

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 12, 2020



Contact:

Diana L. Klink
Office: 757.514.4104
Mobile: 757.359.1845

Tim Kelley
Office: 757.514.4103
Mobile: 757.871.3039

SUFFOLK PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL HONORED AT HAMPTON ROADS CHAMBER VALOR AWARDS

SUFFOLK, VA (August 12, 2020) Suffolk Fire & Rescue and Suffolk Police personnel were recognized for their service to the community at the annual Hampton Roads Chamber Valor Awards on Monday, August 10, 2020, in Chesapeake, Virginia. The Valor Awards offer the Hampton Roads business community an opportunity to thank and recognize public safety heroes for extraordinary acts of courage and resourcefulness in the line of duty.

Suffolk Fire & Rescue Lieutenant L. Watson was the recipient of the Hampton Roads Chamber Medal of Valor Award. On March 11, 2019, Suffolk Fire & Rescue Battalion 2; Engines 9, 6, and 4; Ladder 6; Rescue 1; Tankers 9 and 1; Medic 6; Safety 1; and EMS 1 were dispatched to a reported garage fire threatening a residence. Upon arrival, Lieutenant Watson reported a large detached garage well-involved with the house and two vehicles also on fire. Lieutenant Watson assumed command and her crew pulled an attack line to protect the unburned portion of the exposure (the main residence) that was on fire and only feet from the well-involved garage and vehicles. The attack line was first placed on the fire advancing into the of the main home and

Engine 9's crew attacked the fire in the attic through the soffit and through two windows that had failed on the main residence. Once Engine 9's crew stopped the advancement of fire into the main residence, Lieutenant Watson then directed the attack line into the large garage that was heavily involved in fire. Lieutenant Watson maintained a position to monitor the fire conditions in the garage as well as the main residence. The fire attack was initially effective, so Lieutenant Watson directed her crew to advance the attack line forward in the breezeway between the main home and the garage toward a door in the middle of the garage. Lieutenant Watson and her crew made the door and operated the attack line in the doorway for several minutes. Sensing that fire conditions were not changing, even with an aggressive fire attack, Lieutenant Watson and her crew retreated the attack line to the corner of the garage and residence to continue their attack from the corner of the building. While Engine 9's crew was retreating to the corner of the garage, the Officer on Ladder 6 saw the wall collapsing from the front yard and yelled, "Wall, wall, wall." Ladder 6's Officer saw Lieutenant Watson push her firefighter away from the collapsing wall just as the wall came down, landing directly on Lieutenant Watson. Ladder 6's Officer went immediately to the collapsed garage to perform a rescue and observed Lieutenant Watson's torso hanging out of the debris of the fallen wall, with the roof and brick on top of her. A Mayday was declared, and Lieutenant Watson was dug out by the Firefighter she had earlier pushed out of danger away from the collapsing wall and the Officer on Ladder 6. After the wall came down, Lieutenant Watson did not have any recollection of the collapse until she was pulled free of the collapsed area and debris. Lieutenant Watson received immediate Advance Life Support care and was transported to the hospital with significant injuries. Another Firefighter was transported to the hospital with burns sustained by digging out Lieutenant Watson. For Lieutenant Watson's heroic actions and placing her crew's welfare before her own, she received the Hampton Roads Chambers' Medal of Valor Award.

Suffolk Police Department Detectives C. Scherer and J. (Attard) Catanese were each honored with the Investigative Merit Award. On July 12, 2019, Suffolk Police responded to an accident with injuries and a possible shooting victim. They rendered

aid to the injured. A passenger in one of the vehicles was deceased. Detectives Scherer and (Attard) Catanese began to investigate and determined the victim died of a gunshot wound. They were in rush hour traffic at the on/off ramp near College Drive and University Boulevard. The Detectives searched the crime scene that spanned a half mile of roadway, ditches, and storm drains. They found evidence they could use to link to the suspects. They worked with tips that linked several suspects and a specific vehicle to the incident. They worked with neighboring law enforcement agencies to develop the lead and find the person who shot the victim. They stayed on it for three months and, in October 2019, interviewed the suspect, who confessed to the fatal shooting.

Suffolk Police Department Investigator R. Linville was also honored with the Investigative Merit Award. Beginning in mid-2019, Investigator Linville conducted an extensive investigation into a drug ring and criminal enterprise in the Holland area of Suffolk. After identifying several suspects while conducting controlled purchases, Linville expanded his case to the federal level. He worked with DEA agents and an Assistant US Attorney for federal charges of Conspiracy, Narcotics Trafficking, and Human Trafficking. In December 2019, Investigator Linville obtained search warrants for a home in Southampton County. SWAT teams from Suffolk and Southampton County executed the warrants and recovered cocaine, heroin, marijuana, ammunition, firearms, stolen property, and \$25,000 in cash. Investigator Linville then served six more search warrants related to this case. It is still ongoing, and there are at least 15 federal indictments forthcoming, including one for charges related to an overdose death. This is the biggest case in several years for the Special Investigations Unit and the Suffolk Police Department. Investigator Linville went above and beyond his regular duties to bring this case to the federal level.

###