



The South Carolina Sheriff

SPECIAL EDITION

Spring 2019

Medal of Valor Issue

from your South Carolina Sheriffs' Association

SCSA 2019 Medal of Valor Recipients

Abbeville County

Sergeant
Tim Wright

Greenville County

Deputy
Tony Hannon

York County

Sergeant
James "Buddy" Brown

Sergeant
Randy O. Clinton

Lieutenant
David "Heath" Clevenger

Detective
Mike Doty

Deputy
Dennis "Cole" Greene

Sergeant
Grady E. Gonzales

Detective
Christopher J. Laurencio

Lieutenant
James Michael Ligon

Sergeant
William "Judd" Baird,
Clover Police Department

Sergeant
Kyle B. Cummings,
York Police Department

Special Agent
Wayne Matthews,
South Carolina Law Enforcement
Division (SLED)

Special Agent
Dennis Tracy,
South Carolina Law Enforcement Division
(SLED)



Executive Director's Perspective: Appreciating Valor: Fourteen Extraordinary Heroes

**Jarrod M. Bruder, Executive Director
South Carolina Sheriffs' Association**

"We should always invest a small portion of our time in making sure that the real heroes, the heroes who don't wear capes [feel] our appreciation... in sharing our love and respect for what they do."

~ U.S. Senator Tim Scott, keynote speaker for the 2019 Medal of Valor Awards Banquet

As it becomes increasingly rare for law enforcement officers to receive praise or adoration, we want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and public appreciation. As an Honorary Member of the South Carolina Sheriffs' Association, you help acknowledge officers and educate the public about their exceptional level of commitment, constant sacrifices and acts of heroism through your moral and financial support.

I hope you enjoy your special **2019 SCSA Medal of Valor** issue of *The South Carolina Sheriff*. The Medal of Valor award is presented to a deputy sheriff "who performs actions above and beyond the call of duty; and exhibits exceptional courage, extraordinary decisiveness, and presence of mind; or acts with an unusual swiftness, regardless of his or her personal safety, in an attempt to save or protect human life."

Each act of bravery and selflessness shows true inspirational courage and determination in the face of life-threatening

situations. As you read their stories, please join me in congratulating all fourteen 2019 SCSA Medal of Valor recipients from Abbeville County, Greenville County, and York County. We celebrate and applaud their praiseworthy actions and attitudes above and beyond the call of duty. I know you'll be personally encouraged and proud of supporting and being a part of something special in our state.

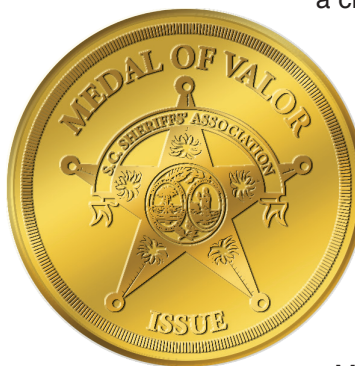
Your generosity helps sheriffs and their offices protect and serve their counties with greater readiness and ability. When you make an extra gift to the SCSA beyond your Honorary Membership, you help financially support every critical service — including special training at our Winter Conference and throughout the year. And those tools can make all the difference in a crisis situation.

Sen. Scott captured the spirit of the SCSA Medal of Valor as well as SCSA Honorary Members, "to appreciate the magnitude of sacrifice when people are running in when everyone else is running away."

Thank you for continuing to honor the tradition of the South Carolina Sheriffs' Association Medal of Valor and the brave officers who received awards this year. Working together, Honorary Members like you help make our state stronger today and for the next generation!

Sincerely,

Jarrod M. Bruder, Executive Director
South Carolina Sheriffs' Association



2019 SCSA Medal of Valor Recipients

Risking Death for a Stranger: Officers in York County

"I've had many proud moments... and I say to these men: this is as proud a moment I've ever had in my career to present this Medal of Valor to you and your families."

~York County Sheriff Kevin Tolson

On January 15, 2018, deputies from the York County Sheriff's Office (YCSO) were dispatched to respond to a domestic violence incident. Officers found a female victim. Her husband had viciously assaulted her and then fled—armed with an AK-47 rifle, handgun, and a survival bag.

Officers began an intense three-hour manhunt for the domestic violence suspect. YCSO K-9 Officers were called in and multiple law enforcement agencies joined in the search. Special Agents Wayne Matthews and Dennis Tracy, both South Carolina Law Enforcement Department (SLED) helicopter pilots, located the suspect and began following his movements.

The suspect shot at the SLED pilots and ambushed the K-9 Team, wounding Sergeant Randy Clinton. Lieutenant Mike Ligon jumped on top of Sgt. Clinton and returned fire, causing the suspect to flee. Lt. Ligon, Detective Chris Laurencio, and Deputy Cole Greene pulled Sgt. Clinton from the scene to Lieutenant Heath Clevenger's patrol car. Lt. Clevenger took Sgt. Clinton to the hospital.

On January 16, the York County Multijurisdictional SWAT team was activated to find the suspect. A SWAT unit consisting of Sergeant Buddy Brown, Detective Mike Doty, Sergeant Grady Gonzales, Lt. Ligon, Lt. Clevenger, Sergeant Kyle Cummings (York Police Department), and Sergeant Judd Baird (Clover Police Department) prepared to search an overturned boat where the suspect was reported to be hiding. The suspect ambushed the SWAT unit and shot Det. Doty in the head and Sgt. Brown in the leg.

Immediately after the suspect opened fire, members of the SWAT unit returned fire. It was later determined that the

return fire from Sgt. Cummings and Sgt. Brown rendered the suspect's weapon inoperable—allowing the wounded officers to be extracted and given medical aid. During the gunfire exchange, Sgt. Cummings was wounded and required lifesaving measures from SWAT medics.

While the suspect remained armed and a threat to officers, Lt. Ligon came to the aid of Det. Doty and performed CPR to revive him.

The suspect had also hit the helicopter. Special Agents Matthews and Tracy were operating. The pilots stayed in the air searching until the fuel supply was so critical they failed to reach the Rock Hill airport and landed in a shopping center parking lot. The air crew refueled and returned to the scene to assist in air support.

Dep. Greene was ordered to stay with the original crime scene with Sgt. Clinton's canine, Gabby. He was later discovered to be suffering from signs of hypothermia that rendered him unable to walk without help and required him to receive medical assistance. Dep. Greene voluntarily delayed his medical treatment so that more critically injured officers could receive medical attention.

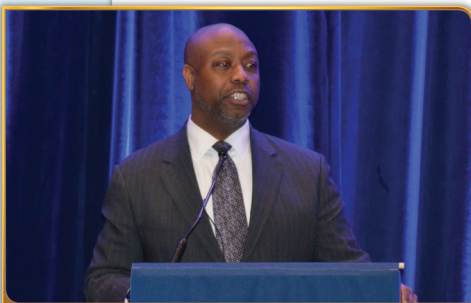
After being flown to a Charlotte, NC hospital, Detective Doty later succumbed to his wounds. He passed away surrounded by family on January 17.

The bravery and teamwork demonstrated by those receiving the Medal of Valor moved Sheriff Tolson to reflect, "I was reminded of the courage, and the strength...the resiliency, and restraint our officers can demonstrate...and a cooperation that



Sheriff Tolson with York County Medal of Valor recipients.

Continued on Page 4



Senator Tim Scott speaks at the 2019 Medal of Valor Awards Banquet.

SCSA President, Cherokee County Sheriff Steve Mueller, commended each of the award recipients, "These officers literally stared death in the face in an effort to serve and protect a complete stranger." He continued, "Their actions are worthy of our utmost respect and admiration. These types of stories are far more prevalent than we even recognize, which is what makes this such a noble profession."

Sen. Scott also issued a challenge for all South Carolinians — to support the law enforcement community, "We should tell the families who survive... that we love them, that we respect them, that we appreciate them." He continued "...and for the officers... we should surround them with a sense of appreciation and gratitude for what they do every day going forward."

Sacrificing for the Good of Others

Deputy Tony Hannon of the Greenville County Sheriff's Office

Deputy Tony Hannon started his career saving lives as a paramedic. He served for 18 years with Emergency Medical Services before serving as a tactical medic with the Greenville County Sheriff's Office part time. After a short period, Hannon transitioned into a full-time Sheriff's deputy.

On June 7, 2018, Deputy Hannon dramatically risked his life to stop an individual suspected of conducting a several-week, escalating violent crime spree. The suspect shoplifted beer and merchandise several times to support his growing drug habit. He had been identified as a suspect in no fewer than thirteen crimes leading up to his eventual arrest, including motor vehicle thefts and robbery.

The morning of his eventual arrest, the suspect stole a vehicle with a tracking device. Uniform patrol deputies attempted to stop the suspect, but he fled in the vehicle. The Sheriff's Office Directed Patrol Unit had tried to stop the suspect in the previous weeks. Now, using the tracking device and the Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit, they were able to track the suspect to the Greenville Health System Hospital. An attempt to block him at an underground parking lot entrance was thwarted when the suspect used the vehicle as a battering ram and struck a deputy who was on foot.

Deputy Hannon was nearby when he heard the radio traffic. Knowing the suspect would continue to prey upon local citizens through escalating crimes, Hannon committed himself to containing the suspect at all costs. The suspect cut through a parking lot, drove over several medians and grassy areas, and drove toward Hannon, who was waiting in his vehicle on a perimeter road.

Without a thought for himself, Deputy Hannon accelerated and rammed the suspect's vehicle head on—rendering the suspect's vehicle useless and the suspect injured. He attempted to flee but was immediately surrounded by other deputies and arrested after a brief struggle.



Deputy Tony Hannon
Greenville County Sheriff's Office

During the collision, Deputy Hannon suffered injuries that briefly left him unconscious. He was treated on-scene and later in the hospital. Without Deputy Hannon's selfless, courageous, decisive action, the suspect would have continued his violent crime spree.



Sergeant Tim Wright
Abbeville County Sheriff's Office

Stay Calm and Follow Your Hunch

Sergeant Tim Wright: Abbeville County Sheriff's Office

Sergeant Tim Wright was on patrol in a dangerous part of town. He saw a vehicle with expired tags that was traveling at a high rate of speed.

Accordingly, Sgt. Wright pursued the suspicious

car for two to three miles. The driver waved out the top of the vehicle seemingly indicating his willingness to pull over. As Sgt. Wright attempted to initiate a traffic stop (but before he could even exit his cruiser) the suspect leaned out of his vehicle and shot at Wright with a .270 caliber rifle. The driver sped away, and after approximately fifty yards, hung out of the vehicle and shot at Sgt. Wright again, with the hunting rifle.

Sgt. Wright pursued and radioed for backup. During the chase, the driver and passenger started throwing items out of the sunroof (including the .270 caliber rifle and another weapon), began swerving into the oncoming lane, and nearly hit a school bus head on.

As items hurtled toward Sgt. Wright, he remained clear-minded, detailing where each evidentiary object landed. Even though his vehicle's speed was compromised, damage

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Risking Death for a Stranger *Continued from Pg. 3*

exists among our law enforcement leaders in York County...we're honoring two state officers and two city officers."

Sheriff Tolson marveled gratefully, "That cooperation that night was seamless, there were no city boundaries, there were no county boundaries, there were no state boundaries—Charlotte/Mecklenburg Police Department had their helicopter in the air. There was one badge that night and there was one blood—and it was blue. And we were after one object,

and that was to stop this evil man...and his night of rampage. I'm very thankful for that cooperation amongst [law enforcement] in York County."

Several speakers at the awards ceremony recognized Detective Doty's family (including his father and his twin brother, York County Deputy Chris Doty). Sheriff Tolson highlighted "the compassion, strength and forgiveness [shown by] the Doty Family...and their wonderful demonstration...of God's forgiveness."

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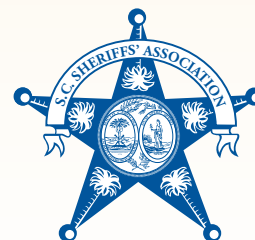
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