



July 28, 2014

Chief Diane Hobley-Burney  
Fort Pierce Police Department

Dear Chief Hobley-Burney,

I am writing today to tell you about the outstanding performance of your officers while it is still fresh in my mind. All too often people are quick to complain and slow to praise. This letter is in praise of the teamwork, helpfulness and swift action of the Fort Pierce Police officers who responded to today's fire alarm at the A.E. Backus Museum & Gallery.

At approximately 10:20 a.m. today, the Museum's fire alarm went off. The building began to rapidly fill with smoke and the staff was unable to determine its source. We called 911 and the Museum's staff began to implement our crisis evacuation plan. We cannot wait to see how bad a fire is before we spring into action. We must empty the building.

Officer Brian MacNaught was the first to arrive on the scene, a full ten minutes before the fire department arrived. He saw our staff hurriedly carrying out artwork and he immediately called for backup. Before anyone else arrived, Mac Naught pitched right in.

The officers who responded to the call for backup were officers: MacNaught, Sena, Rene, Louis, McWilliams, Nieves, Garcia and Stokes. I cannot praise them highly enough. What I saw was community policing at its finest. Some provided security for the paintings we were removing from the building while others carried out the artwork. Every one of them was exemplary in their attitude and efficiency, willingly accepting direction from Museum staff and lending every possible assistance. Quite honestly, they were fantastic.

As it turned out, the fire came from an air conditioning unit and turned out not to be very serious. Had the fire been in the roof it could have been a disaster. Without your officers pitching in, it would have taken our staff much more time to evacuate the building, an exhausting task on a cool day let alone in the summer heat. Once the coast was clear, your officers helped us carry the artwork back in, out of the heat and sun and into a secure space.

I know that you are new to the area and have yet to have a tour of the Museum so perhaps the potential gravity of a fire in the Museum may not be readily apparent. The conservative value of the artwork evacuated is well in excess of \$5 million. Much of it is irreplaceable and represents some of the finest Florida art in existence.

The Museum is grateful to the officers that came to our aid and I hope you will share this letter with them.

Sincerely,

Kathleen P. Fredrick  
Executive Director