody did. It was a nice area, fun to walk around, but you could see the homeless epidemic start to take over and feces on the ground. And you think about these people, the business owners invested their money, their time.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Their livelihood.

**Jen Lee:** For them to look around, they probably feel like “where's our support? Nobody is listening to us.”

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** That is exactly right. And the adage of "I've got your back" rings so true here in Brevard County. We have our citizens back. I tell everyone that when I became sheriff, I took an oath of office to stand for our constitution, to stand for our citizens. In fact, I call it the three Cs.  I protect our citizens, our cops and our constitution. And a lot of places have forgotten it. A lot of places have not only forgotten it, they've turned a blind eye to it and are not doing it. And you're seeing massive departures of law enforcement officers. New York had 5,700 law enforcement officers retire in a six-month period. You can't make that up, not in today's recruitment world, you can't make that up. And so you're seeing a city that is slowly degrading into tolerating crime. They will, again say, "well, that's okay" or "that's okay". And homelessness, it's a slippery slope when you're trying to address homelessness. Obviously our first concerns as law enforcement officers and as humans is the compassion for those that find themselves in that situation.

Years ago, homelessness, you envisioned it as someone standing on the side of the road, holding a sign saying, "will work for food, we are hungry." Today, there's a homeless family standing on the side of the road or they're sleeping in a station wagon, or the families lost their home and they're sleeping in a tent and mom spends all of her time trying to help the kids get ready for school. They're taking out a membership at a local gym, so they have a place to go take a bath. So, homelessness has a completely different picture and view today than it did 20 years ago. When you're addressing homelessness, you have to make sure you're going down, taking a multidimensional approach, if you will. You must first look at the compassion side of it and how do we get those that are homeless, that want help, keyword want help.

**Jen Lee:** Absolutely.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** How do we get them into transitional housing? How do we get them back into a stable environment, stable life, get them a job, get them back in the resources they need? That's one approach. The other approach is making sure you're not creating an environment that is so inviting, like places in Seattle and Los Angeles and New York which are now starting to see where they're taking over the streets. The third part of is you never lose sight of the fact that your good law-abiding citizens, your store owners, your business owners, deserve your protection. And not just your protection against them being the victim of crime, your protection against their business being destroyed, their business being inhibited to the point where they can't function, they can't do the things they do.

So, it's obviously a multidimensional approach you have to take. Fortunately, in Brevard County, we have some great organizations that work with us on the homeless initiatives. You have US Veterans for homeless support, Tara Pagliarini - family promise at Brevard, Dorothy Walsh, helping with the veterans in the south end, the Veterans Memorial Center and team. We partnered with them to make sure where we're finding that balance. You're seeing an initiative right now that Melbourne Mayor Paul Alfre has pretty much taken under his wing to clear out all the encampments, bravo to him.

**Jen Lee:** I read that this morning.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Absolutely. Bravo to him and the team for doing it. Those camps breed drug infestation, they breed crime, they go and steal from the surrounding neighborhoods to support their habits and their lifestyle.  Bravo to him, he's taking a multidimensional approach, trying to get those that want help into those areas that can, and the ones that don't and are just violating the law or are destroying property, public or private, they're addressing.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** If you let that crime tolerate, then you'll see it grow and you'll see it get worse. We had a case right there on 520 in Cocoa, right as you come into off of the interstate. A group had gone into private property, building an encampment and it was just trash. You rode by you just literally went, "ah, that's disgusting". The garbage and everything else that was being thrown. It's private property and so we worked with the property owners to do trespass warnings, to have them clean the property up. One of the things about keeping our community safe, is it gives the appearance of a safe community. When you see trash and what not, you don't feel safe. And if you don't feel safe, you start to have concerns. It's a very broad brush you paint the safety of a community with. You have to look at it from a lot of different angles to make sure that you're doing everything possible to keep your community safe.

I think some people have the tendency to think we ride around and wait for a crime to happen, and we respond to it. There's deeper understanding into trying to protect the community and even to the point where we're so involved in our local charities, trying to help them raise money and hosting events and doing the things that we do. I tell everyone that Brevard County is the place it is because of each little component of Brevard County.

If you take one of those out, if you take Family Promise of Brevard out, we're not the same community. You take Children's Home Society out or Children's Advocacy Center, you take whomever out, we're not that same community anymore. And so, it's important to support them to do the things that we do, not just in protecting from crime, but also in making sure we don't have children going hungry on the weekends, making sure that we're able to get our veterans into the help they need across the board. So, it's a broad brush, but I will tell you this, this is the greatest job on the planet.

**Jen Lee:** That's great. Let's talk about the media.

**Jen Lee:** We're very fortunate here in Brevard County, but how has the media affected the perception of our law enforcement the past year?

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Sure. So, the first thing I would say to that is, 99.9% of the media get up every day and go to work and just report. They don't have an agenda; they don't have anything. In fact, our electronic media gets about 30 seconds to tell their story on their feed for that nightly news. So, 99.9% of them do it right, they do it with passion in their heart, just like 99.9% of law enforcement officers do it right every day.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** To frame all the media into one bad apple is not fair, it's not. Conversely you have that other small percentage that does everything they can to stir hate to, break a story that is not even really a story but they think it might, I call it clickbait.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Some of the media that doesn't like me, I become clickbait. How many times can they get somebody to click on an article so they can sell and say, "Oh, look how many times people look at our stuff."  That's unfortunate and it's sad that all the great things law enforcement does today, will be no different. Law enforcement officers throughout Brevard County, whether they're wearing a green uniform like ours, a blue uniform like our police departments, a black uniform like Melbourne Police department, throughout the day lives will be saved.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Kids will be greeted and played football within the yard. Somebody will be stopped from being a victim, throughout the day, but there's never reporting of that. You don't see it. In fact, we started a program through our community outreach, through our social media and we're very blessed. We have a tremendous following of about 368,000 people that follow us on Facebook. We started a show called the Good Stuff where I highlight the little things that these deputies do each and every day to show the citizens, it's not the bad stuff you see. So, when you look at what some of the media has done, and especially the agenda driven media that has a big picture look at, "Oh, we're going to defame the police" or "We're going to defame this elected leader", or “We're going to defame this company" or whatever it is, they have an agenda. That's sad.

And I don't know how they look themselves in the mirror, but they're trying to defame and destroy the brand of law enforcement. And why? Why would you ever want to do that? Law enforcement officers are the men and women that are out there keeping evil away. They're the people that are out there putting their lives on the line for people they never met before. There's a lot of other things you could be angry at than law enforcement officers. But it's what they think is going to sell papers.

I think they're starting to get the message that negative talk about law enforcement is having a counter effect. People are turning the news off now. People, I guarantee you, if we pull just those of us in this room, you probably don't watch the news anymore because you're disgusted by it. And you don't know what you can believe in what you can't. One of the things that I've done with our community outreach and our social media is citizens get to hear it directly from me. I don't rely on somebody else to put our message out. Now they can take our message and go run with it all they want, but citizens get to hear from me what I actually said, what I actually think and what I actually feel. I think they deserve that from their elected leaders. They may not like what I said but they at least get to hear me say it and they get the absolute true version of it, versus a made-up version that has got an agenda behind it.

I mean, if you want to do nothing else, just look at the headlines in the paper. The headline is designed to grab your attention. A lot of times the headline doesn't have a single thing to do with the actual story, the headline has made, grab your attention, and then I'm going to click on that and I'm going to see what it is. So, the media is doing everything they can in some regard to target law enforcement but this profession is much bigger than that, this profession is much stronger than that. And as you're seeing from citizens, citizens aren't going to tolerate it. They'll put up with a lot of stuff, but when you start targeting their peacemakers, they go stand up and that's what our community has done.

**Jen Lee:** Absolutely. The media reporting is honestly what motivated me to find the courage to start telling my story. I didn't want an opinion piece because everybody has an opinion. You can find that anywhere and half the time it's just a bunch of stuff anyway.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** That's exactly right.

**Jen Lee:** I wanted to share real stories because there is emotions involved with that. There is fear involved with that, and that is where our police officers help. I am one voice at this point, it starts with one voice.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** It starts with one voice, just like one vote.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** But you're not one voice because the things that you're doing in this podcast will reach out to thousands and thousands and they'll share it. And they'll understand what victimization is really like. In this episode, what law enforcement's really like, what are our deputies and officers face out there.

I think you have to lump into that as well or group into that, I should say, our schoolteachers, our firefighters. Those are people that are doing the job because they love it. They're not getting rich, they're not. Most firefighters have a second job. They run a landscaping business, something else to take care of their family. School teachers clearly are not getting rich in their job, they're doing it because they love it.

I feel bad for our school teachers. I mean, when I was a kid growing up, my parents were best friends with my teacher. And when the teacher called home and said, Wayne Ivey did wrong, I did wrong. There wasn't a debate, it wasn't the teacher is picking on me. It was the teacher felt the need to call us and you were in trouble. And I can tell you at our household, it was a butt whipping is what followed. And then an apology to the teacher for it. That was the kind of upbringing, but you look at all those professions and the game has changed for it.

**Jen Lee:** When I was a child, I went to a Catholic school. Things were very different; you stared at the teacher to show respect and you raise your hands and you had manners. And like you said, if my parents got a phone call, I was in trouble.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** You were in trouble, that's right.

**Jen Lee:** Yes. You had to write a sentence 50 times, consecutively numbered.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** That's right. I had a third-grade school teacher, her name was Ms. Williams and it's funny how something as far back, I'm 59 now, and my third-grade school teacher, I still remember lessons that Ms. Williams taught me. And she whacked me on the back of the hand one day with a ruler and my family didn't sue. They didn't run down there "why'd you hit my son." They pretty much knew I did something to deserve it. But Ms. Williams was an incredible teacher to me. And again, back then, she wasn't doing it to get rich, she was doing it because she loved it. You look at those things now and you actually understand what our teachers and our law enforcement officers go through.

**Jen Lee:** There are so many times that I look back and I say, "what happened?" And just like with our law enforcement, "what happened?" Where did all of this come from? Because growing up there was such respect for the police officers, for the firemen. In fact, I was taught in first grade, whenever we heard sirens, police sirens, fire, you stopped what you were doing and you said a prayer for the police officers, for the person involved in the accident and for their families, because it affects a whole bunch of people.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** I will tell you this, if I had to put my finger on where I think this country started to decline in values of respect, character, all of those things, it's when parents became scared, feared more of hearing a knock on the door from DCF, than they did of hearing a knock on the door from law enforcement, telling them their kid was in trouble.

Parents, society, sometime back started to rob parents of their ability to be parents. It started to take it from it. As I tell everyone, and my mom gets so mad when she heard me say this, so make sure my mom is not allowed to listen to his podcast. But my mom gets mad, but it's true, my mom was the sheriff, the judge, and the executioner in our household and my father was her backup and her witness to what happened. Mom didn't play, my mom ran our family with an iron fist. She had the support of my father even years later when my mom and dad got a divorce, they divorced their marriage, not their parenting. They were in sync in all of it. And, I wasn't worried about the Sheriff in Green Cove Springs, Florida, didn't even know who he was. I was worried about mama, and we've lost that.

Mama no longer has the all-out authority anymore. Mom has to worry about being in trouble because of the way society has structured things. And what we always tell everybody here is, if you discipline your kid from a reasonable approach, if you take reasonable actions in disciplining your child, we're not coming to arrest you. We're coming to hi five you because you're helping us. You're helping us not have to deal with that kid later. I think America must get back to letting parents be the chief law enforcement officer in their child's life, not me, not the chief of police, but mom and dad needed to be the chief law enforcement officer.

I'll add right to it and while we're on the topic is, we need to get back to being the country that was founded on faith and prayers. I was so proud of our governor, he just created a moment of silence in our schools now, we're headed back in the right direction. I think that's where we've dropped the ball a lot too.

**Jen Lee:** I think so too. It gives me chills because you're right. When I saw prayers being taken out of schools and things like that, it's it fundamentally affects things.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** It really does. I think too, what we're seeing right now is what I call the first generation of everybody gets a trophy. You don't have to work harder than anybody else anymore. Really, you don't have to work hard, you just have to show up, is the kind of the philosophy that's out there now. Before you had to work hard. Jim Valvano, the coach of NC state said one time, "It's not if you work hard, you'll be successful. It's if you don't work hard, you can't be successful." And that's a very profound statement and we've lost. All we do now is just show up and that's good enough.  I think one of my favorite commercials out there, from some time back, was the dad that was at the end of the year barbecue celebration. As he's walking to his van with his kid, he looks at the trophy and he says, “a participation trophy”. He goes, “we won every game, it wasn't even close.” He rips it off, takes a marker, and writes on the trophy “champion.”

We need to remember being champions is important. Doesn't mean you're better than anybody else, it doesn't. It just means you worked harder than anybody else to get there. And I heard a guy say one time, when do we become a champion? Is it when we put the ring on or is it when we made the decision, we were going to put the ring on? And we need to get back to that value in our country.

**Jen Lee:** I know for me I worked hard because I didn't want to ask for help. There's a sense of pride in challenging yourself and it didn't matter if I worked 40, 50, 60 hours a week, you are going to do what you had to do to survive and provide.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** And you always have in your mind, it will get better. It's "I'm going to work myself out of this particular situation I'm in and it will get better and I'm going to make it better." We've got to get back there.

**Jen Lee:** Yeah. I told my parents, "I didn't always have what I wanted growing up, but I always had what I needed."

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** So funny you say that because the way that I build my budget and people have heard me say this many times before, is I look at my wants and my needs. And it's so funny to hear you say it because the example I always give is “I want a Rolex, but I need a watch”. That's how we run our family income, that's how we run our budget at the Sheriff's office. We get what our team absolutely needs and then if there's a way, we get what they want to do it. And those are distinctly very different items, knowing your wants and your needs.

**Jen Lee:** I think we've shifted a little to, “we're going to give you what you want.”  
  
**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Yeah. Well, we've shifted to we're going to give you to make you happy.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** You can't make somebody happy. They have to make themselves happy and they have to work. I get a greater and more profound feeling out of something that we've worked for, something that we've set the bar on, that nobody else has ever done before. Does that mean it's tough? Yeah. Does that mean that you're in unchartered territory? Absolutely. But it also means you're doing something no one else has ever done.

We have a program called Paws and Stripes College, where we take rescue dogs and teach them to be child comfort dogs, to work with the victims of crime, to help us get the child to open to us and tell us what happened. We started that program because a young man by the name of Jesse Holton, walked into my office, said, "Sheriff, I want to pilot this program. It's never been done anywhere else in the country." And I said, "Bravo let's do it." If it's never been done before, we want to be the first to do it.  Today that program exists to where we now take rescue dogs out of our shelter and we train them to be child comfort dogs, and we give them to law enforcement agencies across the country. All because one guy had the idea to do something nobody else had ever done.

**Jen Lee:** That's great. I love that. So, speaking of kids, my boys are grown and they're both Marines.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** We thank them for their service, thank you.

**Jen Lee:** When they were little boys, they loved to dress up as firemen and police officers. Now as a mom..

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** A little disappointing about the firemen, but that's all right.

**Jen Lee:** But those boots were great, they didn't have laces.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** I think that was mom. I don't think that was them.

**Jen Lee:** That was me. I was like, "A fireman. All right, here you go. You want the yellow boots or the red boots, take your pick?" But a child today that comes to you and says, "You know what, I want to be a police officer, I want to be in law enforcement. What would you tell them?"

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Absolutely. “Go for it!” I would tell them this is, and nothing against any other profession, certainly nothing against, our educators, our firefighters or anything of that nature. But being a law enforcement officer is the greatest job on the planet, even with what we see happening in society today. To come into this job, knowing that there are those out there, a very small percentage of what I call vocal ankle biters that just like to make noise, even dealing with that, this is the greatest job on the planet. It's the most rewarding job on the planet. It's one of those jobs where in one moment, in one day, in one shift, you can change and impact 20 people's lives. There's nothing else out there that gives you that opportunity. In one day, you may have to arrest somebody and the way you do it professionally and the way you handle it, and the way you not only take them to jail, but get them some additional resources, changes their life.

Maybe the day you respond to a car wreck and apply a tourniquet that saves somebody's life.

It may be the day you find a bunch of ducklings in a storm sewer and you pull them out and save their lives. In one day, you will have that opportunity and every shift you go on. And so, it may just be you save somebody's life by pulling them over and saying, "Why are you texting and driving? You're putting your life at risk. You're putting everybody's life at risk." So, I would say, “go for it!, do it!”

I have two sons that are law enforcement officers. And it's ironic, on the way back from Pensacola last night, I stopped and had dinner with my son in Tallahassee and he had his daughter there and she's six and she wants to be a police officer. And he's a state trooper, my son is. My youngest boy is a Deputy for Seminole County and I watched the joy they have in their job. Is it frustrating? When you're standing outside in a hundred-degree weather directing traffic for three hours, do you wonder if maybe you should have gone into some other business? Of course, you do. But when you sit down in your car after just pulling somebody out of a burning car, you're glad you picked that career. So, man go for it.

**Jen Lee:** You said something that's important and I said in one of my previous episodes. I told on myself. The first ticket I ever got was an illegal U-turn on my way to a sales call. I'm directionally challenged. I get lost going into a straight line. So I saw the "Do not make an illegal U-turn" sign and I did the illegal turn, and got pulled over. I said in that episode, sometimes the police officer is not just protecting us, but they're also protecting others.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** That's right.

**Jen Lee:** We forget that because we're so focused on, "oh my God, I got a ticket…

Honestly, somebody was making a right-hand turn at the same time I was doing my illegal U-turn. There was no accident, but there could have been.

**Jen Lee:** And I learned my lesson.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Well, I got to be honest with you. I noticed one thing I picked up on is, “the first tickets you got”. That was the first thing that caught my eye, so you've had more.

But you're right, we try and address issues as they need addressing. Something that's very egregious and that type of thing, obviously, there’s a penalty for that. Sometimes you can pull somebody over and have the same effect by showing them some examples of things that they could have caused. I stopped people all the time on 95, it's a racetrack out there and I tell them, "Listen, I'm the Sheriff and if the Sheriff has to stop you, you're driving pretty badly." And I always tell them, "You're not going to get to where you're going safely and you're going to harm somebody along the way. And your family is going to be hurting. Their family is going to be hurt.”

Sometimes that has a positive effect and other times there are people that are mad from the minute you pull them over. It is what it is, we deal with the demeanor that we get when we approach the car. Traffic stops are some of the most dangerous things that our law enforcement officers do out there. And it's also one of the most important things they do and making sure that everybody's driving safely.

**Jen Lee:**  I was going to ask you, what is one of the most important calls that you attend to. And what I will say is that I tried to play sheriff in the vehicle when I'm driving with my husband and tell him he's driving too fast, but he just doesn't quite believe me or see my badge or something. Do you have a suggestion on how I can get him to slow down?

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** What I would say is, “just let him do what he wants.” Lol I mean, I didn't know it was playing sheriff, I just thought it was, because my wife does same thing. She just tells me you're doing this; you're doing that.

The worst mistake I ever made was and I'll give a shameless plug for this program. We have a program called the Teen Driver Challenge and kids that have their learner's permit go through this and they learn everything in this. Worst mistake I ever made was sending our two boys, we have four kids, but our two youngest ones went to that and benefited from it. But it also was the worst mistake I ever made because they would be in the car with me after having attended, and they'd be like, “you're not supposed to be doing that.” Finally, I'm like, "okay, I'm never sending anybody else to that program." It's a great program because they learn from it.

If you haven't had a chance, if you have a teenager, that's driving, look at the Teen Driver Challenge, go to [brevardsheriff.com](http://brevardsheriff.com/) and check out the Teen Driver Challenge. It's completely free and actually we have parents that come watch their kids go through it and ask us, do we have one for adults? So, we're probably at some point going to come up with the adult driver challenge.

**Jen Lee:** Sounds good. Let me ask you this speaking of kids, do you think if they were able to experience even a couple of hours sitting in court, as people are brought in and they plead guilty or not guilty and either get taken away to jail for 10 days or whatever or maybe do a ride along, do you think that might bring a little reality to a teenager's thought process of, "Okay, this is real. This is not what we see on TV."?

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Yeah. Going to court is an eye-opening experience. From a lot of different aspects. One, you get to see the harshness, the reality of people losing their freedoms. People being sentenced to prison sentences and time in jail or probation, whatever it is, but it's a great learning experience because you also get to see how the criminal justice system works.

You get to see the scales of justice at work. You get to see that; I believe America has the greatest criminal justice system in the world. The fairest, the most balanced but you also have to be a little careful. I'll use Scared Straight as an example and I go back to something we were discussing earlier, taking a multi-pronged approach.

Anytime you take a single dimension approach to something you won't be successful. And, I'll use the Scared Straight program. I'm not a fan of Scared Straight. Scared Straight did one thing, scared the kid. And once they got past the fear, there was nothing to stop them. So, we have a program called Brevard Attitude Modification (BAM) and it's designed to be a little flick on the head to the kid. I tell parents, I don't want the judge to sentenceyour child to this because they're already in trouble. I want you to sentence so that we can keep them from getting in trouble. The goal is for them to never see a judge, not to have a judge send them to a program, so they don't see a judge again. We have this BAM program, it's completely free to our citizens. We take 10-year-old to 17-year-olds and we split it between male and female attendees. And it's a great program.

In that program, what they get is, they get the court experience. In fact, that's how it starts. It starts that morning with a judge sentencing them to a 12-hour day and in the BAM facility. They get the process experience; they are booked into the BAM facility. They have to change into their inmate clothing. They have to make their bunks. In that process, they get to meet our team that is kind of a bootcamp type approach. Then they go in and they meet the Chain Gang and the Chain Gang doesn't do what Scared Straight does.  Chain Gang doesn't come in and yell at them and threaten them and bully them. Chain Gang actually sits down with them and has a good comforting talk about "you don't want to be here, this is not the place you want to be." And they have a very candid approach.

And it's funny when we were designing, BAM, I actually try to do some unique things to think outside the box. In fact, I tell our team, I don't want you to think outside the box. I want you to think outside the warehouse where the box is at, because that's where we get the real good stuff. And so, one of the things we did was we brought the Chain Gang in and asked them to help us design the BAM program. And my initial vision was for the Chain Gang to "Get in here! Get your bunk made!" that type of approach. And the Chain Gang talked me out of it and said, "Sheriff, we think this will be a better approach." Who better to listen to than them? What would have maybe kept them from going down that path?

So, we put you through that, you take a tour of the jail, you eat jail food, which for me would do it. You make me eat one of those meals out of the jail, I'm never committing crime ever in my life. They go on a tour of the morgue to see what death really looks like. And then, when they come back, we ask, "Are you ready to make good decisions?" In fact, there's two big, giant arrows on the floor; one says bad decisions, one says good decisions. We stand in the middle of it and we say, "Are you ready?" And they say, "I'm going to make good decisions in my life." Then we take them into a completely different environment. It's a bright environment where we teach them how to do a resume, where we teach them about picking the right friends, where we teach them about dress. We actually have some local businesses that will give them a job if they're old enough, no questions asked. They want to get them in the work field, to get them in the force. And what we try to do is show them what happens when you make bad choices and what happens when you make good choices. So, we take that multidimensional approach to it, not just giving them the scared part, but giving them the celebrating part as well.

**Jen Lee:** That's great. I'm so glad you had the opportunity to mention that program.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** So if you want to learn more about it go to [brevardsheriffs.com](http://brevardsheriffs.com/), look for Brevard Attitude Modification.

**Jen Lee:** I have one last question.It's kind of a little bit off the topic of BAM, but I like it nonetheless.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Every time you say you have kids; I worry that you're going to ask me to take them and I'm not doing that. I've done my time there.

**Jen Lee:** No. One is out of the country, but if you could get him back here so I could visit by all means you're on it.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Well, when he gets through with his time serving our country, tell him to come serve our community. I'll hire him as a deputy, him or her.

**Jen Lee:** Oh, absolutely. He loves it. Both of my boys love it. So, I'm so proud of them. And to hear what they have gone through is amazing.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** As you should be.

**Jen Lee:** My husband is Chinese and so there is heightened awareness of crime in the black, brown, Jewish, Asian communities.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Right.

**Jen Lee:** If my husband were to walk up to you on the street and say, you know what, I don't really feel safe, what would you say to him and followed up by what action?

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** If timing was not an issue, I would play this podcast for him. I would tell him all the great things about our community and how we work so hard to make everybody safe, to make sure that everyone knows. I go back to what I said earlier, we're a community that not only puts our citizens first and making sure they are safe, but we also do the same thing with our animals. We take that deep dive into everyone deserves to be safe, whether they're homeless, whether they live in a mansion and everywhere in between regardless of ethnicity, regardless of life experience and anything else. The fundamental key to happiness is feeling safe.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** It really is. And so, we talked to them about the different things that we do to make sure that everyone feels safe and the balance that we go through.

I would talk about the diversity of our community.

I would talk about how our community has served as a model for other communities. If you go back in the past year and look at everything we've gone through, from COVID to the protests and riots associated with defund the police and everything else. If you look at how Brevard County responded to each one of those crises, we were a model for other communities. We really were. We had candlelight vigils, we had forums to talk about things, we had a response plan to COVID.

I mean, even go back before when the presidential debates and everything else were going on, people were protesting for one candidate or another. All we did as law enforcement is we made sure everybody was safe. We didn't get into the weeds of who you're supporting, who you're not supporting, you do your thing over there. They're going to do their thing over here. And we're going to be the thinner green line between a little bit of chaos if you will. So, I would just remind him of all those things. And then I would probably ask him the biggest question of all of it. Why did you pick Brevard County to live in? And if you look at that from a backwards answer, because he knew he would be safe.

**Jen Lee:** And my husband does feel safe just for the record. He's got me.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** He's got you. Yeah.

**Jen Lee:** So, before I wrap up, is there anything else you would like to tell our listeners and the citizens of Brevard County?

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** Just thank you. I mean, we've talked about it a lot. We've hit on how incredible this community treats its law enforcement officers, but I don't think our citizens realize the magnitude of what that means to our team. I don't know that they truly understand how much that means to each of our team members to have someone show them how much they're appreciated. And in any walk of life, being appreciated is one of the things that we strive for. In any walk of life being appreciated is one of the things that makes you thankful you pick the career you did, or thankful you picked the spouse you did, or thankful you picked the team you did. Whatever it is that knowing that that you're appreciated.

And then the last part is, where the success we're having and lowering our crime rate. As I said, we've lowered it by 47% in the past eight years. That success is directly attributable to the partnership we have with our citizens. We are an agency of 1700 people. But when you consider the partnership we have with our citizens, that's a force multiplier of 600,000. And so we have 600,000 people right here that come from all different walks of life, all different dynamics, all different political beliefs and religious beliefs and everything else that all have the common mission of making sure Brevard County is the great place it is.

**Jen Lee:** That's great. I want to thank you so much for being here today, answering questions of mine and I know citizens of our county have similar questions as well. I'm going to launch this episode on Thursday, July 1st, just in time for the 4th of July weekend, give people something to listen to, to think about. I think it will be really special. So, I appreciate you participating.

**Sheriff Wayne Ivey:** I want to invite them and everybody out, if you're going to launch it then, July 3rd, this year, the 4th of July falls on a Sunday. So out of respect for our churches and people's attendance in church, we're going to do our Independence Day parade on Saturday. And it's going to be from 10am-12pm, right out in front of the Merritt Island Mall. When COVID was happening, we didn't want to not hold our parade. And so, we went to a new format of doing it as a static parade so that people could drive by and see the floats. And we were able to social distance.  If anything, good came out of COVID, it was, we found a new way to do a parade because literally thousands of people get to drive by. And they're all dressed in their patriotic colors and they're holding signs and they're driving by on 520 right in front of the Merritt Island Mall. And so, we're going to continue to do it that way for years to come. It's actually better on the people that are participating in the parade, the walkers and everything else. So, July 3rd, 10am-12pm come out and help us celebrate the independence of our country.

**Jen Lee:** That's great. Thank you so much.  I'm going to use one of your quotes, "It takes a community to protect a community." I think that's really important. I hope our message today is one of unity, strength, peace and love. Thank you for listening to *I Need Blue*. This is Jen Lee joined by Sheriff Wayne Ivey. Visit [www.ineedblue.net](http://www.ineedblue.net/), subscribe, and you can find all of our episodes on there as well as your other favorite podcast platforms, such as Spotify, Apple, Pandora. Thank you and God bless all of those who keep us safe.