

# Ft. Pierce Police Department

## News Release

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**R. Sean Baldwin**

*Chief of Police*



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### Police academy recruit finds gun possibly connected to recent homicide

**FORT PIERCE** – Even after Mark Steele told his partner three times that he found the gun, she still didn't believe him. Erika Gerstner had to see for herself.

Steele, 20, of Hobe Sound and a student in the Indian River State College Law Enforcement Academy Class 6, discovered the gun in some bushes near the mailbox of 1211 Raymond Avenue, an abandoned home about a block northeast of where the shooting occurred, ending the search after about 45 minutes.

"He was so excited, dancing around and giving high fives," said Gerstner, 19; of Fort Pierce is also a student in the Law Enforcement Academy Class 6.

Steele and Gerstner, and 14 other current and former law enforcement academy track students volunteered to help detectives search for the gun used in the murder of Herby Innocent, 22, of Fort Pierce. Detectives believed murder suspect, Jeremiah Minatee, 19, of Fort Pierce, discarded the gun when he fled from the scene of the crime in the 1200 block of Ormond Avenue on Friday, June 26 at about 10:30 p.m. Minatee was arrested early Sunday morning.

"We were prepared to do whatever it took to make sure no kids or another criminal found that gun," said Jamie Rediker, 26, of Okeechobee and a member of Law Enforcement Academy Class 6.

Beginning at about 9:15 a.m. Wednesday, eight, two-member teams began searching in a northeastern direction from 1217 Ormond Avenue, the location of the shooting. The students focused their search in an eight block area, said Detective John Fasanello, who is assigned to the case along with lead Detective Aleita Smith.

Carl Judish, 38, of Sebastian, who was the seventh person to respond to a text message sent by Richard Dewey, the Academy Track Program assistant professor, said "This is a great opportunity for anyone going into law enforcement. This is the meat and potatoes of law enforcement."

As word of the news about the recovery of a gun spread through the department, an impromptu celebration followed and congratulations were exchanged.

"Finding a gun that matches the description in a location so close to the homicide is very meaningful for the case," said Detective Sergeant Dennis McWilliams. "Not only does it give us the opportunity to collect physical evidence we would not have had, but it also gives us the peace of mind that this weapon is off the streets and will not be used to kill anyone else".

Other Law Enforcement Academy Track students that participated in the search:

**Class 6 students:** Daniel Abaira, Jennifer Baldino, Justin Gitto, Jamie McIntyre, Carl Jurdisch, Shane Hicks, Matt Dietrich, Kevin Morin, Michael Cooper and Greg Dampier

**Class 5:** Jesse Harris

**Police Academy:** Corina Garcia and Melissa Towle

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