

Hillsborough deputies honor special PDQ employee

Hillsborough deputies honored Sam Piazza for the help he's given to the sheriff's office.

Author: Bobby Lewis

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It's been five years since Sam Piazza first slipped on a [PDQ](#) apron. It's felt like home ever since.

"I love my job," the 28-year-old said. "It's been almost six years."

The proud PDQ-er has Down Syndrome. He spends his time behind the counter at the chicken restaurant prepping ingredients for dishes. He also has befriended many of the customers at the Carrollwood location, including many men and women in uniform.



Sam Piazza, holding plaque, is honored by Hillsborough deputies at his job at PDQ.

"I'm a better person for knowing him, for sure," said Hillsborough County sheriff's Deputy Tyler Wilson. "He's very well connected. I joke it's like walking around with the mayor."

Every time you walk around with him somebody knows him, shakes hands with him, says hello to him.”

On Wednesday morning, the [HCSO sent a dozen deputies](#) to honor Piazza with a plaque, a “token of our gratitude” as Wilson called it, for all the help he’s shown to the department over the years.

“You deserve it,” Wilson said as he hugged Piazza.

A few tears followed.

“When I first got that plaque, it was the best thing that ever happened to me,” said Piazza.



Piazza took it upon himself to meet with sheriff’s deputies, to help them better understand how to interact with people like him. Piazza has helped deputies by explaining how many people with Down Syndrome prefer to talk with strangers in groups. The department uses his lessons as a guide when interacting with people in the community.

“What makes him special is he does a lot of stuff with his family,” said his 10-year-old cousin, Ellie Hunziker.

The restaurant chain even named an ice cream sandwich after Piazza. The ‘Sweet Sammy’ is vanilla ice cream between two gingersnap cookies.

It’s another example of a sweet honor for a beloved member of the community.