

## 1998 Department Awards

Each year, the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office hosts a ceremony to honor those whose bravery and dedication to protecting others distinguish them as heroes. In 1999, Sheriff Greg Champagne presented 21 Distinguished Awards, 11 Letters of Commendation, and 14 Citizen Awards.

Recipients were honored for a variety of courageous acts -- from rescuing a child from a burning building to defusing a domestic violence incident to foiling a couple of bank robbers.

### **Distinguished Service Award**

#### **Cpl. Patrick Beard - Distinguished Service Award**

When fire ravaged a Luling family's home the morning of Nov. 8, 1998, Cpl. Patrick Beard was among those who responded. En route from U.S. 90, the officer knew he would pass the fire station nearest the burning building - the Luling Volunteer Fire Department. As a volunteer fireman for the LVFD, Cpl. Beard knew each second would be critical if lives were to be saved.

Cpl. Beard unlocked the station house, pulled the lead fire truck from the garage and drove to the scene of the fire just down the street.

Once there, he was joined by fellow officers who proceeded to hook up the hydrant lines and extinguish the fire.

Cpl. Patrick Beard was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by Sheriff Greg Champagne for displaying the presence of mind and dedication to duty in retrieving the truck from the fire house and getting it quickly to the scene of the fire.

### **Letter of Commendation**

#### **Deputy Bob Villere - Letter of Commendation**

Deputy Villere also responded to the reported fire. Also a volunteer fire fighter, the deputy assisted Cpl. Beard in running hoses to nearby fire hydrants and in fighting the fire.

Deputy Villere was awarded the department's Letter of Commendation for his quick action and professional manner in discharging his duties that night.

### **Letter of Commendation**

<b>Sgt. Mark Candies</b>	<b>Deputy Claude Adams</b>
<b>Deputy Wayne Augillard Jr.</b>	<b>Deputy Maureen Larosse</b>

Acting as a team, the officers quickly arrived at the scene, set up traffic control points, clearing access for fire fighters and other emergency personnel.

Unfortunately, the fire did claim two lives: Mr. August Gordon Sr. and Broderick Gordon. The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office shares in the family's grief, and continues to offer support as they rebuild their lives.

#### **Technician William 'Billy' LeBlanc - Letter of Commendation**

Crime Scene Division may, indeed, be one of the most overworked branches of the St. Charles Sheriff's Office. Whether investigating an accident, burglary, theft or violent criminal act, deputies invariably must call a Crime Scene tech. Once there, they collect the core of the case - photographs, fingerprints, impressions, and any other evidence that can help solve the case. The work is tedious and exact and requires the technician's fullest attention.

When a fellow officer is involved in a shooting, the technician's job is made that much more vital. This crime scene will be scrutinized unlike any other.

Technician Billy LeBlanc was called to just such a scene last year. He was asked to reconstruct a running gun battle, which covered two streets, several back yards and empty lots.

Undaunted by the scope of the task, Technician LeBlanc so accurately recreated the scene that he was also able to recover spent bullets that hit a house two blocks away. Detectives were able to add to the evidence collected to successfully nab the shooter who escaped arrest the night before.

## **Distinguished Service Award**

In March 1998, one woman went on a mini crime spree, wreaking havoc throughout St. Charles Parish.

It began when a priest reported he had been robbed at gunpoint by an elderly woman. That same day, the same woman reportedly robbed another victim in nearby Kenner, La.

But as often happens, the woman's luck ran out as she attempted to rob a bar in Norco.

The scene unfolded at the Spillway Bar on Airline Highway. The woman spent the evening drinking and chatting with several of the bar's patrons. As owner Glenn Weber prepared to close the bar for the night, the woman produced a handgun and threatened to rob him.

In the next moment, Mr. Weber wrestled the gun away from the woman. She ran to the parking lot and sped down the highway in her car. Mr. Weber followed her as far as the parking lot. Using his cell phone, he dialed 9-1-1 and described the culprit and her get-away car.

As Mr. Weber was talking to 9-1-1 operators, the woman, who had turned her get-away car around, passed back in front of the bar.

Deputy Michael Bergeron spotted the car traveling westbound on Airline Highway. He gave chase. Once behind the woman, the deputy activated his emergency lights and successfully directed her car to the side of the road.

Calling upon his training, Deputy Bergeron waited for backup deputies to arrive before he approached the car.

Lt. Fred Oubre, Sgt. Billy Faucheux, Cpl. Gerald Benoit and Reserve Cpl. Roy Gautreaux quickly arrived and the department's felony stop procedure was put to work. Lt. Roddy Landry provided cover, ensuring the safety of the officers who were attempting to get her out of the car. The officers presumed the suspect was still armed, and despite their orders, she refused to exit the vehicle.

The woman was ordered from her car.

Lt. Oubre eased his way to the passenger side of the car as the other deputies continued to press toward the driver. Suspecting the woman might have had a second gun, Lt. Oubre shouted from the passenger side of the car to distract the suspect.

At that moment, the deputies were able to quickly open the door and pull the woman from the car. Once the woman had been handcuffed and seated in the back of a police unit, deputies found a fully loaded, cocked .357 magnum revolver. It was hidden under a flannel shirt on the front seat next to where the woman had been seated moments earlier. Deputies surmised that had a single deputy directly approached the woman, he would have certainly been killed.

Subsequent checks unearthed several charges against the woman. In Lafayette, she was wanted in connection with an armed robbery. The victim was killed in that case.

The goal of every deputy when faced with an armed suspect is to make an arrest without injury to anyone. In order to take this woman into custody, the deputies had to adapt to a rapidly changing tactical situation. These officers say of the incident that they were just doing their job. But it is the teamwork, dedication and willingness to risk their own lives to ensure the safety of others that earned them commendation from Sheriff Greg Champagne.

Deputies received added help in this instance from an everyday hero: Mr. Weber. Had he not disarmed the woman, she probably would have shot him as evidenced by her previous crimes. Mr. Weber's accurate description of the suspect and the get-away car that she was driving helped deputies quickly locate her.

In the wee hours of Nov. 15, 1997, a cashier at an east bank convenience store was splashed with hot coffee and then robbed at gunpoint.

The assailant approached the counter where the cashier was counting money from her cash drawer, preparing to make a cash drop. The suspect was carrying a cup of steaming coffee he had poured at the store's snack bar.

As the cashier prepared to ring up the man's coffee, he threw it in her face and demanded money. Both stunned and burned, the woman did not immediately comply. He pulled a handgun, pointed it at her, and again demanded money or he would shoot her. The cashier gave the robber money from the cash register.

He ran out of the store, jumped into a car and sped away toward Airline Highway.

The cashier called 911. Supervisor Denise Francis received the call. She was able to calm the caller and, through her years of experience, was able to get a complete description of the robber and his get-away car. That information was simultaneously relayed to east bank Sheriff's units.

Francis kept the cashier on the telephone and continued to gather information about the incident as deputies sped to the scene.

Deputy Brady Bischof and Sgt. Jimmy Robert Jr. spotted the car and implemented a felony traffic stop. Deputy Bischof arrested the robber, his two accomplices and was able to recover the weapon and all of the stolen money.

## Letter of Commendation

**Cpl. Carl Jonkers****Deputy Jason Guidry**

A fire at a west bank apartment complex last November required deputies and emergency personnel to act quickly.

Cpl. Carl Jonkers and Deputy Jason Guidry arrived on the scene as the Captain of the Luling Volunteer Fire Department pulled up to the burning structure in the LVFD's pumper truck. Reportedly, residents from the buildings adjacent the complex had been safely evacuated, but the fire was threatening those structures as well.

Knowing that it would take precious minutes for additional help to arrive, the deputies immediately began to pull hoses from the truck. Assisting Fire Captain Brian Champagne, Cpl. Jonkers and Deputy Guidry manned the hoses and, without any prior fire fighting training, were able to help extinguish the blaze. No one was harmed in the incident, and property damage was contained to the one building.

**Deputy Conley Martin - Distinguished Service Award**

One of the most dangerous dispatch calls is a domestic disturbance. For keeping a cool head and thinking quickly, Deputy Conley Martin was commended for his work during once such incident.

Last June, a 9-1-1 caller reported his brother was being chased by an ex-girlfriend armed with a gun and threatening to kill him. The victim escaped the scene and was traveling to his brother's St. Rose home.

While the caller was relaying information to the 9-1-1 operator, his brother indeed skidded into the parking lot. The girlfriend sped into the parking lot, but stopped a distance away from her intended victim when she spotted Deputy Martin's squad car.

Deputy Martin approached the car and innocently began asking the girlfriend about the incident. Throughout their exchange, the deputy was aware the woman was reportedly armed.

The ex-girlfriend said she and her former boyfriend had been involved in a car accident and that she wanted to file a police report.

Deputy Martin asked the woman to get out of her car. She refused, jammed the shift into gear and peeled out through the apartment complex. The officer jumped into his unit and gave chase.

The woman did come to a stop in another parking lot within the complex. She got out of her car and began running through the complex. In her hand, she held a chrome-plated handgun.

Deputy Martin ran after the suspect, ordering her to stop and drop the gun. She continued to give chase, running through breezeways and stairwells. As the officer rounded a stairwell, he found himself face to face with the girlfriend, whom he secured and arrested.

At the time of the arrest, the gun was nowhere in sight. However, to be safe, the deputy held the woman on the ground until backup help arrived. When Deputy Martin patted down the suspect, he found the gun, fully loaded and cocked, hidden in the waistband of her pants.

**Distinguished Service Award**

**Deputy Conrad Bernard**  
**Deputy Gino Najiola**  
**Deputy Michael Bergeron**

**Cpl. Gerald Benoit**  
**Deputy Joseph Kaiser**  
**Reserve Cpl. Randy Robert**

In the early morning hours of New Year's Day 1998, the east bank Patrol Division was dispatched to a horrible automobile accident near Destrehan Plantation. Two victims were reported to be trapped in a burning car.

Deputies Conrad Bernard and Gino Najiola and Cpl. Gerald Benoit used the fire extinguishers from their units to control the fire as Deputies Michael Bergeron and Joseph Kaiser pulled the victims from the car.

EMS workers who had arrived on the scene immediately began giving medical treatment.

In the meantime, deputies turned their attention to the other vehicle. The driver and front seat passenger were dead, but the back seat passenger was alive. The flames, which had spread from the first car, kept medics at bay.

The East St. Charles Volunteer Fire Department arrived and deployed fire hoses. Reserve Cpl. Randy Robert, a former volunteer fireman, manned the engine pump, while Deputies Bernard and Bergeron put out the fire. The victim was pulled from the back seat of the car.

The actions of the duties were above and beyond the call of duty. The deputies placed their own personal welfare aside to render aid to those who had been badly injured.

**Distinguished Service Award**  
**Deputy Cyril 'Cy' Favaloro      Deputy Johnny Champagne**

Two out-of-towners decided St. Charles Parish would be easy pickings. They specifically came to town to rob the First American Bank in Des Allemands.

The two entered the bank, implied they had a gun and demanded cash. As they dashed toward their get-away car, the dye pack exploded in the parking lot. Witnesses sitting on a nearby porch described a strange man running across the parking lot. They said purple smoke was coming out of his pockets and that he was tossing money on the ground.

The witnesses who saw the pair pull onto U.S. 90 gave an accurate description of the get-away car to bank personnel.

Geography, it appeared, was not a strong suit for the two robbers. They didn't realize the only road back to their native Jefferson Parish traveled the entire width of St. Charles Parish.

Deputy Johnny Champagne picked up the robber's trail near Interstate 310. Sgt. Cy Favaloro, who was in the area, joined the chase. Down the road, officers began to set up road blocks to stop the robbers.

The get-away car weaved through traffic, nearly missing several units. The officers feared that the would-be robbers would be home free if they made it past Luling and on to the isolated stretch of highway between Willowdale Boulevard and the Jefferson Parish line.

Deputy Champagne and Sgt. Favaloro boxed the robbers' car, forcing the vehicle off the road in front of St. Charles Plaza Shopping Center in Luling. Deputies who had joined the chase immediately captured the robbers and recovered the stolen money.

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#### **Citizen Award**

**Ms. Darleen Dominic**  
**Mr. Darren Roussell**  
**Mr. Mark James**

**Ms. Debbie Boudreax**  
**Mr. Gerald Bertrand**  
**Mr. Robert Metcalf**

**Mrs. Inez Metcalf****Mr. Jermaine Fox**

Last September, Mother Nature wreaked havoc on St. Charles Parish. The area braced itself as Tropical Storms Hermine and Frances and Hurricane Georges threatened the shore.

Frances' storm surge inundated the parish's east bank and many low-lying areas of the west bank flooded.

Matters were made worse when Union Carbide reported roof damage to a tank of hazardous material. Heavy rains weighted the roof and caused it to collapse. Deputies set up road blocks to cordon off the area until the situation stabilized.

Conditions at Union Carbide lasted for almost three days.

In the meantime, Hermine was closing in and, behind it, Hurricane Georges threatened a direct hit. The Sheriff's Office implemented its hurricane plan and a mandatory evacuation of the parish was ordered by Parish President Chris Tregre.

About 75% of the parish's residents did leave St. Charles Parish. Area businesses were boarded up and closed throughout the emergency. That weekend, deputies remained on 24-hour alert and were required to work double shifts.

Not long into the emergency, the Sheriff's Office found itself in need of provisions for the emergency service workers charged with protecting residents' property.

Several civic-minded business owners and managers who remained in the parish extended themselves to the department and donated needed supplies.

Ms. Darleen Dominic, the manager of the E-Z Serve in Destrehan, donated ice and supplies before locking her store and evacuating the parish. Additionally, she turned over the keys to the department and asked only that a log be kept of the items taken. Deputies were given full access to the store for anything they needed during the hurricane's passing.

Likewise, Mr. Darren Roussell and Debbie Boudreaux of the Delchamps Food Store in Luling provided aid.

Mr. Roussell kept the store open so that deputies could load food for the evening's meal. Additionally, Ms. Boudreaux stayed in St. Charles Parish during the storm and volunteered to provide the deputies access to the store to retrieve additional supplies.

Mr. Eugene Dupuy of Winn-Dixie in Luling also graciously provided food and supplies to the department throughout the storm.

As the Sheriff's Office prepared to bear the brunt of Hurricane Georges, plans were implemented to use the Fraternal Order of Police Hall on the east bank. Deputies would be able to check in between shifts. To ensure the building would retain power if the electricity were to be knocked out, alternatives were sought. But generators were, to say the least, a hot commodity.

Angelo Iafrate Construction Co. provided a generator for use throughout the storm. The department honored Mr. Gerald Bertrand and Mr. Mark James with Citizen Awards.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Metcalf, owners of the Subway Sandwich Store in Destrehan, provided sandwiches and hot meals to deputies prior to the storm. Also a shift manager, Mr. Jermaine Fox, who also happens

to be a Post #15 Explorer, decided to volunteer his time at one of the department's staging areas rather than staying with his own family through the evacuation period.

**Det. Sgt. Deborah Johnston - Distinguished Service Award**

**Citizen Award**

**Mr. Louis Morales Jr.**

**Mr. Steve Talbot**

As Det. Sgt. Deborah Johnston was crossing the Hale Boggs Bridge, she spotted a car parked on the side of the westbound lane. Upon closer inspection, she saw a woman who had climbed over the railing and was sitting on the outskirts of the bridge.

Det. Sgt. Johnston notified 911 of the possible jumper. Unable to cross to the westbound lane, she proceeded down the bridge and re-entered the interstate in the direction of the distressed woman.

When Det. Sgt. Johnston reached the woman's parked car, she saw a man talking to her. Motorist Steve Talbot had spotted the woman and was attempting to talk her into climbing back onto the roadway.

Other motorists stopped along the road to watch the woman.

Additionally, from 911 was flooded with calls. Mr. Louis Morales, a local tow truck operator, was among the callers.

As Mr. Talbot spoke to the woman, Det. Sgt. Johnston reached over and grabbed the woman's right arm to keep her from jumping or falling off the bridge.

The woman immediately became frantic and began to resist. The officer used her portable radio to call for more help. Mr. Morales, who had joined the fray, and Mr. Talbot also grabbed hold of the woman. The three were able to pull the woman safely from the ledge of the bridge.

Absent the efforts of Det. Sgt. Johnston, Mr. Talbot and Mr. Morales, this woman surely would have jumped to her death.

**Deputy Richard Miguez - Distinguished Service Award**  
**Ms. Georgiana Stipe - Citizen Award**

Last August, 9-1-1 operators received a frantic call from a woman who said a man was beating on the door of her Killona house. The man, the caller said, had just shot his girlfriend in St. John Parish.

As dispatchers continued to gather information, the woman handed the telephone to her grandmother, Ms. Georgiana Stipe.

Ms. Stipe gave a complete description of the man and detailed where he was on the property. Deputy Richard Miguez was working the Killona area that night and responded to the call.

The suspect originally peacefully acquiesced to the deputy. The officer reported to dispatchers that he had the man in custody.

However, as soon as he made that transmission, the suspect began to resist arrest and a fight ensued. Deputy Miguez was unable to get to his radio to request more help.

Mrs. Stipe, who was still on the phone with dispatchers, reported that the deputy was in trouble and was, in fact, on the ground fighting with the subject. She also told 9-1-1 operators she thought the suspect still had a gun.

Back-up units sped to the scene when Mrs. Stipe's report was transmitted. Luckily, Deputy Miguez regained control of the man and had him handcuffed when the back-up units arrived.

**Distinguished Service Award**  
**Sgt. Jimmy Robert Jr.**      **Deputy Patrick Walker**  
**Cpl. Randal Pollet**      **Reserve Sgt. Randy Robert**

Last November, officers were called to a Norco home where a man was threatening to commit suicide. However, when they arrived, the man was gone. He returned as they interviewed the man's relatives.

The man into the kitchen and grabbed two large knives. He then ran to the bathroom, locking himself inside.

Deputy Patrick Walker quickly evacuated family members from the house for their safety. He also set up a perimeter around the house to prevent the man from escaping.

In the meantime, one of the deputies began talking with the suicidal man. The deputy's goal was to get the man to put down his weapons and come out of the bathroom.

Because the man had escaped earlier, officers barricaded the doorway with furniture to prevent him from barging out and attacking the deputies.

In time, the man stopped talking, opened the door and rushed the officers. The barricades, however, threw him off balance. The deputies were able to contain him and, with the aid of pepper spray, were able to temporarily disable him. The knives were recovered.

The man was safely secured and taken to the hospital for evaluation and treatment.

The presence of mind displayed by the officers saved the man from hurting himself or others.

**Deputy Joseph Kaiser - Letter of Commendation**

Deputy Joe Kaiser responded to a residence burglary in Bayou Gauche late last April. Shortly after the transmission, he was advised that the caller had canceled the initial call and that the deputy's services were no longer needed.

The officer thought the call sounded suspicious and continued to Bayou Gauche to verify that everything was OK.

When he arrived, Deputy Kaiser could hear screaming from the back yard of the residence. He ran to the rear of the house only to find the home owner wrestling the burglar. The suspect, who was a friend of the home owner's daughter, said he had permission to be in the residence.

After the second call to 9-1-1 canceling the deputy was made, the burglar began fighting with the home owner.

Sheriff Greg Champagne commended Deputy Kaiser for diligently investigating the matter, arresting the burglar and saving the home owner from possible injury.

#### **DCpl. Donald 'Kenny' Gagliano - Letter of Commendation**

The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office enjoys a special relationship with the parish's public school system. In addition to providing DARE and Resource Officers to the schools, the department also assigns a deputy to the Court School.

Court School staffer Ms. Yvonne Adler wrote Sheriff Greg Champagne of the feats of one of the officers. She wrote:

"The staff at the Court School feels the need to address the service of Deputy D. Kenneth Gagliano. Deputy Gagliano has been working at the Court School for over a year and is dedicated to continual service. His attendance is exemplary. He is devoted to the program and its success. In fact, he goes beyond his job duties to ensure the program's success. His disciplinary actions are consistent and firm. Deputy Gagliano supports the staff which makes us feel safe although we work with such a difficult population. We are thankful that Deputy Gagliano has joined our staff. He is definitely an asset to the Court School Staff."

#### **Cpl. Paul Finn - Distinguished Service Award**

On Sept. 15, 1998, Cpl. Paul Finn was assigned a traffic post on U.S. 61 when he was advised a vehicle was traveling recklessly toward him. As the car approached, he stepped into the roadway and flagged the driver to the shoulder of the road.

The driver was instructed to turn off her engine and step out of the car. She didn't respond.

It was then that Cpl. Finn noticed the woman appeared to be disoriented. All four car doors were locked. Again, he asked her to put the car in park and get out.

As he waited a response, the car began to roll forward. Fearing that the woman was in fact unconscious and that her foot had fallen off the brake, Cpl. Finn broke the rear car window and climbed into the car. He reached over the front seat and placed the gear shift into park. The vehicle safely came to a stop.

Cpl. Finn called for medical assistance and kept the woman calm until EMTs arrived.

It was later learned that the driver has diabetes and was suffering from diabetic shock.

#### **Sgt. Rocco Dominic - Letter of Commendation**

Last June, Sgt. Rocco Dominic spotted a suspicious vehicle coming from an east bank business park. A long-time St. Charles Parish resident and experienced patrol officer, Sgt. Dominic has intimate knowledge of the area and knew that something wasn't right.

The officer stopped the vehicle and began questioning the driver, making a casual visual inspection of the car. What he saw in the vehicle and heard from the driver validated his suspicions.

Upon further investigation, it was learned that Sgt. Dominic had interrupted a felony in progress. The driver had stolen over \$1,800 in property from one of the companies in the business park.

Sgt. Dominic's dedication to duty and determination led to the arrest and recovery of a significant amount of stolen property.