

# CITY OF CORAL GABLES

## - MEMORANDUM -

**TO:** ASSISTANT CHIEF MICHAEL MILLER  
ASC CHAIRPERSON

**DATE:** March 4, 2015

**FROM:** SGT. DEAN WELLINGHOFF  
CID 

**SUBJECT:**  
NOMINATION FOR  
DETECTIVE OF THE QUARTER

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I would like to nominate Detective Brad Baena for Officer of the Month for February 2015 based on the following case:

In December of 2013, Detective Baena was assigned a case reference shoplifting which occurred at Neiman Marcus in the Village of Merrick Park. Detective Baena issued a BOLO for the subject captured on video surveillance and was able to subsequently arrest three offenders and charge them accordingly.

Detective Baena believed that one of the offenders may have had information on an organized retail theft group operating in Coral Gables and throughout Miami Dade County. He then began to establish a rapport with the offender. Detective Baena met with the offender on many occasions and was able to convince the offender to become a Confidential Source (CS) in furtherance of identifying different individuals / businesses involved in organized retail theft crime in Coral Gables and Miami Dade County.

In February of 2014, Detective Baena coordinated a meeting with the CS, members of the Miami Dade State Attorney's Office, Miami Dade Public Defender's Office, South Miami Police Department, and the Judicial Advocate for the Coral Gables Police Department. The CS agreed to take Detectives on location to miscellaneous businesses in order to identify parties involved in organized retail theft crimes. One such location was Salon Ensueno located at 1040 West Flagler Street.

The CS was then documented as a CI and began to provide useful information to Detective Baena as to the involvement of the owner of Salon Ensueno, Pedro Baro, in dealing in stolen property. Having previously worked with members of the Miami Dade County Police Department's, Hammocks District Organized Retail Theft Crime Squad, Detective Baena initiated contact with them due to their expertise in this field and requested their assistance. He also enlisted the aid of the Strategic Initiatives Team as well as other members of the Property Crimes Unit in an effort to conduct a long term investigation into the criminal enterprise operating out of Salon Ensueno. Officer Hector Diaz from the SIT volunteered to act in an undercover capacity as a "thief" wanting to sell stolen merchandise to Mr. Baro at Salon Ensueno.

Throughout the next several months, Detective Baena coordinated with MDPD, Homeland Security Investigations, Miami Dade SAO, and other CGPD personnel as well as officials with various retail establishments such as Target, JC Penney, Macys, etc. He was able to convince these retailers to provide us with enough merchandise to sell to Mr. Baro to build a strong case against Mr. Baro.

Through the diligent efforts of Detective Baena and Officer Hector Diaz, several controlled sales of "stolen" merchandise to Mr. Baro were made at the salon. This was an extremely tedious and lengthy

investigation which required great attention to detail and coordination with multiple law enforcement agencies. As a result of these efforts, search warrants were obtained for Salon Ensueno and the residence of Mr. Baro. In addition, an arrest warrant was issued for Mr. Baro.

On February 25, 2015, under Detective Baena's direction, law enforcement agents from CGPD, MDPD, and HSI conducted a coordinated effort to take Mr. Baro into custody and to execute the two search warrants. Mr. Baro was arrested at his residence without incident. As a result of the searches of Mr. Baro's residence and business, over \$116,000 in US currency was recovered and impounded and tens of thousands of dollars in merchandise was recovered.

Detective Baena is deserving of this award because, rather than simply closing a shoplifting case by arrest and moving on to the next investigation, his intuition told him that there was more to this subject that deserved further investigation. As a result of his initiative and rapport with members from several other law enforcement agencies, Detective Baena was able to take a major "fence" off of the street and seize a large sum of cash and merchandise. Due to his attention to detail and his thorough investigation, he was also able to present a strong case for Dealing in Stolen Property to the Miami Dade State Attorney's Office.

It should also be noted that Detective Baena's work ethic day in and day out is second to none. He conducts thorough investigations and puts tremendous effort into every investigation. He has proven to be an exemplary Detective.

I would also ask that Officer Hector Diaz be recognized for his part in this investigation. Officer Diaz also has proven to be an exemplary employee who is committed to the mission of this organization. In fact, due to Officer Diaz's excellent undercover skills in this case, the Department of Homeland Security Investigations has asked to use him in an undercover capacity for future cases such as this one. Officer Diaz made himself available any and every time that Detective Baena asked him to and he did an outstanding job.

Reviewed By:

  
A/Lt. Cuong Nguyen  
Criminal Investigations Division

Date:



  
A/Major Jesse Medina  
Criminal Investigations Division



  
Assistant Chief Michael Miller  
Awards Selection Committee Chairperson



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