



Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office

Kelly Hoover
Public Information Officer
(805) 681-4192

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News Release

Sheriff's Office Honors Exemplary Performance in 2016

Santa Barbara - The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office would like to congratulate the Sheriff's employees and a member of the public who were honored yesterday, May 18, 2017, at a Recognition Awards Program and Luncheon. The award recipients were recognized for their exemplary service during 2016 at a ceremony held at Earl's Place at the Earl Warren Showgrounds.

The Sheriff's highest award for heroism, the Sheriff's Medal of Valor, was given to Sergeant James Zbinden, Senior Deputy Michael Harris, Deputy Justin DiPinto and Deputy Michael Hollon for their resolute actions during a life-threatening incident on June 11, 2016 at Paradise Campground in the Los Padres National Forest. An axe-wielding camper, who was under the influence of LSD, threatened campers and first responders. The subject threw axes at friends, battered an elderly camper and assaulted several people including a firefighter and several deputies. It took deputies more than ten minutes of struggling with the violent camper to take him into custody. Even though at several points during the confrontation lethal force would have been justified, they put their own personal safety at risk and used several less lethal options to resolve the incident.

The Sheriff's Medal of Courage, given for the first time this year, was awarded to 14 deputies, 11 of whom were involved in the dangerous pursuit and confrontation with a suspect wanted for the armed kidnapping of 15-year-old Pearl Pinson from Solano County. The suspect was located on the 101 freeway near Buellton and pursued into Solvang where he exited his still-moving vehicle and fired upon deputies. Deputy Nathan Flint returned fire and shot the suspect in the leg. He fled on foot and broke into a mobile home where a resident was inside but fortunately managed to escape. The suspect located keys to a truck parked outside and attempted to flee the scene. He was confronted by several deputies, refused to surrender and opened fire on the deputies. The deputies returned fire, killing the suspect, which ended the tragic situation and protected the community from further harm.

Sheriff's Deputies Brice Bruening, Ray Gamboa and Jesus Gutierrez were also awarded a Sheriff's Medal of Courage for their courageous response to a report of a vehicle over the side of a steep embankment off Highway 101 at "Three Bridges". The deputies worked with CHP and fire personnel

to extricate a female occupant who was trapped in her vehicle which had caught on fire. Their quick-thinking and immediate actions are credited with helping to save the woman's life.

Three Sheriff's Deputies and a Custody Deputy received the Sheriff's Lifesaving Award for their heroic actions during a medical emergency. Deputy Philip Farley and Deputy Shane Moore were honored for their response to a report of a man having a heart attack at a Goleta business. They arrived on scene quickly and provided lifesaving medical care, which included the use of an automated external defibrillator and application of chest compressions, until paramedics arrived and could take over.

Sheriff's Special Duty Deputy James Kurowski and Sheriff's Deputy Bradley Adams received the Sheriff's Lifesaving Award also for helping to save a heart attack victim, this one in the backyard of a residence in Santa Ynez. They too used an automated external defibrillator and provided life-saving medical care until paramedics arrived.

Custody Deputy Crystal Batterson received the Sheriff's Lifesaving Award for helping to save an inmate who was found unresponsive and not breathing in his cell. She began cardio pulmonary resuscitation chest compressions and continued to assist both jail medical staff and paramedics with chest compressions until the inmate could breathe on his own.

The Sheriff's Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) received the Sheriff's Unit Citation Award for its outstanding work and teamwork throughout 2016 on a continuous flow of challenging cases. The 34 honorees from CIB included Sheriff's detectives and their supervisors and support staff as well as forensics personnel. The group worked together to help solve a high profile triple homicide investigation and bring it to trial. They also investigated a number of cases which included a homicide in Lompoc, two officer involved shooting cases from outside agencies, a 2013 Deltopia stabbing in Isla Vista, a card theft case, several sexual assaults and child abuse cases, elder abuse cases and a case that started out as a homicide but through the course of the investigation was determined to be a suicide. The dedicated personnel worked non-stop from case to case and showed great teamwork and effort throughout the year.

The Sheriff's Distinguished Service Award went to Chief Deputy Sam Gross for his 46 years of service to the Sheriff's Office and the Santa Barbara County community. During his more than four decades at the Sheriff's Office, Chief Gross has held numerous assignments and has more than 60 letters of commendations in his personnel file. He is the most senior member of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office and has displayed professionalism, integrity and an unsurpassed devotion to duty throughout his career.

The Sheriff's Meritorious Service Medal was given to two deputies for their commitment and dedication to the Sheriff's Explorer Program. Senior Deputies David Robertson and David Valadez have spent countless hours training and mentoring teens in this program, which teaches important life-skills and character development, plus offers pre-professional training in law enforcement and other related professions. The two Senior Deputies are also credited with revamping and rejuvenating both Explorer Post 32 and Explorer Post 830, both of which are looking for new recruits.

Richard Kline, the President of the Sheriff's Benevolent Posse, received the Exceptional Citizen Award for outstanding leadership within the Posse and his tireless efforts to help raise funds to assist the Sheriff's Office during these financially challenging times.

The Sheriff's Office wants to thank all of the award recipients for going above and beyond in support of our mission to protect and serve our communities.











