

2003 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 2003, Sheriff Greg Champagne presented two Awards for Valor, 10 Distinguished Service Awards, 22 Letters of Commendation, and two Citizen Awards.

Recipients were honored for a variety of courageous acts -- from rescuing two women and their dogs from a burning home to providing soft drinks and encouragement to deputies directing traffic following a flood.

- * Award for Valor
- * Distinguished Service Awards
- * Letters of Commendation
- * Citizen Awards

Award for Valor Deputy Gwendolyn Jennings

Deputy Jennings was awarded two Awards for Valor.

In January 2003, she was dispatched to a fire in Norco, and was advised that two people, one of whom was handicapped, were possibly trapped inside the residence. An elderly neighbor at the scene confirmed both were still inside the burning home, and were probably in a rear bedroom.

Deputy Jennings ran into the smoke-filled dwelling, made her way to the rear bedroom and out onto the backyard patio where she found the wheelchair-bound woman. Still inside the house were the other woman and two dogs.

Upon re-entering the bedroom, Deputy Jennings found the woman and a small dog in a cage. She assisted both out of the residence.

After learning another dog was still inside, Deputy Jennings entered the burning house a third time, located and removed the animal, and continued to help fire fighters enter another door to extinguish the fire.

All of the occupants and Deputy Jennings were treated for smoke inhalation at St. Charles Hospital. Afterward, the deputy returned to duty.

The second incident occurred June 5.

In the wake of several fatal accidents along U.S. 61, Deputy Jennings was dispatched to that highway. A passerby advised her that a vehicle had just entered the canal and was beginning to sink. The deputy spotted a blue pick-up truck with just the top of the cab sticking out of the water.

The driver, still sitting behind the wheel, began yelling for help. At Deputy Jennings' request, the driver exited the vehicle, however, because of the injuries he sustained in the accident, was unable to swim to the bank. He began sinking.

Deputy Jennings immediately jumped into the water, grabbing the driver before he slipped under the surface of the canal. With help from EMTs and other officers on the scene, the driver was pulled to the bank to safety and subsequently transported to St. Charles Hospital for medical attention.

If not for the quick thinking and the deliberate actions of Deputy Jennings, surely tragedy would have resulted in both of these instances.

Distinguished Service Awards

Sgt. Jimmy Robert Jr.
Cpl. Robert Villere

Cpl. Richard Miguez
Deputy Steven Stewart

In February, the SCSO was alerted that units from the St. James Parish and St. John Parish Sheriff's Offices were in the midst of a high-speed pursuit. The armed felony suspect was heading east on LA 3127 toward St. Charles Parish.

The suspect had attempted to shoot a SJPSO deputy a felony stop in that parish.

Cpl. Robert Villere was at the Nelson Coleman Correctional Center booking a prisoner when he heard the call over the radio. He took up a position along LA 3127 and set up spike strips.

The tactic worked. The spikes flattened three of tires on the suspect's vehicle.

As soon as the suspect was over the spikes, Sgt. Jimmy Robert, who had positioned his unit near the jail, drove to the median of the highway to catch the felon. The suspect spotted the deputy's unit and attempted to ram it. Sgt. Robert exited his vehicle at which time the man fired at the officer.

Cpl. Richard Miguez and Deputy Steve Stewart had arrived at the scene as these events were unfolding. After the suspect fired at Sgt. Robert, the officers returned fire. The suspect was struck once and was taken into custody without injury to the officers.

It was soon learned that the suspect was wanted for multiple carjacking offenses in Iberville and Ascension parishes, attempted murder in St. James Parish, and several traffic violations in St. John Parish. The armed convicted felon had a long history of violent offenses.

There is no question that the actions of these officers not only resulted in the capture of a very dangerous criminal, but also saved the lives of an unknown number of officers and civilians. The actions of these deputies under extreme circumstances is exemplary and deserving of recognition.

As a result, this burglary was solved in a matter of minutes and three weapons stolen had been recovered and returned to their rightful owner due to the prompt and efficient actions of these officers.

Lt. George Breedy

Last May, deputies were dispatched to Monsanto Park; a man, armed with a gun, was threatening to shoot himself.

Upon arriving, deputies found the man sitting on a picnic bench holding a semi-automatic pistol in his right hand with the barrel pressed to his head. The officers quickly began setting up a perimeter and evacuating any by-standers.

Once the area was secure, Lt. George Breedy attempted to talk the man into putting the gun down.

Distraught over a personal issue, the man wanted to take his life.

Lt. Breedy was able to calm the man down and, ultimately, get him to surrender his gun at which time he was secured and transported to a hospital for mental evaluation.

Deputies later learned that a relative received a note from this man stating that he intended to go to the park and shoot himself. Relatives reported the subject had been anxious and distraught for some time and was fully capable of completing the act.

If not for Lt. Breedy's calm demeanor, expertise, and courage, this incident may not have turned out as a success.

Deputy Adolph Federico

Last March, deputies received a missing person call in Ama.

Upon arriving at the scene, it was learned that the victim, a young man who had recently been released from a mental hospital, had forced entry to his parent's bedroom using a circular saw, and had possibly ingested a large number of medications kept in there.

Large bloodstains at the scene indicated the man may have been seriously injured.

While searching the area, a neighbor reported seeing the young man walking into the woods nearby.

Deputy Adolph Federico began searching the woods. Realizing time was of the essence, he borrowed an ATV from a resident riding nearby and extended his search. A short time later, he saw bloodstains in the foliage. The young man, suffering severe injuries to his wrists, was found lying under some brush.

Deputy Federico placed the wounded man on the ATV, notified his sergeant, and drove the victim from the wooded area to the tree line where EMTs were waiting to take him to the hospital.

It was later determined that the young man had ingested over 100 pills and had purposely cut his wrists with a circular saw after forcing his way into the bedroom.

The treating physician later commented that this young man survived his injuries in great part because of the quick action by Deputy Federico in locating him and getting him to medical care.

Lt. Warren "Pie" LeBeauf

The SCSO's Safe Schools Program, which teams Resource Officers with each of the parish's public middle and high schools, has proven quite successful. One day last school year, it proved to be a lifesaver.

A student with a long history of mental health problems appeared to suffer a blackout during school one day. As the student came to, she jumped up and began running away from school officials who were trying to assist her.

Sgt. Pie LeBeauf and school officials gave chase as the girl ran up a flight of stairs to a landing where she threatened to jump. The deputy was able to maneuver himself to an area where he couldn't be seen, secured the girl from the landing and brought her back before she was able to jump and further injure herself.

**Det. Sgt. Rodney Madere Jr.
Cpl. Morris Cavaliere
Cpl. Johnny Champagne**

Last December, deputies were dispatched to a west bank jewelry store where an armed robbery was in progress.

Det. Sgt. Rodney Madere who was nearby took up a tactical position near the front of the store. Cpls. Mo Cavaliere and Johnny Champagne, both of the Traffic Division, were also nearby and took up a position in the rear of the building to prevent any perpetrators from leaving the store.

Officers learned that the robber had at least two hostages inside.

As other deputies were en route, Sgt. Madere was able to see inside the store from his vantage point and began advising arriving units of the perpetrator's whereabouts and suggesting tactical locations for these officers to converge.

As deputies waited for the perpetrator to exit the store, Sgt. Madere saw the store manager lock the door. At that time, Cpls. Cavaliere and Champagne were making their way around to the front of the business and also observed the robber leave the store.

As Sgt. Madere ordered the perpetrator to the ground, the suspect turned and attempted to run, but seeing Cpls. Cavaliere and Champagne, he knew that his avenue of escape had been shut down.

The robber was subdued after a brief struggle during which Sgt. Madere sustained a broken hand.

Using his training and tactical skills, Sgt. Madere was able to apprehend an armed robber without putting any civilians in harm's way or causing serious injury to any other responding deputies. The quick action, cool head, and execution of duty on the part of Cpls. Cavaliere and Champagne made for a good outcome in this extremely dangerous situation.

All of the jewelry and money stolen was recovered; none of the hostages were injured. In an almost textbook execution of a felony arrest, these officers ignored personal danger and arrested the suspect while the armed robber was in progress.

For their actions, Sgt. Madere, Cpl. Cavaliere, and Cpl. Champagne are awarded the Distinguished Service Award. Also, Det. Sgt. Madere was named Sheriff's Office Deputy of the Year for 2002.

Letters of Commendation

Sgt. Joseph Kaiser	Deputy Bradley Walsh
Deputy Marlon Shuff	Deputy Michael Fine
Deputy Juan Pinillos	Det. Jason Guidry
Det. Wayne Joseph	Technician James Hughes
Cpl. Paul Finn	"Beau"

In July, deputies were dispatched to a Boutte convenience store that had been robbed. The suspect had fled on foot.

Sgt. Joseph Kaiser and Deputy Marlon Shuff arrived in less than a minute and then had secured the scene at the store. Cpl. Steve Brens, Deputy Juan Pinillos, and Deputy Brad Walsh began to canvass the area for the subject.

The cashier said that when she opened the register, the perpetrator leaned over the counter, reached into the register drawer and grabbed several bills.

Crime Scene Technician James Hughes arrived and soon afterward, began processing the scene.

On the store's surveillance footage, the perpetrator's face was only visible below his nose because he was wearing a baseball cap. However, Deputy Pinillos recognized the suspect's distinguishing facial features. Officers attempted to locate the suspect at his listed addresses and at the residence of his family members, but had negative results.

While they continued their search, another robbery was dispatched at a nearby convenience store; the method used by the robber matched exactly the prior incident. This time, however, the cashier saw the perpetrator running toward Barton Avenue.

Within moments, Sgt. Kaiser, Deputies Shuff, Pinillos, Walsh, Fine and Technician Hughes all converged on the area. Dets. Jason Guidry and Wayne Joseph also heard the broadcast and responded.

All the units began a thorough search, believing the perpetrator did not have time to make it completely out of the area. The K-9 Division was contacted, and Cpl. Paul Finn and his canine "Beau" responded and began to search for the perpetrator near the railroad tracks.

"Beau" picked up a scent and began to search a wooded area leading toward U.S. 90. Deputies heard a splash and followed wet footprints across the highway leading into another wooded area. Setting up a perimeter, the deputies closed in to a parking lot near an apartment complex.

Det. Guidry, standing on his vehicle looking over the fence, noticed a man lying on the ground that matched the perpetrator's description. The detective noticed the man was wet and placed him under arrest.

As other deputies arrived to help with the arrest, the perpetrator tried to escape, but was quickly apprehended and taken into custody. Both cashiers subsequently positively identified this person as the perpetrator of the robberies.

Assistance, teamwork, and attention to detail made it possible to quickly apprehend this desperate criminal.

**Deputy Ronald Brown
Deputy Joey Thibodeaux**

Deputies Ronald Brown and Joey Thibodeaux were investigating a disturbance in Luling when they learned that the offender had fled the scene prior to their arrival. Witnesses provided the suspect's name.

After a quick background check, deputies learned the offender was wanted for three attachments, all of which were drug-law violations.

The deputies began patrolling the area in search of the man and located him near Hackberry and Paul Frederick streets. Deputy Thibodeaux attempted to place him under arrest for the attachments when the man became combative and began to struggle. Deputy Brown arrived to assist Deputy Thibodeaux.

During the struggle to subdue the man, Deputy Thibodeaux was struck in the head and about the upper body by the offender.

Once the suspect was secured, the deputies performed a search and found 80 1-inch packages of powder cocaine, a plastic bag containing 117.5 grams of crack cocaine, and a clear plastic bag containing about 1-½ grams of marijuana in his possession.

Thanks to the deputies' dedication and persistence, a substantial amount of narcotics were taken off of the street.

**Sgt. Jimmy Robert Jr.
Deputy Steven Stewart
Deputy Aolph Federico**

On Jan. 5, at approximately 0230 hours, Deputies Steven Stewart and Adolph Federico, and Sgt. Jimmy Robert Jr. responded to a burglar alarm at St. Charles Printing, Inc., in Boutte.

Upon arrival, officers found the front glass door smashed, a cinder block lying inside the business on the floor, and the cash register missing. Officers also noted that the offender had exited via the back door, toward Hickory Street, and had left latent fingerprints inside the business in the process.

After securing the scene, officers began to search the residential areas within walking distance of the crime. Officers were familiar with the local residents and having knowledge of recent similar business burglaries, began to formulate possible suspects.

As the officers canvassed the 100 block of Hickory Street, Sergeant Robert noticed several cinder blocks on the ground in front of a mobile home. Deputy Stewart further observed that these cinder blocks were covered in green algae, just as the cinder block that was thrown through the glass door of the printing shop. Officers noted that a multiple offender known for burglary, resided at this particular residence and had been recently released on bond from the correctional center pending a court appearance for a previous burglary charge in the same area.

Officers Stewart and Federico located a large garbage bag behind the residence containing various types of property and the cash register from the print shop. A short time later, officers located the offender hiding behind the residence, at which time he was apprehended without incident.

As a result of these officers' dedication, investigative skills, and attention to details, several business burglaries were solved and a large amount of stolen property was recovered and returned to the owners. These officers' exemplary performance is a credit to the department and the citizens of St. Charles Parish and they should be commended for their actions.

The suspect was found later that day hiding under a house.

Lt. George Breedy	Lt. Roddy Landry
Sgt. Stephen Cantelli	Det. Jason Guidry
Det. John Joseph Ganote	Det. Wayne Joseph

In March of last year, Lt. George Breedy, while acting in an undercover capacity, posed as an organized crime figure from New York and negotiated the delivery of 110 pounds of marijuana from the Houston area. The price agreed upon was \$850 per pound.

On the previously agreed delivery date, Lt. Breedy met with three men at a local motel. The men produced approximately 92 pounds of marijuana. Drug Enforcement Administration agents and members of the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Division, who had staked out the hotel,

immediately moved in and arrested the men and secured the marijuana. The drugs were subsequently field-tested and were determined to be high-grade marijuana.

This drug bust is the third largest such seizure in St. Charles Parish in the last 20 years. For these officers' dedication to duty, bravery, and professionalism should be recognized and they are each hereby awarded a Letter of Commendation.

Cpl. Walker, physically limited by his injuries and training a new officer, totally acted to initiate the traffic stop, and Deputy Banks, a trainee working from instructions given in the few minutes before the traffic stop, took command of the situation and brought the traffic stop to a conclusion in a manner befitting an officer of much greater experience.

Unit Citation - Achievement

Lt. David Guzzardi

Sgt. William LeBlanc

Technician Troy Becnel

Technician James Hughes

Technician Kevin Hollingsworth

Technician Jules G. Tarullo

In St. Charles Parish, every major crime scene demands an investigative team dedicated to providing highly skilled comprehensive and professional techniques. An intricate part of that team is the crime scene technician, whose overall objectives are: To help provide detailed documentation, help develop investigative leads, identify evidence to link victims and perpetrators with a crime scene, and to reconstruct the fatal event.

The crime scene technician's skill, which is often overlooked and unrivaled to the successful processing of any major crime scene, requires knowledge in many disciplines, including forensic photography, crime scene sketching, fingerprint processing, and evidence collection.

There is no doubt, Lt. Kinler wrote, "that this desperate killer had no intentions of going peacefully. He posed a real threat to the community at large.

Each technician makes every effort to remain current in any advances of crime scene investigative techniques. In-house training and the sharing of knowledge gained from training courses attended between members of the division are the norm, generating friendly competition and team spirit.

Over the last 11 months, the same techniques and procedures were used by the Division to investigate over 300 calls for service, ranging from burglaries to death scenes, utilizing approximately 736 man hours. This, of course, does not include the additional man hours spent behind the scenes to fingerprint items collected from the scene, package evidence, complete comprehensive reports, and prepare exhibits and testimony for courtroom presentations.

Of these 300 calls for service, 30 incidents involved death scenes. During a six-week period, toward the end of 2002, Crime Scene technicians investigated 10 death scenes back-to-back.

As the nomination states, "Crime Scene investigation is a dirty, messy, under-appreciated job with few 'feel good' moments, and often requires working in bio-hazardous conditions. It takes special personnel with specific abilities and demeanor to juggle all the details of scene protocols: coordinating efforts, scene safety, personal safety, and concern for the evidence to be collected and processed. ""

These officers using their intuition, experience, and training were able to search the area, locate witnesses, and ultimately capture the subject in a relatively short period of time."

Citizen's Award
Paul and Erin Chaisson and Family

During Tropical Storm Isidore, U.S. 61 along the east bank flooded, causing traffic to be diverted to River Road.

Traffic was heavy and intersections were congested. Deputies were stationed at all the major intersections to ensure that the traffic flowed smoothly. As you can imagine, it was quite a day for those deputies; they faced bad conditions and long hours.

However, at each of the traffic checkpoints, Mr. Paul Chaisson, his wife Erin, and their children Simone, Christophe, Etienne, Jean-Paul, and Sophie stopped and provided each deputy with soft drinks, ice water, popcorn, muffins and thank you cards. The cards read, "You are the greatest, thanks for all you do," and similar kind words.

This gesture of kindness displayed by the Chaisson family really made those officers feel very special and made a very tough job seem more tolerable.

In their nomination, deputies wrote, "the kindness displayed by the Chaisson family should serve as an example to everyone on how we need to take care of each other. Therefore, we hereby recommend the Chaisson family for the outstanding Citizen Award."

Wayne Gaupp

The investigation of child abuse cases can be a very complicated and emotional process for detectives. One of the tools necessary to successfully complete such an investigation is a non-threatening environment for victims to disclose their stories.

In August 1998, the John Madere family donated the building at 816 Paul Maillard Rd. in Luling to the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office.

The Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse, under the leadership Mrs. Wayne Gaupp, approached the Sheriff's Office with the idea of using that facility and creating a child abuse advocacy center in St. Charles Parish. In 2000, Mrs. Gaupp engineered an inter-agency agreement between the Sheriff's Office, Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Office of Community Services, and the District Attorney's Office.

In April of 2001, the Madere Children's Advocacy Center opened its doors providing counseling to victims of child abuse. The SCSO conducted its first forensic interview at that Center on Sept. 16, 2002.

We would like to recognize Mrs. Gaupp for all of her hard work in helping the Sheriff's Office to provide this needed facility to the citizens of St. Charles Parish. This advocacy center provides a non-threatening environment for law enforcement to interview the victims of child abuse, provides counseling to the victims, and also facilitates interaction between the Sheriff's Office, the Office of Community Service, and the DA's Office aiding in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases.