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Police Officers to Be Honored With Valor, Life Saving and Merit Awards

Ceremony Marks End of National Police Week

HARRISONBURG – Three Harrisonburg law enforcement officers who were the targets of a man wanting a shootout with police will be recognized Saturday with the Harrisonburg Police Department’s Medal of Valor.

The honors will be conferred at a banquet event sponsored by the Harrisonburg Police Foundation. At the ceremony, six other officers will receive Life Saving Medals, one a Distinguished Action Medal, and nine will presented an Award of Excellence.

Police Chief Steve Sellers explains the significance of the awards: “The employees being recognized embody the best attributes of the law enforcement profession. “Some took life threatening actions to protect themselves or others, some clearly saved lives, some promoted community service and others simply provided unparalleled service. They have given their all, either in a sustained manner or through one specific moment of crisis, making Harrisonburg a safer place to live and work.”

The Medal of Valor will be presented to Officers Justin Kline and Dwayne Jones, and to former officer and now Virginia State Trooper Joshua Joseph. The three were involved in an exchange of gunfire at with a man involved in a traffic stop who later was wounded and captured. The man was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to prison.

Life Saving Medals will be awarded to Officers Mark Stutes and Brian Jones, who observed a mechanic at the City Transportation facility being dragged beneath a runaway bus. They managed to stop the bus and rescue the worker.



Lt. Todd Miller earned the Life Saving Medal for his actions on Interstate 81, where he found an unconscious woman lying in the travel lanes. After she was removed from the roadway, she regained consciousness and tried running back into traffic. Miller, with the assistance of a passing truck driver, prevented further harm to the woman.

Life Saving Medals were also conferred on Sgt. Rachel Hammer and Officer Alex Piper and Cody Burgoon for their actions in helping to save the life of a man who was bleeding profusely from self-inflicted stab wounds to the neck and abdomen.

The Department's Distinguished Service Medal was awarded to Officer Sarah Campbell, the officer first on the scene of the incident in which the armed man stabbed himself. She was able to temporarily disable the man and initiate life-saving measures, even though he violently resisted and tried to fight her off.

Nine officers will receive the Department's Award of Excellence, which recognizes exemplary performance and superior execution of their duties in day-to-day duty assignments. Those to be honored are Sgt. Philip Read and Officers Greg Deeds, Patrick Smoot, David Hanlon, Kevin Argiro, Colton Wetherell, Paywand Sofy, Dylan Johnson, and former Officer Joshua Joseph.

ATTACHMENT: Summaries of the citations for the award recipients.



MEDAL OF VALOR

Officer Justin Kline

Officer Dwayne Jones

Officer Joshua Joseph

Late on February 26, 2017, Officer Joshua Joseph observed a vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed and sought to initiate a traffic stop. The driver refused to yield and continued to drive erratically, disregarding red lights and stop signs through the downtown business district.

Officer Joseph broke off pursuit and attempted to follow and record the vehicle's registration, but lost sight of the vehicle. About 30 minutes later, Officer Joseph saw the same vehicle again. He radioed ECC and requested additional units to assist with a traffic stop.

Officers Justin Kline and Dwayne Jones responded and the vehicle was stopped. As Officer Kline exited his cruiser, the suspect driver got out of his vehicle with a revolver in hand and began shooting. Rounds shattered the windshield and struck the spotlight of Officer Kline's cruiser. The shooter then fired at Officers Joseph and Jones, before turning and running.

Joined by Virginia State Police Trooper Scott Lam, the officers pursued the suspect to the rear of a residence, where they found him hiding in a boat and pointing his gun at the officers. When the man ignored orders to drop his weapon, Officer Jones fired to eliminate the threat.

The subsequent investigation revealed the suspect had told family members that he wanted to have a, "shootout" with law enforcement. The suspect pled guilty to attempted murder of four police officers and other charges and was sentenced to 92 years in prison, with all but 45 years suspended.

DISTINGUISHED ACTION MEDAL

Officer Sarah Campbell

Officer Sarah Campbell was dispatched to investigate a man armed with a long pole or shovel and large kitchen knife. She located him holding a knife to his neck. When she tried to engage him, he ran. Officer Campbell pursued and lost sight of the man, but heard him scream. She found him behind a building. He had stabbed himself and was bleeding profusely from wounds in the neck and abdomen. Concerned that he was going to kill himself, she deployed her Taser.

With the man on the ground, Officer Campbell applied pressure to his wounds to stop the bleeding. The subject was combative and tried to pull her hands from his neck while yelling "just



let me die.” Even though Officer Campbell was sprayed in the face, mouth, and eye with the subject’s blood, she continued to render aid and eventually was assisted by other officers.

LIFE SAVING MEDAL

Sgt. Rachel Hammer
Officer Alex Piper
Officer Cody Burgoon

Officers Alex Piper and Cody Burgoon responded with Officer Sarah Campbell to the report of a disturbed individual. They were joined by their squad supervisors, Sgt. Rachel Hammer and Corp. Philip Wonderley.

Officer Burgoon saw the man stab himself in the neck four or five times and saw Officer Campbell deploy her Taser. With the subject on the ground and violently resisting attempts to help him, Officer Burgoon kicked the knife away, and helped restrain the man and render aid.

Sergeant Hammer arrived to see Officer Campbell attempting to stem the copious flow of blood from the man’s neck and abdomen. She concentrated on the abdominal wound while also restraining the man’s hands.

On his arrival, Officer Piper utilized the contents of his Go-Bag, particularly QuikClot, to stanch the flow of blood, then located additional supplies of QuikClot for use on the subject’s wounds. He then joined in restraining him.

This team of officers worked efficiently and effectively to gain control of the subject, provided critical care that stopped the loss of large amounts of blood, and turned him over to rescue personnel.

Officer Mark Stutes
Officer Brian Jones

Officers Mark Stutes and Brian Jones were at the City Transportation Shop when they witnessed a city employee being dragged under a moving bus.

The employee had been making repairs to the bus when a mechanical failure occurred and the bus began to roll. The rear tandem wheels struck the employee and he was being dragged.



Reacting quickly, Officer Stutes jumped onto the moving bus and engaged the brake. Officer Jones, who was in his police vehicle, drove into the path of the bus to keep it from continuing to move.

Both officers then assisted other workers in pushing the bus backward to free the employee. Once the man was freed, Officer Jones rendered aid by applying pressure to a head wound.

Lt. Todd Miller

Lt. Todd Miller was traveling to work on I-81 when he noticed traffic ahead swerving toward the shoulder of the road. As he drew closer, a tractor-trailer in front of him abruptly veered onto the shoulder and Sergeant Miller saw a body lying face down and not moving. He notified ECC and began investigating.

The body was that of a female who was unresponsive. She had labored breathing but no visible injuries except abrasions on her hands. While being attended to by Lt. Miller, the woman regained consciousness but seemed incoherent and unaware of her surroundings.

Lt. Miller escorted her off the road, but she attempted to walk back toward the traffic. Lt. Miller again escorted her off the road. The woman once again began struggling and trying to run into traffic. Lt. Miller was able to restrain her with the help of the truck driver who moments earlier had swerved to avoid hitting her.

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The Award of Excellence is presented to officers who have been selected for special recognition because of their exemplary performance and superior execution of duties in day-to-day assignments and conduct as role models for fellow officers.

Sgt. Philip Read
Officer Greg Deeds
Officer Patrick Smoot
Officer David Hanlon
Officer Kevin Argiro
Officer Colton Wetherell
Officer Paywand Sofy
Officer Dylan Johnson
Officer Joshua Joseph