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TWELVE VIRGINIA LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS RECEIVE 2018 VACP AWARDS FOR VALOR

*Officers from Chesterfield County, Danville, Farmville, Portsmouth, Roanoke,
Stafford County and Virginia State Police recognized for heroism.*

On September 11, 2018, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation (VACP) will present twelve Virginia law enforcement officers from seven agencies with the Association's highest honor, the Award for Valor. The awards will be presented during the Awards Banquet at the VACP Annual Conference, held this year at the Hotel Roanoke in Roanoke, VA.

The Award for Valor recognizes a law enforcement officer who, in the line of duty, performs an act of extraordinary heroism while engaged with an adversary at imminent personal risk.

Officers receiving the 2018 Awards for Valor are:

Chesterfield County Police Department
Sergeant Jeffrey A. Kencitzski
Master Officer Shawn V. Beach

On December 27, 2017, Sergeant Jeffrey Kencitzski and Master Officer Shawn Beach responded to a suicidal subject who had fired off multiple rounds inside his house.

When Sergeant Kencitzski arrived, he and Master Officer Beach began to set up a perimeter in front of the house. Sergeant Kencitzski saw two women sitting in a vehicle in the driveway of the house. He was able to get them out of the driveway and safely away from the scene to keep them from harm. Prior to getting clear, they told him that the man inside the house was intoxicated and angry.

After getting the two possible victims away from the present threat, Sergeant Kencitzski and Master Officer Beach saw the subject fling open the front door. He was screaming unintelligibly, was visibly enraged and carrying a rifle. Sergeant Kencitzski tried to verbally engage the man to no avail. The man then levelled the weapon at the officers and fired a round through the glass screen door at Sergeant Kencitzski and Master Officer Beach. In fear for their lives, both officers were forced to return fire at the man, resulting in several fatal wounds.

Sergeant Kencitzski and Master Officer Beach demonstrated heroism and valor through their willingness to put themselves in harm's way to protect the two potential victims and the surrounding community. They put themselves at risk to try and help a suicidal man and resorted to lethal force only when necessary to protect their lives and the lives of those around them.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is honored to present Sergeant Jeffrey A. Kencitzski and Master Officer Shawn V. Beach with the 2018 Award for Valor.

Chesterfield County Police Department
Corporal Brian M. Rhodenizer

On the afternoon of October 11, 2017, Chesterfield County police officers were dispatched to a bank robbery in progress at the Argent Federal Credit Union. Officers were advised that a man there had just committed an armed robbery.

Responding officers located the suspect in a vehicle several miles away. As they approached, the suspect sped off. Corporal Brian Rhodenizer was behind the suspect's vehicle and remained close enough to prepare for the suspect's attempt to flee.

The suspect exited from the vehicle and attempted to scale a fence with cash in his hands and a pistol tucked in his waistband. Corporal Rhodenizer utilized a Taser to subdue the suspect; however, it proved ineffective. As the suspect dropped to the other side of the fence, both the cash and firearm fell to the ground. The suspect picked up the money and gun while turning towards Corporal Rhodenizer, who was shouting orders at the suspect. As the suspect's gun rotated in Corporal Rhodenizer's direction, he fired twice, striking the suspect in the abdomen.

As the suspect went to the ground, Corporal Rhodenizer continued giving commands to the suspect. Once over the fence, he secured the suspect and immediately began rendering first aid. Corporal Rhodenizer yelled for other officers to throw him medical supplies over the fence. Corporal Rhodenizer and another officer treated the suspect's wounds to the chest/abdomen area while also attempting to calm him.

The rescue workers that treated and transported the subject to the hospital returned to the scene later and inquired as to whom rendered the initial aid to the suspect. These firefighter/paramedics were surprised to hear it was the officer that shot the suspect. Ultimately, they commended his quick actions, advising the suspect never would have survived his injuries without the immediate and excellent attention received prior to reaching them.

The suspect has since been implicated in three additional bank robberies in the metro Richmond area and Corporal Rhodenizer has been lauded for his heroic and courageous actions.

We are honored to present Corporal Brian M. Rhodenizer with the 2018 VACP Award for Valor.

Danville Police Department
Officer Justin P. Nelson
Officer John S. Stadler

On January 6, 2018, just after midnight, Officer John Stadler responded to a disturbance call. The caller reported a female running down the street, screaming that someone was shooting at

her. Officer Stadler encountered the hysterical female who was screaming the words, “He killed her.” Officer Justin Nelson and Corporal Jeffries arrived on the scene as Officer Stadler was attempting to gain more information from the distraught female. The female only could manage to give minimal helpful information.

Officers Stadler and Nelson proceeded to the address to check the well-being of the individuals inside. The officers encountered another subject sitting in the driveway, who advised that a female inside had called him for a ride. The subject told Office Stadler that he did not know about the condition of the people inside the residence.

Officer Stadler knocked on the door and announced himself as “the Police.” An extremely agitated male on the other side of the door then yelled back, so Officer Stadler asked whether everyone was okay. The suspect responded, “They all dead.” As Officer Nelson stepped onto the porch, the suspect fired a shotgun round through the front door causing both officers to retreat for cover.

Corporal Jeffries, who was several houses up the street, notified dispatch of “shots fired” and called for all available units to respond. SWAT and Hostage Negotiations were activated, but would not arrive in time to address the situation. Shortly after the 50-minute standoff, the suspect exited the residence through the front door and fired two shotgun rounds toward the officers.

When the suspect raised his weapon to fire again, Officer Nelson fatally engaged him, ending the standoff. After securing the scene, officers discovered the suspect had killed both a female and a small dog inside the residence.

We are honored to present Officer Justin P. Nelson and Officer John S. Stadler with the 2018 VACP Award for Valor.

Farmville Police Department
Sgt. David A. Ragland

On the afternoon of May 22, 2012, Farmville Police were dispatched to be on the lookout for an armed man entering the town. The man had been involved in a domestic situation in recent weeks and was under a protective order that prohibited him from possessing a firearm. It was believed that the suspect was enroute to inflict harm to his wife at her place of employment.

The suspect’s vehicle, a green Dodge truck, was stopped by officers from the Farmville Police Department and Prince Edward County Sheriff’s Department in the 1900 block of West Third Street. The suspect sped from the stop and fired a shot at the pursuing Farmville officer, David Ragland.

The pursuit continued into Prince Edward County, where the suspect stopped on Forestview Road. The suspect exited his vehicle armed with a handgun and shots were fired by Officer David Ragland and the suspect. The suspect was pronounced dead at the scene. Officer David Ragland sustained no injuries as a result of shots fired by the suspect.

Farmville Police Officer David A. Ragland, who has since been promoted to Sergeant, is recognized with the 2018 VACP Award for Valor.

Portsmouth Police Department
Officer Angelina Baaklini

On November 6, 2017, Portsmouth Police Officer Angelina Baaklini was patrolling her assigned area when she came upon a suspicious male on a bicycle. Officer Baaklini recognized him by name and face and had knowledge that he had an active juvenile detention order. As Officer Baaklini was attempting to detain the 15-year-old, he produced a handgun and shot Officer Baaklini five times. One of those rounds was stopped by her ballistic vest; however, four rounds struck her in the body. Officer Baaklini took cover behind her police vehicle, drew her weapon and radioed dispatch that she had been shot. She provided a very detailed description of the suspect to include his name and direction of travel.

Retired Portsmouth Police Sergeant Geravis “G.A.” Brown lived nearby and came to Officer Baaklini’s aid. He stayed with Officer Baaklini until other officers arrived. Detectives Robert Dyer and Stanley Alexander were the first officers on scene, immediately providing necessary first aid until Portsmouth Fire Rescue and Emergency Services responded and assumed her treatment.

Because of Officer Baaklini’s very clear description of the suspect, his name, as well as direction of travel, responding Officers Ian McNett and Connor McDaniel spotted the suspect entering the London Oaks Apartment complex on foot and could see that he had a handcuff on one of his wrists. As Officer McNett and Officer Connor were working to close the distance from the suspect, K-9 Sergeant Matthew Crutcher worked his way through the apartment complex to prevent the suspect’s escape. Officer McNett and McDaniel were able to close the distance and challenge the suspect as Sergeant Crutcher and K-9 Eli provided cover as the officers took him into custody.

Officer Baaklini was transported to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital where she underwent surgery upon arriving at the hospital and subsequently a second successful surgery overnight. The 15-year-old male suspect was charged with numerous offenses including attempted capital murder of a police officer and use of a firearm. He was adjudicated as an adult and was found guilty of all charges.

For their efforts, Detectives Robert Dyer and Stanley Alexander will receive the VACP Lifesaving Award. Tonight, we are honored to recognize Officer Angelina Baaklini for her bravery and professionalism with the 2018 VACP Award for Valor.

Roanoke Police Department
Officer R. Andrew Howell

On November 8, 2017 at 10:05 PM, Roanoke Police Officer R. Andrew Howell answered a disturbance call where he could hear a male and female arguing. He heard over his radio that the male subject was armed. As Officer Howell approached, he determined that there were three individuals involved — two who were arguing and one who was standing nearby.

While observing the subjects, Officer Howell could hear a female state, “you put a gun to my face” and then observed a female walking towards him. The female asked if she could go to the residence next door. Officer Howell continued to focus on the remaining male and female on the property. The remaining female was now a short distance from the front porch and the male was looking down at her as the argument with the other woman continued. Officer Howell then observed the male raising a handgun in the female’s direction as he began verbal warnings to the suspect to drop the gun. The suspect then fired a shot at the woman.

Officer Howell immediately returned fire at the male suspect, who was now turning toward him with the weapon pointed in his direction. The suspect was struck and collapsed on the porch. Officer Howell took custody of the suspects’ firearm and summoned additional police resources to aid in securing the scene. Despite the provision of emergency treatment, the suspect died from the wounds received.

Through the course of the Virginia State Police investigation, it was determined that at least one round from the suspect’s weapon was fired towards Officer Howell’s position. The female victim advised that an ongoing domestic issue had been developing over a child custody issue. The victim credits Officer Howell’s intervention with preventing her from being shot during this conflict.

The quick response and actions of Officer Howell were critical in preventing further violence and serious injury or death. Officer Howell acted according to training and policy and without any hesitation to engage an armed combatant who had already fired at a defenseless victim. Without Officer Howell’s quick response and immediate intervention, the circumstances could have resulted in additional injury or death.

The VACP is honored to present Officer R. Andrew Howell with the distinguished 2018 Award for Valor.

Stafford County Sheriff’s Office
Deputy Cody McCormick

Virginia State Police
Trooper Zachary G. Torrance

Around noon on December 28th, 2017, the Stafford County Sheriff’s Office released a bulletin on a homicide suspect. Traffic on I-95 in Stafford County was very heavy; however, Virginia State Police Trooper Zachary Torrance was able to spot the subject’s vehicle as it pulled onto I-95 to head north. Trooper Torrance called into dispatch to have them relay to Stafford County Sheriff’s Office that he was behind the suspect vehicle. He continued behind the vehicle, waiting for backup.

The vehicle then stopped in the middle lane of traffic on I-95 and the suspect leaned out his driver’s side window and began firing into Trooper Torrance’s windshield. After a round of shots, the suspect put the vehicle back in drive and headed north again. Undeterred by the close call, Trooper Torrance kept up with the vehicle and expertly called the pursuit as they headed north

on I-95 at a high rate of speed. Had Trooper Torrance not reacted as quickly as he did to the shots fired, he would have been struck center mass by the bullet that penetrated his windshield and then his driver's seat.

Stafford County Sheriff's Deputy Cody McCormick responded to a call that a Virginia State Trooper was pursuing a vehicle northbound on I-95. Shortly after Deputy McCormick joined the pursuit, the suspect leaned out of his window again and fired his weapon. McCormick, a former Army ranger who had been shot at before in Iraq and Afghanistan, ducked as a bullet came through his windshield and lodged in the center of his driver's seat headrest.

The suspect then accelerated and headed north on I-95 with Trooper Torrance and Deputy McCormick right behind. At the 142 mile marker, the vehicle ran off the right side of the interstate and overturned, landing upside down in the travel lanes.

Upon the suspect vehicle overturning and coming to a rest in the middle of the highway, Trooper Torrance and Deputy McCormick tactically exited their cruisers and took up a position of cover behind the State Police cruiser and secured the perimeter until back-up units could arrive. As additional deputies and troopers arrived on scene, the Sheriff's Office responded with their tactical response vehicle and used its ram to breach the suspect vehicle windows, which allowed for a better view of the suspect inside. It was quickly determined that the suspect was suffering from some type of injury. At this time a team of deputies and troopers moved forward and were able to remove the suspect from the vehicle. It was confirmed that the suspect was terminally injured from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

The VACP is honored to recognize Stafford County Deputy Cody McCormick and Virginia State Trooper Zachary G. Torrance with the 2018 VACP Award for Valor.

Virginia State Police
Master Trooper David A. Lewis

On Christmas Day 2017, Master Trooper David Lewis heard a dispatch that a 2015 Ford Escape that had been involved in an armed robbery at a Dinwiddie County convenience store and that it may be headed north on I-95.

Henrico County police officers and Virginia State Police troopers located the Ford Escape near Route 1. But when the officers approached, the vehicle fled the parking lot.

State Police pursued the suspect vehicle, which was traveling 120 mph without its lights on. The driver attempted to ram the trooper's vehicle.

The pursuit continued north into Caroline County. Meanwhile, Master Trooper Lewis and his fellow Culpeper Division troopers were getting into position to pick up the pursuit should it continue into Spotsylvania County.

And, it did... with the suspect still traveling in excess of 100 mph and using the shoulder to get around traffic. By this time, Master Trooper Lewis had received additional information on the suspect, indicating he was likely armed and had shot up a convenience store in North Carolina

earlier on Christmas Day. Also, the driver had stolen the Ford Escape at gunpoint at another gas station in North Carolina.

Suddenly, the driver bailed from the Ford Escape as it was still moving and ran on foot towards the median. Master Trooper Lewis pursued the suspect on foot. The suspect fired at Trooper Lewis, narrowly missing him. Master Trooper Lewis immediately returned fire and struck the suspect, who still refused to stop and ran into the heavily-wooded median.

Interstate 95 was immediately closed in both directions for the safety of all motorists and a perimeter established to contain the suspect within the median. The 21-year-old male suspect was located and surrendered to State Police. The suspect's firearm was recovered at the scene and marijuana was found inside the stolen vehicle. The suspect was treated for non-life threatening injuries and charged on multiple counts.

Master Trooper Lewis risked his own safety to protect his fellow troopers and passing motorists against the threat of this potentially deadly gunman. We are honored to recognize Master Trooper David A. Lewis with the 2018 VACP Award for Valor.

Virginia State Police
Senior Trooper Christopher A. Putnam

On the evening of September 19, 2017, Senior Trooper Christopher A. Putnam observed a vehicle traveling 87 mph in the 60mph zone on Chippenham Parkway in Chesterfield County. When the trooper activated his emergency lights, the vehicle pulled over to the northbound shoulder. As Sr. Trooper Putnam approached the vehicle, it sped away and a pursuit was initiated.

The pursuit continued north on Chippenham Parkway, crossed over the James River into Henrico County and then onto Parham Road. The driver of the vehicle turned into a neighborhood street that was a dead end and tried to turn around in the cul-de-sac. Senior Trooper Putnam positioned his patrol car in front of the vehicle and rendered it disabled.

Now stopped, a female jumped out of the driver's side and fled on foot into the yard of a nearby residence. Without hesitation, Sr. Trooper Putnam ran after her commanding the woman to stop. The woman stopped, turned, and fired a 45-caliber handgun, striking Sr. Trooper Putnam in the arm and ballistic vest.

The woman then ran through the neighborhood and forced her way – at gunpoint – into a house, demanding the residents surrender their vehicle to her. She fled that residence and was apprehended in the woods nearby by Henrico County Police without further incident.

The quick arrest of this woman was due to Sr. Trooper Putnam's extraordinary fortitude and determination not to let the shooter escape or harm anyone else. Despite having lost the use of his arm in the shooting, he remained incredibly calm and made his way back to his patrol car while still taking cover. Maintaining his composure, he called his location into dispatch and provided a detailed description of the shooter, resulting in her quick capture. With the help of a Henrico County Officer, Sr. Trooper Putnam was able to administer his own tourniquet to his

arm, stopping the profuse bleeding and ultimately saving his own life.

The 23-year-old North Carolina woman was sentenced to serve 46 years in jail for her guilty plea to attempted capital murder of a police officer.

In recognition of his extraordinary courage, purpose, and resolve, we are honored to recognize Senior Trooper Christopher A. Putnam with the 2018 VACP Award for Valor.

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The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation (www.vachiefs.org) is a statewide charitable organization of federal, state and local police chiefs and other law enforcement executives dedicated to improving the professionalism of police agencies in Virginia and to providing training and education programs for law enforcement executives. The Association was founded in 1926 and has more than 600 members.

Photos of the award winners will be available after the conference at <http://photos.vachiefs.org/VACP-Conferences/2018-VACP-Annual-Conference/>

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For Immediate Release*