



## **Media Release**

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### **FCSO Announces 2015 Annual and Quarterly Award Winners**

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office celebrated its annual awards luncheon Wednesday at the new sheriff's operations center. With the Community Chorus of Palm Coast singing holiday songs, employees, family, friends and guests gathered to eat lunch and recognize those who went above and beyond during 2015. The awards and recipients are as follows:

- **Lifesaving Medal:**

1. Awarded to Sgt. Mike Van Buren, CSI Lainie Weibling, and Deputies Joe Barnett, Greg Nunziato and Bret Wood following their collective effort to save the life of a missing 4-year-old boy on Sunday, July 12, 2015. Lawton Lapete was found in a hot vehicle and may have been there up to an hour, before rescuers arrived. Deputies worked to reduce his core temperature and resuscitated him before he was taken to Florida Hospital Flagler and later to Wolfson Children's Hospital in Jacksonville. Through their united efforts, a tragic situation was averted. Each member played an integral role, from the Communications Specialist to the Sergeant of this squad - from finding the child to resuscitating him, to visiting him in the hospital, all demonstrating a touch of kindness and concern.



Pictured from left to right are Sheriff James L. Manfre, Sgt. Michael Van Buren, CSI Lainie Weibling, deputies Joseph Barnett, Greg Nunziato, Bret Wood, and Scott and Angela LaPete and their son Lawton, who was found unresponsive in a hot car.

2. Awarded to Lenix Thorne, a resident of Palm Coast, for his actions after he heard a commotion across from his home. He found an unresponsive 16-month-old child, the result of a near-drowning. His quick action of performing CPR until law enforcement officers arrived saved the child. The Sheriff's Office recognizes his heroic actions.



Pictured from left to right are Pam and Lenix Thorne and Sheriff Manfre.

3. Awarded to Deputy Jonathan Kuleski for his work in responding to a medical call on Royal Tern Lane. He performed CPR on the male victim until rescue arrived on scene. His quick actions resulted in ensuring the patient got a chance he may not have otherwise had.



Sheriff Manfre congratulates Deputy Jonathan Kuleski.

- **Meritorious Service Medal:**

Awarded to Sgt. Michael Van Buren and Deputies James Crosbee, Fiona Ebrill and George Hristakopoulos following their efforts Sept. 14, 2015, to diffuse a potentially deadly situation after responding to a call advising a Palm Coast woman was armed with a loaded gun. Upon refusing to comply with the commands to “drop the weapon,” the armed subject proceeded to direct her weapon toward Deputy Hristakopoulos. At this time Sgt. Michael Van Buren deployed his Dart Firing Stun Gun subduing the subject. This team of officers all did an excellent job of issuing their verbal commands and following procedure.



Pictured from left are Sheriff Manfre, Sgt. Michael Van Buren and deputies James Crosbee, Fiona Ebrill and George Hristakopoulos.

- **Certificate of Merit:**

Awarded to Corporal Bernard Woodward and Deputies John Castanheira, Fred Gimbel, Shayna Favorite-Biss and Frank Barbagallo for their outstanding work together in responding to a domestic violence call. The suspect was highly intoxicated; he had battered the girlfriend and her friend, took the couple’s 17-month-old child and stole the victim’s mother’s car. The child was listed as missing and endangered. They were able to “ping” the suspect’s cellphone to locate him and the child. Due to the diligence of this team, the suspect and child were found in their disabled vehicle. It was feared that the child was in harm’s way due to the environment and the mental and physical state of the suspect.

- **Community Service Medal:**

1. Awarded to Deputy Jason Williams for his consistent initiative to participate in every job fair and open house with the Florida Law Enforcement Academics. Through his hard work and diligence, we have been able to consistently meet our recruitment goals.



Sheriff Manfre congratulates Deputy Jason Williams.

2. Awarded to Sgt. Dave Williams and Deputies Kenny Goncalves, Scott Vedder, Otis Gilyard and William Lowe for their participation in many events that involve the public. They are there not only as a traffic unit assisting in the flow of traffic safely, they are very much involved in demonstrations, static displays and talks with the Flagler community and especially the youth.



Shown are from left, Sheriff Manfre and Deputies Scott Vedder, William Lowe, Kenny Goncalves, Otis Gilyard and Sgt. David Williams.

- **Unit Citation Medal:**

Awarded to Director Jim Troiano, Sgt. Adam Biss and Accreditation Assistant Michele Bagnoli for extraordinary achievement in accomplishing a specific mission. This unit excelled in planning, implementing and executing the CFA law enforcement accreditation process for the sheriff's office to achieve agency re-accreditation.



Shown are Sheriff Manfre, left, Sgt. Adam Biss and Director Jim Troiano.

- **Distinguished Service Medal:**

1. Awarded to Deputy Ron Mello for his knowledge, skill and initiative that make him a valued member of our agency. He has demonstrated initiative, determination and thoroughness in the cases he has been involved with. This case in particular stands out for Deputy Mello's dedication. It was for a missing juvenile who was believed to be in New York, where Deputy Mello went above and beyond working with Suffolk County to help locate the child and assisting with the arrangements to transport the child back to Florida.



Shown are Sheriff Manfre, left, with Deputy Ron Mello.

2. Awarded to Deputy Richard Petkovsek for being proactive, and for displaying an eagerness to make a difference in the community. His work reflects his initiative, determination and thoroughness. He was instrumental as the primary and arresting deputy in solving a burglary on Seven Wonders Trail.



Sheriff Manfre congratulates Deputy Richard Petkovsek.

3. Awarded to Deputy Chris Taylor for his professional demeanor, positive attitude and ability to be a team player. Deputy Taylor has an outstanding attendance record and an excellent performance record with the agency. He provides the youth of Flagler County with leadership through becoming an active member of Police Athletic League (PAL) wrestling.



Shown with Sheriff Manfre is Deputy Chris Taylor.

- **Deputy of 4th Quarter:**

Corporal Michael Miller was honored for taking on several new tasks these past few months that have demonstrated a great commitment to our agency goals and objectives. Corporal Miller has taken the lead on sex offender address verifications, making sure these people are following the law and that we know the address where they live. He recently joined the Hostage Negotiation Team as a supervisor and has been instrumental in recruiting new members, scheduling new training, and reorganizing the team to make it better and more effective. Corporal Miller has also taken the lead in researching and testing the potential use of dictation software that may make our deputies more efficient in the ability to write reports.



Sheriff Manfre is pictured with Corporal Michael Miller.

- **Detention Deputy of the 4th Quarter:**

Deputy Beatrice Rivas has been a member of the Flagler County Sheriff's Office Detention Division since 2002. She is a senior deputy. Deputy Rivas has done a great job being our only Female Field Training Officer, which means she has the sole responsibility to make sure deputies are properly trained to supervise female inmates. Deputy Rivas is a team player and well-respected by her peers.



Sheriff Manfre congratulates Deputy Beatrice Rivas.

- **Civilian Employee of the 4th Quarter**

Renina Fuller was named Civilian Employee of the Quarter for her dedication to the Finance Department to keep everyone getting paid before, during and after the move to the new operation center. Also because of the absence of the other Finance employee, Renina has taken over all the duties in that office and has performed professionally and has gone above and beyond to make sure the bills get paid and the employees receive their paychecks even with the adversity of the computer systems being on the fritz after the move. Because of her and her co-workers' duties being performed by her alone and with all the other adverse issues confronting her, no disruption of financial services were affected.

- **Detention Deputy of the Year:**

Deputy Justin Bailey, an FCSO employee since 2010, was honored for his commitment to insure the safety of inmates as well as staff and visitors at the Detention Facility. He is a member of the Corrections Special Operations Team. Deputy Bailey was recognized for his heroic actions in saving his neighbor's life.



Sheriff Manfre congratulates Detention Deputy Justin Bailey.



- **Civilian Employee of the Year:**

Sheri Gopie became a member of the Flagler County Sheriff's Office family in 2013. She serves both Sheriff Manfre and Chief Deputy Hoffman, along with the entire executive staff. Sheri is always ready to help FCSO employees and civilians with day-to-day questions without complaint. Sheri is never without a smile and a helping hand.



Sheriff Manfre congratulates Sheri Gopi.

- **Deputy of the Year:**

Sgt. Michael Van Buren has been a dedicated member of the FCSO since 1987, where he has displayed professional judgment and years of experience. This was again noted when he diffused a potentially deadly situation on Sept. 14, 2015 and he should be commended. He is truly an asset to FCSO and to the community he serves. Sgt. Van Buren is the epitome of commitment not only to the agency but to the public he serves.



Sheriff Manfre and Sgt. Van Buren

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