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Gilchrist County Rotarians learn school safety methods



(from left)
Rotary President Aaron Haynes, Rotarian Rob Rankin, Sheriff Bobby Schultz, GCSO Lt. Clint Anderson and GCSO Sgt. Edwin Jenkins pause for a photo opportunity.

**Story and Photo By Holly Creel, Gilchrist County Rotarian
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TRENTON -- Gilchrist County Rotary Club meetings just keep getting better!

The turnout on Monday (Aug. 27) at the Woman's Club was terrific! Members and guests came to hear Rotarian and Gilchrist County Superintendent of Schools Rob Rankin and Sheriff Bobby Schultz speak about the efforts the Gilchrist County School District and Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office to do everything possible to make this county's schools safe for students, visitors, teachers, administrators and other staff members.

Superintendent Rankin noted that the focus changed Feb. 14 with the shooting of students at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. Increased security, training and mental health support are just a few of the measures being implemented to improve safety in Florida schools.

A mental health director who is knowledgeable about resources outside of the school system has been employed. An additional GCSO School Resource Officer (SRO) has been added and GCSO Lt. Clint Anderson will serve as the SRO supervisor.

This additional officer provides an armed officer at each school in Gilchrist County. Lt. Edwin Jenkins explained the rigorous selection and training in firearms and defensive tactics required for a responder in the Sheep Dog program.

The Sheep Dog program is the Gilchrist County version for what is known throughout the state as the Guardian Program. This is a program designed to have armed guardians who are not teachers watch over public schools.

What was most impressive is how the School Board and Sheriff's Office work together, shoulder-to-shoulder, to do all within their power to keep the Gilchrist County schools safe.

Working together and watching out for each other as family is one of the attributes that makes Gilchrist County such a special place.

Gilchrist County is not immune to safety issues, but it is heartening to know Sheriff Schultz and Superintendent Rankin are doing their best to keep the county safe. As Rankin and Schultz concluded, there will always be a risk -- but they urge everyone to do all that can be done to prepare and train, and to pray. That will provide the best opportunity to attend school and feel safe in a world of uncertainty.

Going along with this informative and heartfelt meeting, was a delicious meal served by Chef Jason of Chef's Table Bistro. Fried chicken, garden salad, creole rice and beans and mini cupcakes were enjoyed during lunch.