

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 26, 2016



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SUFFOLK PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL HONORED AT HAMPTON ROADS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S VALOR AWARDS

SUFFOLK, VA (April 26, 2016) Suffolk Police and Suffolk Fire & Rescue personnel were recognized for their service to the community at the annual Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce Valor Awards on Friday, April 22, 2016 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. At this year's ceremony, there were 38 police officers, EMTs, and firefighters honored in six special categories.

Suffolk Police Department Sergeant Timothy Cooper, Detective Casey Thomas, and Detective Alex Johnson were honored with the Investigative Merit Award. These detectives worked over a hundred hours to bring closure for a victim and his family in a brutal homicide. They started with only a body in the water that had been there for a couple of months and worked diligently until they had three full confessions. On March 9, 2015, Suffolk Police recovered a body floating in the water at Lakeview Parkway. An autopsy revealed the subject had received blunt force trauma to the head and had water in his lungs. Detective Casey Thomas and Detective Alex Johnson were

assigned this as their first homicide case. Working under the leadership of Sergeant Timothy Cooper, they went out of their way to ensure that this case was solved. They identified one suspect who had fled to Wisconsin and located another suspect in Suffolk who they managed to get to implicate himself in murdering the victim. That suspect confirmed that one of the other people involved had fled to Wisconsin and that there was a third person involved. Detectives Thomas and Johnson were able to track down and obtain a full confession from the third suspect. They developed a phone relationship with the suspect in Wisconsin and obtained a full confession from that suspect after flying to Wisconsin and arranging a meeting at a Police Station.

Suffolk Police Department Detective Matthew Faubion, Detective Heather Linville, Detective Joyce Williams, and Intel Analyst Amanda Lopez also received an Investigative Merit Award. This team's dedicated, hard work led to the apprehension of an internet child predator and the safe return of a Suffolk teen. On August 17, 2015, a 14-year-old girl was reported missing by her mother. She left a note saying she was okay and loved her family. Instead of shuffling this to a back burner as a cold runaway case, Detective Matthew Faubion, Detective Heather Linville, Detective Joyce Williams and Intel Analyst Amanda Lopez spent hours scouring neighborhood computers, cell phone records, talking with family and friends and following up on tips to produce a lead in the case. Finally on September 23rd, the girl called her mother. Intel Analyst Lopez traced the call to a residence in Superior, Wisconsin. These Suffolk Investigators quickly learned Superior Police were investigating a man at that address for a juvenile missing under similar circumstances. The suspect convinced both girls he was a modeling scout and was able to get them to go home with him. Suffolk Investigators' information gave the Superior Police the edge they needed to obtain a search warrant and search the home. It was during that search that the girl from Suffolk was located. The suspect was arrested and charged with sexual assault and statutory rape in Wisconsin, with additional charges pending. This investigation is being adopted by the FBI Crimes Against Children Task Force and charges from additional victims are forthcoming.

Two members of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department, Lieutenant Jeremy Gould and Senior Firefighter John M. Piver, received the Lifesaving Award. On March 30, 2015, Lieutenant Jeremy Gould and Senior Firefighter John Piver rescued a woman attempting to take her life by wading out into the James River. The woman was holding on to a bridging piling about 150 yards away from the shoreline. The water was around 45 degrees. She appeared to be chest high in the water and was not responding to anyone calling from the bridge. Lieutenant Gould and Firefighter Piver received the go ahead to rescue her immediately as waiting for cold suits or more crews would be too late. They tied off to a tag line and waded out into the frigid water to retrieve the woman. They brought her back to the shoreline where she was placed in a stokes basket and hoisted to the waiting ambulance. They both acted without due regard to their own safety and put this woman's life first.

In late August 2015, Suffolk Fire & Rescue Lieutenant Taz Lancaster was off duty surfing in Buxton, North Carolina. He was paddling in to shore when noticed a surfboard floating and upon scanning the immediate area saw a man bobbing with only his head showing barely above the water. The man told Lieutenant Lancaster he had fallen off his board head first into a shallow sand bar and felt as if he were paralyzed. Without hesitation and with the possibility of a c-spine injury, Lieutenant Lancaster used his surfboard as a backboard to stabilize the man as best he could while floating him back to shore through the rough breaking waves. While on shore, Lieutenant Lancaster called 911, further immobilized the victim's neck and reassured the man until rescue arrived and flew the man out. Lieutenant Lancaster tracked the man's progress and fortunately he only had temporary paralysis due to the compression sustained to his c-spine and ended up making a full recovery. Had Lieutenant Lancaster not quickly assessed the situation and took the appropriate action when he did, the man could have sustained permanent paralysis from the waves slamming him around or could have drowned in the rough surf. Because of Lieutenant Lancaster's quick thinking, he was awarded a Lifesaving Award.

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