

## **2016 ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY**

**Meritorious Citizenship Award:** This award is presented to individuals other than State Patrol employees who have assisted the Minnesota State Patrol in providing a significant service to the public.

### **Deno Yannarelli, Minneapolis**

Without regard for his own life, **Deno Yannarelli** rushed to the scene of an explosion to aid a driver covered in flames. On May 27, 2015, a semi-truck burst into flames on I-35W in Roseville after the driver lost control and hit an overhead sign. The driver was attempting to put out the fire when an explosion took place. Deno reached the victim by climbing over a chain link fence and threw him on the ground to put out the flames, burning his own arm in the process. Deno's heroic act saved the driver from more serious injury and possibly death.

### **Jerry Amaral, Jordan**

Rushing towards a fire takes courage, and **Jerry Amaral** did just that on the morning of Sept. 5, 2015. While driving his semi on Highway 169 in Sand Creek Township, Jerry witnessed a motorcyclist lose control and crash on the highway. While the rider was trapped under the bike, it started on fire. Without hesitation, Jerry pulled him out from under the cycle to safety. If not for Jerry's quick actions, the outcome would likely have been much worse.

### **Clay Baer, Apple Valley**

On Sept. 23, 2015, on Highway 77 in Eagan, **Clay Baer** saved a driver from drowning. He witnessed a vehicle lose control and go down an embankment into a holding pond, where it became submerged. Clay ran down the embankment, jumped into the pond and pulled the driver, who was struggling to stay above the water, to the surface. If not for Clay's quick actions, it is likely that the driver would have drowned.

### **Laura Machacek, Burnsville**

Would you know what to do if a child was choking? On Oct. 23, 2015, **Laura Machacek** was driving on Fairview Avenue under Highway 36 in Roseville when she saw the woman ahead of her frantically get out of her car and start yelling for help. When Laura saw a two-year-old child choking and not breathing, she quickly removed the child from the vehicle, placed the child over her leg, and cleared a sucker from the airway with back blows. The child then started breathing again. Laura's knowledge and quick action most certainly saved the child's life.

### **Sheldon Haskins, Chaska**

In the morning of July 21, 2015, in Chaska, **Sheldon Haskins** witnessed a vehicle go off the road, crash down through a steep ditch, go through heavy foliage and hit several large trees. While several vehicles around him kept going, Mr. Haskins stopped, walked through heavy cover and located the car. Sheldon called 911 and comforted the woman until help arrived. If it wasn't for Mr. Haskins stopping to help, officers believe it would have been nearly impossible to know a vehicle had gone off the road due to the vehicle being hidden in the dense cover.

**Minnesota State Patrol Commendation Award:** This award is presented to members of another law enforcement or emergency service agency who have assisted the State Patrol in providing a significant service.

**Deputy Russell French – Carlton County Sheriff's Office**

**Citizen: Jay Tyrrell, Staples**

On July 21, 2015, **Carlton County Sheriff Deputy Russell French** and **Jay Tyrrell** worked together to save a child's life. When Deputy French arrived on a crash scene on Highway 210, he met Jay, who told him there were a number of people injured in a vehicle, with the most serious being a child who was unresponsive and suffering from life-threatening injuries. Jay used a blade to cut the car seat's straps so Deputy French could remove the little girl from the vehicle. Realizing time was critical, Deputy French transported the girl in his own squad to meet an ambulance that was still 10 minutes from the scene. Jay maintained the child's airway as Deputy French drove. Deputy French's quick thinking and Jay's decisive actions were critical in saving the child's life.

**Life Saving Award:** This award is presented to members of the State Patrol who distinguish themselves by performing acts that prevent the death of another.

**Trooper Kristen Fritz – State Patrol, West Metro**

**Citizens: Angela Benage, Minnetonka & Allison Jallah, Crystal**

When a person is suicidal, bringing them back off the ledge is a very difficult task. But on April 14, 2015, as a woman stood on the bridge at Cedar Lake Road over Highway 169, several witnesses ran to her aid. **Angela Benage** and **Allison Jallah**, along with another witness, grabbed the woman to help prevent her from jumping or falling. When **Trooper Kristen Fritz** arrived on scene, she quickly issued commands to get those helping the woman to move as one and pull her back over the concrete wall to safety. Angela and Allison were instrumental in saving the woman's life by preventing her from falling to the pavement below, and Trooper Fritz's leadership in guiding the others prevented what could have been a tragic event.

**Sgt. Mike Hagen – State Patrol, Duluth**

**Pine County Sheriff's Office: Deputy Joseph Mishler & Sgt. Daniel Kunz**

On May 15, 2015, **Sgt. Mike Hagen** responded to a hit and run involving multiple vehicles, with the suspect fleeing on foot into a pond. Sgt. Hagen, along with **Pine County Deputy Joseph Mishler** and **Sgt. Daniel Kunz**, began talking with the suspect, who was threatening them with a knife. Eventually, the suspect cut and then tried to drown himself. As the suspect became increasingly lethargic and was no longer talking, Deputy Mishler and Sgt. Hagen entered the water to assist him. As the man moved closer to the officers, Sgt. Kunz was able to throw a rope around him, allowing the others to pull him from the water, take him into custody, and get him first aid. Their actions saved the suspect's life.

**Trooper Jonathon Carlson – State Patrol, Duluth**

When lightning struck a 12-year-old boy in Duluth on June 28, 2015, **Trooper Jonathon Carlson** helped save his life. Trooper Carlson found the boy unconscious on the driving range at the Enger Park Golf Course. A bystander, who identified himself as an off-duty firefighter, was giving CPR by performing chest compressions. Trooper Carlson attached his AED and provided CPR until the Duluth Fire Department and ambulance arrived to take over. The boy regained a pulse on scene and was transported to the hospital. Trooper Carlson's quick actions contributed to the boy's survival and recovery.

**Trooper Elissa Schmidt – State Patrol, St. Cloud**

While off duty on Nov. 7, 2015, **Trooper Elissa Schmidt** was hunting when she came to the aid of a fellow hunter who had been accidentally shot. Trooper Elissa applied pressure to the wound with her hunting vest, encouraged the victim to continue breathing, and talked with him to keep him alert. After help arrived, Trooper Schmidt continued applying direct pressure with gauze pads while medical staff performed an assessment. Swift County Sheriff John Holtz said Trooper Schmidt's quick action saved the victim from extreme blood loss.

**Trooper Robert Frisby – State Patrol, West Metro (not in attendance)**

Troopers are not doctors but it doesn't stop them from taking life-saving measures in a medical emergency. On May 5, 2015, **Trooper Robert Frisby** responded to a medical call with a man suffering from an arterial bleed. Trooper Frisby applied a tourniquet and applied direct pressure on the wound. Trooper Frisby's actions helped save a man's life that day.

**Trooper Anthony Butler – State Patrol, St. Cloud (not in attendance)**

During a medical call on Oct. 3, 2015, **Trooper Anthony Butler** found a man lying near a doorway. The man was not breathing and was turning blue. Trooper Butler began CPR along with another Officer until an ambulance arrived. Medical staff at the hospital said without the efforts of Trooper Butler and the other Officer, the patient would not have survived.

**Trooper Glen Bihler – State Patrol, Brainerd (not in attendance)****Deputy Greg Brown – Mille Lacs County (not in attendance)**

After bringing a pursuit to an end, **Trooper Glen Bihler** and **Mille Lacs County Deputy Greg Brown** discovered the driver was not breathing, didn't have a pulse and was turning blue. Both Bihler and Deputy Brown performed CPR on the driver until the man began breathing on his own and regained a pulse.

**Sgt. Christopher Bjerken – State Patrol, Thief River Falls (not in attendance)**

**Sgt. Christopher Bjerken** is being honored for not one, but two life-saving acts in 2015.

On April 6, Sgt. Bjerken responded to a home with a woman in cardiac arrest. Sgt. Bjerken not only performed CPR on the scene, but also in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. For more than 10 minutes, Sgt. Bjerken performed chest compressions on the victim whose heart eventually started beating again on its own.

On May 7, 2015, a 44-year-old man collapsed at his home. When Sgt. Bjerken arrived, the man was not breathing and had no pulse. Between CPR and shocking the victim with an AED at the home, as well as providing breaths in the ambulance, Sgt. Bjerken helped save the man's life.

**Chief's Commendation Award – Communications/911:** This award is presented to radio communications operators who provide vital, life-saving services that lead to the rescue of a person, provide outstanding performance during a special event, or provide a consistent, sustained high level of customer service.

**Radio Communications Operators Amanda Dunkin, Rochester**

**Chris McGuire, Rochester (not in attendance) – Southern Regional Communications Center**

During the morning hours of Oct. 11, 2015, **Dispatcher Amanda Dunkin** helped navigate troopers during a nearly 20-minute pursuit with speeds reaching over 100 miles per hour that ended in Iowa. During the event, which required communication between multi-state agencies, Dispatcher Dunkin kept the troopers updated and safe. During that same pursuit, **Dispatcher Chris McGuire** coordinated other districts to respond and contacted Iowa law enforcement to allow for multi-state communication access. Dispatcher McGuire also handled other calls coming into the center at the time, including a trooper making a stop of a suspect involved in a drive-by shooting.

**COMBINED AWARD**

**Meritorious Service Award:** This award is presented to employees for acts involving personal risk-posing hazards that could lead to serious injury or loss of life to the employee.

**Chief's Commendation Award – Communications/911:** This award is presented to radio communications operators who provide vital life-saving services that lead to the rescue of a person, provide outstanding performance during a special event, or provide a consistent, sustained high level of customer service.

**Minnesota State Patrol Commendation Award:** This award is presented to members of another law enforcement or emergency service agency who have assisted the State Patrol in providing a significant service.

**Sgt. Joe Heyman – Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, Mendota Heights**

**Radio Communications Operators Alex Hogan, Bill Hoium, Alex Casserly, Roseville (not in attendance)**

**Minnetonka PD: Captain Scott Boerboom**

**Plymouth PD: Sgt. Jon Hunt, Officers Matt Gliniany, Chris Hendrickson, Scott Whiteford, Nick Larson, Steve Larson, Andrew Clayburn and Amy Therkelsen (not in attendance)**

During a child abduction, time is crucial. On March 10, 2015, a number of law enforcement professionals came together to save a 4-year-old child. Moments after getting word about a kidnapping, a call came into the Roseville dispatch center about a complaint matching the description of the suspect vehicle.

**Radio Communications Operators Alex Casserly, Alex Hogan and Bill Hoium** worked together to quickly locate the vehicle on camera, alert local agencies, and get the information to West Metro troopers. **Sergeant Joe Heyman** was able to intercept the suspect vehicle as it sped

down the shoulder of I-494. During the pursuit, the suspect vehicle went off the road near Highway 55 in Plymouth and became stuck at the bottom of a muddy embankment.

Concerned for the child's safety, Sgt. Heyman, along with other officers now on the scene, approached the vehicle. Seeing that the child was in a choke hold and turning blue, Sgt. Heyman hit the suspect until he released the child, at which point another officer pulled the child to safety. Sgt. Heyman sustained a broken bone in his hand and a Plymouth officer sustained facial injuries during the eight-officer struggle to restrain the suspect until medics arrived and sedated him.

The officers were able to locate the vehicle and get it stopped because of RCOs' awareness, quick thinking, and teamwork. And the assisting officers' help allowed Sgt. Heyman to safely take the suspect into custody without significant injury to himself and/or the child.

For their combined actions that saved the child from injury or worse:

- Sgt. Joe Heyman received the Meritorious Service Award.
- Cpt. Scott Boerboom, Sgt. Jon Hunt, and Officers Matt Gliniany, Chris Hendrickson, Scott Whiteford, Nick Larson, Andrew Clayburn, Steve Larson and Amy Therkelsen are presented with Minnesota State Patrol Commendation Awards.
- RCOs Alex Casserly, Alex Hogan and Bill Hoium are presented with the Chief's Commendation Award for Communications/911.

**Meritorious Service Award:** This award is presented to employees for acts involving personal risk-posing hazards that could lead to serious injury or loss of life to the employee.

#### **Sgt. Travis Boetel – State Patrol, Rochester**

On March 18, 2015, **Sgt. Travis Boetel** not only assisted in bringing a high-speed chase to an end, but he also protected a fellow trooper from potential harm. When the suspect rammed his vehicle head-on into Sgt. Bormann's squad, Sgt. Boetel attempted to stop the suspect's vehicle, which then sped towards Sgt. Boetel's squad, slamming into it. With no way to escape, Sgt. Boetel fired three shots, and the suspect gave up. Sgt. Boetel's actions to protect himself and Sgt. Bormann from serious injury or death brought an end to a critical incident.

#### **Sgt. Ron Richards – State Patrol, Marshall**

**Citizen: Paul Langseth, Worthington (not in attendance)**

**([Video available](#))**

**Sgt. Ron Richards** was directing traffic on the afternoon of Aug. 31, 2015, for a funeral procession along Hwy 60 in Jackson County when a semi-truck driver slammed into a stopped truck and caught fire. Sgt. Richards radioed for assistance and went to the semi driver, who was screaming for help. **Paul Langseth** heard the crash and ran to provide assistance. He and Sgt. Richards forced open the door of the semi, and the two worked together to free the driver from the burning truck and move him to a safe location. Sgt. Richards said he would not have been able to do it without Paul's help.

### **Trooper James Johnson – State Patrol, Mankato**

It was Nov. 1, 2015, when **Trooper James Johnson** responded to a home in Hutchinson to assist the police department and McLeod County Sheriff's Department with a person inside willing to die rather than go back to prison on a probation violation. When officers attempted to take the man into custody, a physical altercation took place. The suspect suddenly pulled a gun and shot a Hutchinson officer in the leg, then pointed it directly at the McLeod County deputy's head. Trooper Johnson grabbed the suspect's gun hand with both of his and pinned it to the floor, preventing the gun from being pointed or fired at any other officer. The suspect continued to attempt to free the weapon until he was shot by a deputy. Trooper Johnson's actions were instrumental in preventing any other officers from being injured.

### **Troopers Zach Borchardt and Nate Walton – State Patrol, Mankato**

As **Troopers Zach Borchardt** and **Nate Walton** attempted to stop a driver under the influence of alcohol and threatening to take his own life, the driver veered off the road and crashed through the thin ice of the Blue Earth River during the evening hours of March 3, 2015. The troopers put on their life jackets and got on top of the vehicle, which was submerged up to the windows. With the lethargic driver in water up to his chest, the troopers smashed out his window and pulled him from the car. The troopers pulled the man about 60 feet through icy waters to shore, where they wrapped him in a blanket in the back of a squad until medics arrived. Without hesitation, Troopers Walton and Borchardt put themselves at risk to save another.

**Exceptional Service Award:** This award is presented to employees who have provided extraordinary service in the performance of their duties.

### **Commercial Vehicle Inspector Tammy Hafermann – St. Croix Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, Mendota Heights**

Motorists may not think twice about highway weigh stations, but weighing trucks protects Minnesota's roadways, and the safety inspections keep motorists safe. **Commercial Vehicle Inspector Tammy Hafermann** works the busiest scale site in the state, with approximately half of the trucks weighed by the State Patrol each year. In 2015, CVI Hafermann led all mobile and scale-assigned CVIs and troopers by conducting 756 commercial vehicle inspections. In that time, CVI Hafermann documented and took action on:

- 452 size and weight violations.
- 2,095 state and federal violations.
- 457 out-of-service violations.
- 434 driver violations.
- 15 speed violations.
- 22 seatbelt violations.
- One cell phone violation.
- 20 other moving violations.

**Trooper David Koski – State Patrol, Virginia**

A trooper is never truly off duty. In the morning hours of Sept. 17, 2015, off-duty **Trooper David Koski** noticed a suspicious vehicle going into the driveways of neighboring homes. Trooper Koski followed the vehicle and watched it pull into another driveway and back up to a garage. Trooper Kioski then pulled into the driveway, got the plate number, reported it, and then backed about 50 feet down the road. Suddenly the suspect accelerated out of the driveway towards him, striking his door and pushing his vehicle into a ditch. A short time later, a St. Louis County deputy located the stolen vehicle. Later that afternoon, the man was arrested. To keep his neighbors safe, Trooper Kioski put his own life in danger and went above the call of duty.

**Trooper Ben Karon – State Patrol, Duluth (not in attendance)**

Acts of kindness can not only keep people on their feet, but they can also help keep people safe. Such was the case on Dec. 17, 20015 when **Trooper Ben Karon** responded to a flat tire call. Upon learning the family had just used up the last of their money on gas, Trooper Karon paid for a tow truck and the tire assist out of his own pocket so the family could make it home safely on a cold Minnesota night.

**Eagle Squadron Award:** Each year, this award is presented to the Minnesota State Patrol trooper who arrested most impaired drivers.

**Trooper Peter Schultz – State Patrol, Oakdale**

Getting drunk drivers off the road is one of the state patrol's top priorities. In 2015, **Trooper Peter Schultz** arrested 201 impaired drivers, keeping countless motorists safe on Minnesota roads.

**Leadership Award:** This award is presented yearly to the employee who consistently exhibits outstanding leadership and excellence in public safety through their personal actions, guidance, direction and professional involvement.

**Sgt. Jason Halvorson – Training and Development Section**

Training and the development of future troopers is key to growing and maintaining the strength of the Minnesota State Patrol and **Sgt. Jason Halvorson** is an integral part of the training team. He creates, implements and coordinates the combatives, Taser, chemical agents, physical fitness and fit testing programs, and much more. Several cadets commented on their respect and admiration of him during academy training. One stated, "One of my favorite instructors was Sgt. Halvorson. He had respect for everyone, and had this way about him that made you want to listen." Sgt. Halvorson is receiving the Leadership Award in recognition of his continuing commitment to improving the safety and wellness of Minnesota State Patrol.

**Civilian Employee of the Year:** This award is presented to the non-sworn employee who best demonstrates outstanding work performance, initiative, leadership and effective interpersonal relations.

**Brent Jaeger and Patrick Pueringer – Headquarters, Information Services, St. Cloud**

**Brent Jaeger** has been with the State Patrol's Information Services Section for 11 years. His primary focus is server support. **Pat Pueringer** has been with the State Patrol for nearly seven years, and serves as the network security lead. Brent and Pat both played a critical role in the State Patrol's new Southern Regional Communications Center last year. They were instrumental with planning, developing, and implementing the data room. Without Brent and Pat's willingness to share their time, expertise, and hard work, the project would not have come together as well as it did or have been completed on time.

**Trooper of the Year:** This award is presented to the trooper who best demonstrates outstanding work performance, initiative, leadership and effective interpersonal relations.

**Sgt. Dennis Koenen – State Patrol, St. Cloud**

Throughout **Sgt. Dennis Koenen's** nearly 30 years on the job, he has been a consistent performer. Although Sgt. Koenen will retire later this year, he still treats every day as if it were his first day on the job. He has maintained a high level of enforcement since he started in 1986 and has maintained a positive, respectful attitude towards work and life despite seeing more than his share of death and destruction. He strongly believes in the State Patrol's mission of effectively changing drivers' behavior through enforcement and education. His positive attitude is infectious to those around him, and he needs very little, if any, oversight or direction.

Sgt. Koenen is the State Patrol's representative in the Kandiyohi Safe Communities Coalition, presented at the local Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) regional workshops, and has taken a leadership role in his station regarding fatality reduction efforts by identifying the behaviors associated with fatal crashes in Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties.

One of Sgt. Koenen's partners recently said, "I want to be a better person and trooper because I work with him – to be like him." According to his captain, "Sgt. Dennis Koenen has been modeling what a state trooper should look and act like for the last 30 years. I have always been amazed at his work ethic and the quality of his work. Any new trooper would do well to model him- or herself after Sgt. Koenen!"