



# The South Carolina Sheriff

**SPECIAL EDITION**

**Winter 2023**

**Medal of Valor Issue**

**from your South Carolina Sheriffs' Association**

## **SCSA 2023 Medal of Valor Recipients**

### **Aiken County**

Deputy Jonathan McCreery  
Staff Sergeant Tommy Adams  
Investigator Savanna Williams  
Sergeant Darryl Kostyk  
Corporal Brandon Rucker  
Lance Corporal Eric Perez  
Trooper Drew Derrick  
Lieutenant Andrew Harris  
Special Operations Deputy (SGT) Kevin Creed  
Special Operations Deputy (SGT) Michael Williams  
Sergeant Nicholas Lott  
Special Operations Deputy (SGT) Christopher Carey  
Lieutenant Jason Todd

### **Florence County**

Deputy Tyler Urquhart  
Deputy Christian Seal  
Deputy Brandon Rowell  
Captain Rollins Rhodes

### **Spartanburg County**

Deputy Austin Aldridge  
Deputy Benjamin McCombs  
Deputy Christopher Rojas  
Deputy Steven Escobar  
1st Lieutenant Steve Henderson  
Lieutenant Anthony Hawkins  
Lieutenant Mark Freeman  
Lieutenant Michael Longshore  
Lieutenant William Hopkins  
Lieutenant Robert Taylor III  
Sergeant Zach Featherston  
Sergeant Kyle Jurek  
Sergeant Wesley Bennet  
Master Deputy Trevor Shue  
Investigator Jason Kramer  
Investigator Dalton Crow  
Master Deputy Sean Biggs  
Master Deputy Jacob Shields

### **Sumter County**

Staff Sergeant Steven Blake Weathersbee  
Lieutenant Robert Reynolds  
Deputy Joshua Kirby

### **York County**

Deputy Korey Wedow  
Deputy Lucas Frame



## **Executive Director's Perspective:**

*Valor: Bravery and Strength in the Face of Extreme Danger*

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

**W**elcome to our 2023 Medal of Valor issue.

This special issue of The South Carolina Sheriff offers a glimpse into the extreme and life-threatening dangers our law enforcement officers can face in answering any given call for help.

The actions and conduct of the deputies included in this issue qualify them to be Medal of Valor recipients. We are pleased to recognize and honor each of these public servants. And in doing so, I want to thank you, our SCSA Honorary Members, because your continued support helps to provide the very latest in education, state-of-the-art training, and critical support to the men and women of South Carolina's 46 Sheriff's Offices.

In addition to honoring our Medal of Valor recipients, it is a privilege for me to welcome and introduce our newly elected sheriffs.



**Sheriff  
James O. Freeman**

Allendale County Sheriff James O. Freeman is a native South Carolinian; a 1989 graduate of Allendale Fairfax High School. His law enforcement career began in Allendale, with

the Allendale Police Department. After a year of service with the APD and having completed his studies with the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, he went to work as a deputy with the Allendale County Sheriff's Department, where he's served as Captain for the past 20 years. During his time with the Allendale Sheriff's Department, Sheriff Freeman has also served as a Sworn Deputy U.S. Marshall and with Allendale County Rescue as a Certified EMT.



**Sheriff  
Cambo Streater**

Chesterfield County Sheriff Cambo Streater has been in law enforcement for more than 40 years, including 23 years in leadership positions. He began his career with the Chesterfield County Sheriff's Department in 1978. Sheriff Streater brings a wealth of experience and quite a long list of accomplishments to the job, having held front line and command positions in several state agencies, including the ABC Commission, SLED, and the USC Division of Law Enforcement and Safety. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy, Carolina Command College, and Narcotics Commanders School.

*(continued on next page...)*

# 2023 SCSA Medal of Valor Recipients

## Bravery and Professionalism Keep a Bad Situation from Becoming Much Worse

*Deputy Jonathan McCreery, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*

*Staff Sergeant Tommy Adams, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*

*Investigator Savanna Williams, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*

*Sergeant Daryll Kostyk, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*

*Corporal Brandon Rucker, SC Highway Patrol*

*Lance Corporal Eric Perez, SC Highway Patrol*

*Trooper Drew Derrick, SC Highway Patrol*

*Lieutenant Andrew Harris, North Augusta Department of Public Safety*

In the early evening hours of April 20, 2022, the Aiken County Sheriff's office received a call for help; a female was kidnapped by a very disturbed male under the influence of drugs. He was broadcasting the incident live on Facebook. Officers could see that the suspect was armed and was threatening to kill the victim and the officers who were responding. This led to an armed standoff surrounding a vehicle the suspect and victim were in. Multiple agencies were involved, and all displayed calm and professionalism that prevented a bad situation from becoming much worse.

After a period of time, the suspect began firing at a law enforcement drone. The hostage used this opportunity

to attempt an escape from her captor. Officers displayed extraordinary bravery and calm retrieving the young lady from the line of fire, with several officers leaving protective cover, assisting her to safety while shielding her with their own bodies. As the suspect raised his weapon towards officers, they were forced to engage the suspect with gunfire. Numerous shots were fired, leading to the suspect being injured and eventually surrendering.

The actions of these officers directly led to the rescue of a female hostage, unharmed. Their actions and calm control of the scene ensured no other individuals were placed into harm's way and resulted in a very dangerous suspect being placed in custody.



Sheriff Michael Hunt with MOV winners from the Aiken County Sheriff's Office and SC Senator Tom Young, Jr.

## (Executive Director's Perspective continued...)



Sheriff  
Anthony Russell

Hampton County Sheriff Anthony Russell began his term this January. He served with the Hampton County Sheriff's Office through three prior administrations, spanning the last 26 years. During that time, Sheriff Russell compiled an extensive resume within the department, serving as patrol deputy, advancing to investigator and Captain. As Captain, he

supervised the Special Operations Unit which includes Criminal Investigation Division, Narcotics, K-9, Court House

Security, Gang Unit, SRO, Traffic Unit, Civil Process, and Crime Suppression Unit (Road Patrol). Sheriff Russell has been active in several professional and law enforcement organizations and has received several awards, commendations, and honors over his years of service.

We welcome these men, grateful for the wealth of experience they bring to their new posts. Your support of your SCSA helps these new sheriffs, providing practical tools and support to ease their office's transition.

Join us in honoring the valiant men and women who put their lives on the line to serve and protect the communities and the people we love.





## Serving Valiantly Together

*Special Operations Deputy (SGT) Kevin Creed, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*  
*Special Operations Deputy (SGT) Michael Williams, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*  
*Sergeant Nicholas Lott, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*  
*Special Operations Deputy (SGT) Christopher Carey, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*  
*Lieutenant Jason Todd, Aiken County Sheriff's Office*

On October 28, 2022, the above listed deputies were assisting Richmond County Sheriff's Office (GA) with locating and apprehending a murder suspect. After formulating a plan based on the information received from Richmond County Sheriff's Office Investigators, they proceeded to a location where this suspect was located. This team of deputies entered a Beech Island, SC home in search of the wanted suspect. While searching the premises, the team encountered gunfire from the lone suspect in the home. Once one

of the deputies was struck in his ballistic vest and grazed on his right forearm, team members returned fire, covering the safe exit of the entire team. The deputies recovered and held the perimeter until additional assistance arrived. The suspect was later taken in custody, surrendering to safely end the standoff. The above named deputies' actions went above and beyond the call of duty in safely apprehending an armed suspect who was wanted for a heinous crime.



Aiken County MOV winners with Sheriff Michael Hunt and SC Senator Tom Young, Jr.

# 2023 SCSA Medal of Valor Recipients

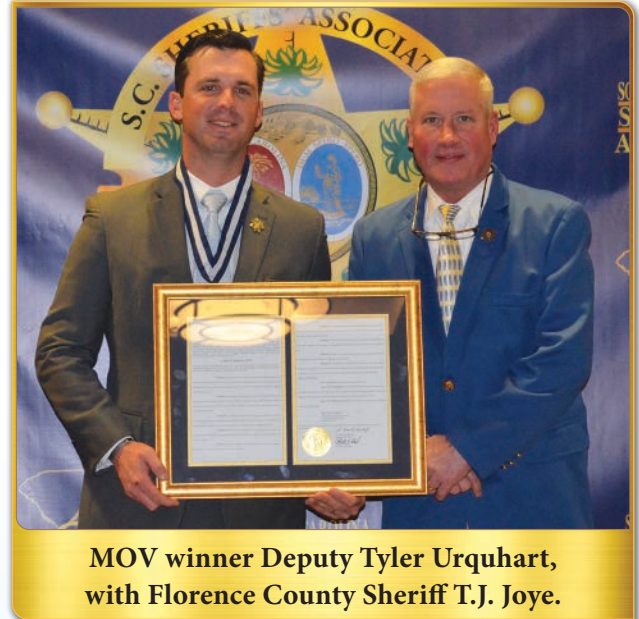
## Professionalism and Compassion Toward a Suspect Who Intended to Kill Him

*Deputy Tyler Urquhart, Florence County Sheriff's Office*

On the afternoon of January 5, 2022, Deputy Tyler Urquhart attempted a traffic stop of a vehicle for speeding and an expired tag. The vehicle failed to stop, leading to a brief pursuit, followed by a foot pursuit of the fleeing suspect.

Deputy Urquhart gave a verbal warning that the suspect was about to be tazed, at which point the suspect turned, pointing an AR pistol at the deputy, stating, "I'll shoot you!" Deputy Urquhart transitioned from taser to handgun and shot the suspect. Approaching the suspect and confirming he was no longer a threat, Urquhart began administering first aid including chest compressions in an attempt to save the suspect's life. Unfortunately, the suspect did not survive.

Deputy Urquhart demonstrated amazing valor, professionalism, and compassion toward a person who intended to kill him.



MOV winner Deputy Tyler Urquhart, with Florence County Sheriff T.J. Joye.

## Deputy's Prompt Response and Life-Saving Efforts Save a Child's Life

*Deputy Christian Seal, Florence County Sheriff's Office*



Florence County Sheriff T.J. Joye with MOV winner Deputy Christian Seal.

On April 18, 2022, Corporal Christian Seal and other deputies responded to a call on North Williston Road in Florence County of a vehicle which had left the roadway into a body of water. Upon arrival, Seal was informed by bystanders that a 7-year-old was conscious and breathing, a one-year-old had a pulse, and a two-year-old had no pulse and was not breathing.

Deputy Seal focused his attention on the two-year-old, and after finding no pulse, immediately began chest compressions. Upon the arrival of an EMS unit, Deputy Seal carried the child to the ambulance where higher level of life care was available. He continued to provide aid as the child was intubated and transported to the hospital in the ambulance. While enroute to the hospital, the 2-year-old child regained a pulse and began breathing on its own. Without Deputy Seal's prompt response and lifesaving efforts, this child would not have survived.





## Heroic Efforts in Hopes of Saving Lives

### *Deputy Brandon Rowell, Florence County Sheriff's Office*

**O**n May 28, 2022, Florence County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to an active shooter call in a rural area of Florence County. A suspect was firing randomly at passing vehicles with a high-powered rifle. One vehicle contained two injured victims, an adult male and a child.

Deputy Rowell responded to this vehicle and immediately began to administer first aid to the juvenile who has sustained a chest wound to the back of his neck. Determining the best action was to evacuate the juvenile in the back of his patrol vehicle to ambulances staged outside the immediate area of the active shooter, he delivered the juvenile to the paramedics. Deputy Rowell assisted the paramedics briefly, before returning to the scene to administer first aid to the adult victim. Deputy Rowell applied a tourniquet to stop the bleeding until an ambulance arrived to provide medical treatment for the adult victim.

Deputy Rowell then assisted in establishing a perimeter where the barricaded suspect was later taken into custody. Sadly, the juvenile victim did not survive. Deputy Rowell exhibited exemplary valor in providing potential lifesaving aid to the victims of this crime.



**MOV winner Deputy Brandon Rowell, with Florence County Sheriff T.J. Joye.**

## Ready When Called Upon to Save a Life

### *Captain Rollins Rhodes, Florence County Sheriff's Office*



**MOV winner Captain Rollins Rhodes with Florence County Sheriff T.J. Joye.**

**O**n April 11, 2022, Capt. Rollins Rhodes was having lunch at KJ's Restaurant in Lake City, SC. The restaurant was busy, with several others eating lunch, when an older lady who worked for the City of Lake City suddenly began choking. She was noticed by another diner who called out to "Rollins!" for help.

Recognizing the woman was not able to dislodge the obstruction on her own, Capt. Rhodes administered the Heimlich Maneuver, freeing the obstruction and allowing the woman to breathe normally again.

Without Capt. Rhodes' prompt response and lifesaving efforts from Captain Rhodes, this situation could have had a much different result.

# 2023 SCSA Medal of Valor Recipients

## Making the Ultimate Sacrifice

*Deputy Austin Aldridge, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Deputy Benjamin McCombs, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*



MOV winner Deputy Benjamin McCombs, with Spartanburg County Sheriff Chuck Wright.

**O**n June 21, 2022, Deputy Austin Derek Aldridge and Deputy Benjamin McCombs responded to a domestic violence call. Tasked with speaking to the male half of the incident, Deputy Aldridge knocked on the door and waited for a response. Deputy Aldridge gave the ultimate sacrifice on this day, as the suspect shot him.

Deputy Benjamin McCombs demonstrated tremendous courage as this deadly situation unfolded. His demeanor under extreme pressure helped ensure the apprehension of this murder suspect as he tried to flee the scene.

Deputy Austin Aldridge was 25 years old and would have been a loving father—he had recently found out he and his wife were expecting their first child. Deputy Aldridge was an outstanding deputy and will never be forgotten.



The MOV Medal and Resolution for Deputy Aldridge - a somber reminder of his absence due to making the ultimate sacrifice.

## Calmness and Bravery in a Life-and-Death Situation

*Deputy Christopher Rojas, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Deputy Steven Escobar, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*



Spartanburg Sheriff Chuck Wright with MOV winner Deputy Steven Rojas.

**A**t approximately 2 AM on September 8, 2022, Deputy Rojas observed a vehicle he recognized as a stolen vehicle from a Spartanburg Police Department BOLO. Noticing at least four people in the stolen vehicle, Rojas waited until Deputy Escobar was able to get behind him, and the two deputies then attempted a traffic stop.

Deputy Rojas reported the vehicle was failing to stop and a pursuit began. During the pursuit, suspects within the vehicle began firing shots at officers. Suspects eventually stopped the vehicle and fled in multiple directions. Without hesitation for their own safety, Deputies Rojas and Escobar continued pursuing the armed

suspects on foot. The foot chase led into a grassy field, where two of the suspects were apprehended. One of them was in possession of a stolen handgun. The Spartanburg Police Department located a third suspect. The three suspects were taken into custody and investigators connected them to a string of crimes, including burglaries where firearms were stolen and two drive-by shootings. The suspects identified others involved in these crimes as well.

Deputy Rojas and Escobar's calmness and bravery in continuing pursuit while being shot at in a life-and-death situation, resulted in violent offenders being taken off the streets.





## Professionalism, Bravery and Tactical Skills Employed to Save Lives

*1st Lieutenant Steve Henderson, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Lieutenant Anthony Hawkins, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Lieutenant Mark Freeman, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Lieutenant Michael Longshore, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Lieutenant William Hopkins, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Lieutenant Robert Taylor III, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Sergeant Zach Featherston, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Sergeant Kyle Jurek, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Sergeant Wesley Bennet, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Master Deputy Trevor Shue, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Investigator Jason Kramer, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Investigator Dalton Crow, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Master Deputy Sean Biggs, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

*Master Deputy Jacob Shields, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office*

The Spartanburg Sheriff's Office SWAT Team was prepared to assist the Narcotics Unit with a search warrant in the City of Spartanburg and had just finished the briefing at the Sheriff's Office, when officers heard over the radio that Spartanburg City Police were responding to a shooting and shots were fired with an officer down. The suspect had barricaded himself inside a dwelling and there were hostages involved.

SWAT responded to the location.

As negotiations failed, SWAT entered the dwelling under fire, rescuing hostages and engaging the suspect. Gunfire was exchanged between the suspect and members of the SWAT Team, which ended after the suspect was killed inside the home.

For their professionalism and bravery

under fire, members of the Spartanburg SWAT Team listed above are recognized as Medal of Valor recipients.



**Sheriff Chuck Wright with MOV Winners from the Spartanburg SWAT team.**

# 2023 SCSA Medal of Valor Recipients

## The Epitome of a Law Enforcement Professional

*Staff Sergeant Steven Blake Weathersbee, Sumter County Sheriff's Office*

**O**n September 25th, 2022, SSgt. Weathersbee responded to a call for a domestic disturbance.

Shortly before he arrived on scene, dispatch advised that the house was now on fire. SSgt. Weathersbee arrived and began checking the perimeter of the house when he was struck in the leg by a gunshot fired from the backyard. Falling to the ground, Weathersbee drew his weapon and returned fire. Unable to walk, he attempted to crawl to cover, all the while continuing to exercise control over the

situation, alerting arriving deputies to the suspect's whereabouts, making sure they were behind cover, and even directing them in applying first aid to his own wounds.

Body camera video showed that immediately after being shot, SSgt. Weathersbee's priority was the safety of the other deputies coming to his aid. His reaction to this incident was nothing short of heroic and epitomizes the ideal for a law enforcement officer.



Sheriff Anthony Dennis with Sumter County MOV winner Staff Sergeant Steven Blake Weathersbee.





## Training, Experience, and Valor

### *Lieutenant Robert Reynolds, Sumter County Sheriff's Office*

**O**n September 26th, 2022, Lt Robert Reynolds responded to a domestic disturbance call. Details of the call were confusing but led deputies to believe a possible hostage situation had occurred. The location of the victim was not yet known. Deputies on the scene first contacted the suspect by telephone, but he refused to come out of the house or let deputies inside.

Lt. Reynolds arrived and began talking to the suspect from the front porch, demonstrating patience and understanding as he listened to the suspect, trying to gain his trust. The location and condition of the victim were still unknown, and this was Lt. Reynolds' top priority.

After several minutes of gaining the suspect's trust, Lt. Reynolds entered the home where the suspect

was sitting at the kitchen table. Noticing the suspect looking down to his left during their conversation, Lt. Reynolds spotted a handgun on the chair next to the suspect. He shouted to the suspect not to do it, but the suspect reached for the gun. Raising his gun toward Lt. Reynolds, Reynolds drew his gun and fired at the suspect, striking and killing him. Lt Reynolds then made sure the scene was secure before other deputies entered. The victim was discovered at a neighbor's house, severely assaulted but alive.

Lt. Reynolds is approaching 25 years with the department and, during this time, has served several combat tours with the National Guard. There is no doubt the suspect intended to harm Lt. Reynolds, but his training, real-world experience, and bravery prepared him for this day.



**Lieutenant Robert Reynolds, Sumter County MOV winner with Sheriff Anthony Dennis.**



# 2023 SCSA Medal of Valor Recipients

## Deputy's Fast Actions Saved Lives ... Twice

*Deputy Joshua Kirby, Sumter County Sheriff's Office*

On June 21st, 2022, Deputy Kirby responded to a call to assist a stabbing victim. Upon arrival, he discovered a woman with a severe stab wound which had hit an artery. She was losing a tremendous amount of blood. Dep. Kirby quickly rendered first aid, packing the wound and applying pressure until EMS arrived. His actions were instrumental in saving the victim's life.

On July 19th, 2022, Deputy Kirby responded to a call in reference to a shooting. Dep. Kirby was the first to arrive on scene, discovering a female lying in the roadway, covered in blood. Dep Kirby quickly retrieved his first aid kit and began to assess the

victim's injuries, noticing three gunshot wounds, the most serious to the victim's abdomen. Dep Kirby applied dressing to the wounds to stop the bleeding and maintained pressure until EMS arrived, all the while dealing with the chaos of the crime scene and family members standing over him. He also relayed information gathered from witnesses to other deputies. Based on that information, an arrest was made.

Dep Kirby's professionalism and quick actions in these two incidents saved the lives of both victims. In both cases, he didn't hesitate; rather, he reacted in the way he had been trained.



Sheriff Anthony Dennis with Sumter County MOV winner Deputy Joshua Kirby





## Putting Their Lives on the Line

*Deputy Korey Wedow, York County Sheriff's Office*  
*Deputy Lucas Frame, York County Sheriff's Office*

**O**n Tuesday, September 13, 2022, Deputies Korey Wedow and Lucas Frame became involved in a vehicle pursuit of a vehicle stolen out of Charlotte, North Carolina. The two deputies pursued the stolen vehicle for several miles throughout York County. At one point, it appeared that the suspect was going to surrender, but when the deputies attempted a felony car stop, the suspect continued to flee. The deputies were able to eventually block the suspect in at the parking lot of a local pharmacy.

As they attempted a second felony car stop, the suspect drove his vehicle past Deputy Frame, missing the deputy by mere inches. The suspect then aimed his vehicle at Deputy Wedow while Deputy Wedow was standing in the apex of the doorframe of his patrol vehicle. Fearing for his life and the safety of others, Deputy Wedow was forced to discharge his firearm, hitting the suspect. Immediately after the shots were fired, Deputy Wedow and Deputy Frame rushed to the aid of the suspect, attempting life saving measures but were not successful.

Deputies Wedow and Frame displayed extreme courage, bravery, and compassion during this incident. The two deputies placed themselves in harm's way to prevent the suspect from hurting members of the public.



**Sheriff Kevin Tolson with MOV winners  
from York County Sheriff's Office.**

## Bravery in Neutralizing a Threat

*Deputy Zachary T. Hentz, Richland County Sheriff's Office*



**Sheriff Leon Lott with Richland County  
MOV winner Deputy Zachary T. Hentz**

**O**n March 19, 2022, Deputy Zachary Hentz responded to a call involving a domestic incident.

Deputy John Anderson had arrived at the scene first encountered a suspect exiting the home holding what appeared to be a large knife, later identified as a sharpened wooden stake. Deputy Anderson attempted to retreat while commanding the suspect to drop his weapon. Deputy Hentz arrived and joined Deputy Anderson in calling for the suspect to drop his weapon.

The suspect suddenly charged at Deputy Hentz, who had both his taser and firearm drawn. Deputy Hentz deployed his taser as the suspect advanced, but the prongs did not attach. As the suspect continued his advance, Deputy Hentz then deployed his firearm. Deputy Anderson handcuffed the suspect, and both officers performed life-saving measures on the suspect. Unfortunately, they were not able to save the suspect who later died of the gunshot wounds.

While it is never the goal of deputies to take the life of anyone, Deputy Hentz exemplified courage and bravery as he assisted his partner in neutralizing a threat to both their lives. Deputy Hentz faced the danger without hesitation, upholding the standard all officers are encouraged to meet each day as they go into the community to serve.

*Thank You!*

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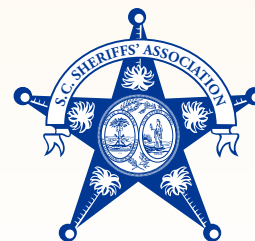
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