

FEBRUARY 6, 2023



County and Community Leaders Launch New Public Safety Initiative

Clay County Signal 35 Fund

Green Cove Springs (FL) – Today, county and community leaders launch a unique public safety initiative – Clay County’s new **Signal 35 Fund**.

In times of serious trouble or emergency, Clay County citizens know they can call their local public safety organizations for help. We all count on the personnel, both sworn and civilian members, who embody local law enforcement, fire-rescue and emergency management teams in Clay County.

But who do these men and women call when they have their own emergency?

Announcing the **Signal 35 Fund**, a new privately funded public safety initiative in Clay County named after the county’s radio call code for “officer needs assistance”. Created by local leaders and community sponsors, the goal of this initiative is to cut through red tape sometimes present after a serious incident, so emergencies faced by Clay County’s public servants are addressed quickly – literally on the same day or overnight.

The **Signal 35 Fund** will function as a not-for-profit organization. The board members will help raise funds in the community and stand ready to provide those funds when unique emergency needs suddenly hit but expenses aren’t covered swiftly enough by other funds or benefits. In consultation with board advisors (ex: Sheriff, Police Chiefs, Fire/Rescue Chiefs), they’ll determine assistance awards, manage the not-for-profit’s budget and address needs as they are brought to the board’s attention.

The Clay County Signal 35 Board

- **Clay County Sheriff (Ret.) Rick Beseler**
- **Former State Senator and Commissioner of Education Jim Horne**
- **CEO of W.J. Sapp and Son, Judson Sapp**
- **First District Trustee, Florida Professional Firefighters, Scotty Taylor**
- **Owner of W.J. Sapp & Son, Jud Sapp**
- **Attorney John D. Horne**
- **Clerk of Court and Comptroller Office’s PIO Mary Justino**
- **Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook (Board Advisor)**

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This is the Signal 35 Fund's mission.....

To respond quickly with ready-to-allocate resources when unique emergency needs hit our community's public servants.

To efficiently manage and fairly award contributed funds to public safety agency employees and their immediate family members in their time of need.

To come to the rescue of those whose life's work is to rescue us.

The need is real.

Each year, between 140-160 officers die in the line of duty in the United States and thousands more are injured on the job while serving their communities. Firefighters, paramedics and emergency management personnel face a similar fatality rate nationally, especially during times of pandemic. In addition to the dangers inherent in their chosen careers, they also face the same sudden emergencies we all do such as house fires, sudden deaths in the family, natural disasters and major health crisis.

Here are some scenarios to consider:

- A sheriff's office deputy is shot in the line of duty while apprehending a suspect. His wife left by car three days before to visit her mother in New York – she needs to get on the next flight out NOW so she can be by her husband's side at the hospital, but they don't have the funds to buy the plane ticket.
- An Emergency Communications Officer works the 911 Center through multiple shifts during a tropical storm. While she is taking calls from panicked citizens, she is unaware that her own home is flooded, and her belongings are lost.
- A fireman's daughter is struck by a car on her way to school. The child must receive treatment in a specialty hospital located 3 hours away – her parents forgo paying other household bills so they can afford the gas it takes to travel to and from the hospital.
- A long-time civilian employee of the police department loses her home to fire after lightning strikes the roof. A single mom, she doesn't have the funds for first-and-last month's rent on an apartment for her and her kids, so they're in a cramped hotel room.

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Helping is Easy

Go to Signal35.org and click on the “donate” button on the home page – then look for this:



Every donation, regardless of the amount, is appreciated and will be put towards this cause. An online receipt of each tax-deductible donation is generated as well as links that can be shared with friends, families and colleagues.

Who We Serve

- Fire/Rescue Service
- Law Enforcement
- Corrections
- 911 Telecommunications
- Fire/Arson Investigators
- Forensics
- Flight Medics
- Retirees, Recruits, Cadets
- Immediate Family Members

*It is the goal of the Signal 35 board to raise \$50,000 in the first year. Fundraising has begun and donations are already coming in.

The Signal 35 Fund board challenges everyone in our community to get involved.

Now that a spotlight is on this very serious need in our public safety community, we need even more leaders and concerned citizens to join the effort.

Join us.

Contact Information

- Signal 35 Board Member Judson Sapp at (904) 904-717-2533
- Signal 35 PIO Mary Justino at (904) 657-6132 (text please)

General Email: info@signal35.org

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