

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JOE BAGLEY VFW POST 2582 HONORS SUFFOLK PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL

SUFFOLK, VA (July 20, 2017) Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) presents Public Servant Awards to emergency medical technicians, law enforcement personnel, and firefighter personnel. Prior to the July 19, 2017 Suffolk City Council Meeting, Suffolk's Joe Bagley VFW Post 2582 presented awards to one member of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department as well as one member of the Suffolk Police Department. An additional member of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department was honored but was unable to attend the presentation. The VFW 2582 also presented perpetual plaques to the respective agencies for both the Suffolk Police Department and Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department. Award winners must have demonstrated recognition by their colleagues or those they serve, consistent excellence in the performance of their duties, and consistent dedication to their official responsibilities over a period of years and continuous growth in responsibilities and skills within their profession.

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Lieutenant John E. Thrush – VFW Emergency Medical Technician Public Servant Citation

Lieutenant John E. Thrush joined the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department in 1996 as a paramedic from Portsmouth Fire & Rescue. Lt. Thrush had joined the Virginia Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad in 1987 and obtained his Paramedic certification in 1990. He has obtained certifications in Confined Space Rescue, Trench Rescue, Rope Rescue, and Vehicle Rescue. In addition, Lt. Thrush is responsible for purchasing and distributing medical supplies for Suffolk Fire & Rescue. He was promoted to Lieutenant in November 2003.

In letters received nominating Lt. Thrush for Paramedic of the Year, he is described as being one who has spent countless hours, day and night, keeping the department's apparatus stocked and ready to serve the citizens of Suffolk. One nominator also commented that Thrush is always looking for ways to save on the associated costs while promoting efficiency and is always willing to go the extra mile and take on special projects. Lt. Thrush is the most recent recipient of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department's Paramedic of the Year. He is currently assigned to Fire Station 6.

The VFW Emergency Medical Technician Public Servant Citation is presented to an individual who actively gives emergency medical treatment and provides rescue service or civil disaster assistance as a member of any public or volunteer company organized to give emergency medical care, rescue and civil disaster assistance to our nation's citizens.

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Senior Firefighter Les Lemasters – VFW Firefighters Public Servant Citation

Senior Firefighter Les Lemasters joined the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department in 2002. A lifelong resident of Chesapeake, Virginia, Lemasters became a Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician – Intermediate and received his Associates of Applied Science degree in Fire Science Technology from Tidewater Community College in 2004. He currently assists Suffolk Fire & Rescue in the administration and maintenance of Personal Protective Equipment and department uniforms. Lemasters is also the most recent recipient of the department's Fire Fighter of the Year Award.

In a letter nominating Lemasters, it was said that he has done an amazing job working with the department's uniforms. In addition, this duty requires many hours both on and off duty. The uniforms are the first thing the department's customers see and Lemasters has greatly improved the department's professionalism.

Senior Firefighter Lemasters is currently assigned to Engine 5 in the Second Battalion on Shift B. He resides with his family in the Western Branch community where he is active in several organizations. He is past President of the Jolliff Woods Civic League and is currently on the Western Branch Business Development Committee, on the Board of Directors and team manager at Western Branch Little League, and an active member of Alexander Baptist Church.

The VFW Firefighters Public Servant Citation is awarded to any individual who actively fights fires as a member of any public or volunteer company organized to fight fires and give assistance to our nation's citizens.

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Officer Josie Hall – VFW Law Enforcement Public Servant Citation

Officer Josie Hall joined the Suffolk Police Department on February 17, 2009 and attended the Hampton Roads Criminal Justice Training Academy Class "09A". Officer Hall has been assigned to Uniform Patrol since completion of field training and is currently assigned to Sector 1 midnights. Hall holds certifications of Evidence Technician and Radar/Lidar. She has been awarded various departmental commendations and noteworthy performances during her career. Hall was named the Suffolk Officer of the Year for 2015 and was awarded the MADD (Mothers Against Drug Driving) Award for two years in a row. Officer Hall is currently attending Liberty University for a Masters in Elementary School Education.

Officer Hall was nominated for this award for her superior performance often going above and beyond what was required of her. In October 2015, Hall worked a theft from motor vehicle involving over \$2,500 in stolen electronics. Her determination in bringing justice for the victim enabled her to track the suspects to Newport News where they were ultimately located in a stolen vehicle and in possession of the electronics that were stolen from Suffolk. In addition, Officer Hall was also able to lift a latent print off the vehicle which matched the suspects'. Her investigation led to the arrest of three suspects resulting in 39 charges and the victim, along with three other identified victims, getting their property returned.

Officer Hall, along with other Officers, were able to locate and identify a suspected marijuana grow operation resulting in the seizure of several marijuana plants, peyote, cacti cocaine and MDMA (ecstasy) and the arrest of three offenders. This was initiated from a suspicious vehicle where Officer Hall's keen eye for detail led her to observing a suspicious person loitering outside a local restaurant near closing time. Her attempt at investigating further caused the suspect to flee on foot yet he did not get far. Officer Hall was able to apprehend the suspect who was ultimately identified as the person of interest in several robberies in Suffolk and an adjoining city.

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The VFW Law Enforcement Public Servant Citation is awarded to any individual who serves in a municipal, county, state or federal unit tasked with enforcement of the laws pertaining to their area of responsibility. This award does not apply to individuals employed by private companies for security services.

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