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A City of Lakewood tradition
honoring bravery, devotion to duty
and community service

November 16, 2016



2016 AWARD OF VALOR PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION OF MASTER OF CEREMONIES..... COUNCIL MEMBER STEVE CROFT

OPENING REMARKS ED ARNOLD, MASTER OF CEREMONIES

**INVOCATION.....MONSIGNOR JOSEPH GREELEY
SAINT PANCRATIUS CHURCH**

POSTING OF COLORS..... SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT COLOR GUARD

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE COUNCIL MEMBER JEFF WOOD

LUNCHEON

LAKEWOOD'S COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SAFETYMAYOR RON PIAZZA

**INTRODUCTION OF
FIRE CHIEF DARYL L. OSBY VICE MAYOR DIANE DUBOIS**

**REMARKS AND
AWARD PRESENTATIONSFIRE CHIEF DARYL L. OSBY**

**INTRODUCTION OF
SHERIFF JIM McDONNELL COUNCIL MEMBER TODD ROGERS**

**REMARKS AND
AWARD PRESENTATIONSSHERIFF JIM McDONNELL**

ADJOURNMENT..... ED ARNOLD, MASTER OF CEREMONIES

2006-2015 Honorees

2006

Lieutenant Terry Benjestorf, Terry Denning, Sergeant John Gannon, Craig Hendrix, Sergeant Eddie Hernandez, Jay Hubatch, Deputy Shawn Kehoe, Firefighter Paramedic Mario Lemos, Deputy Billy Lovell, Gloria Mannion, Christopher Mannion, Jean Marksbury, Marilyn Nickles, Deputy Grant Oberle, Deputy Daniel Rudd, Deputy Scott Scally, Deputy Shawn Snyder, Deputy Richard Torres, Rene Uribe, Officer William R. Wendt, Firefighter Paramedic Anthony Wren.

2007

Deputy Willie Agustin, Deputy Roy Aldana, Sergeant Sonja Bracken, Deputy Shawn Cliver, Detective Michael Del Real, Deputy Joseph Fleischmann, Deputy Patrick Gudut, Firefighter Specialist Larry Hann, Deputy David Harrison, Sergeant Eduardo Hernandez, Deputy Daniel Holquin, Arlin Kooops, Deputy John Lee, Firefighter Paramedic Mario Lemos, Gisbert Lenny, Tiffany Logan, Sergeant Phillip Marquez, Firefighter Scott Miller, Deputy Gregory Moore, Detective Daniel Morris, Captain Daniel B. Murchison, Mona Overby, Sergeant Steven Paul, Officer Joshua Rice, Deputy Salvador Rios, Anthony Ruiz, Sally Shipley, Deputy Shawn Spoonhunter, Deputy Richard Torres, Sergeant Yancy Walden, Sergeant Josie Woolum, Firefighter Paramedic Anthony Wren.

2008

Firefighter Paramedic Gustavo Aguirre, June Anderson, Engineer James M. Armijo, Anthony Baker, Deputy Steven Baze, Maggie Billingsley, Firefighter Paramedic Ronald Castro, Alfredo Contreras, Firefighter Joshua C. Costello, Bruce DuAmarell, Kevin Hamilton, Sergeant Carlton Hinchman, Deputy Cesar Hinojosa, William Holland, Rose Johnson, Bryan Kekacs, Dennis Kildall, Deputy Brian Nowell, Deputy Charles Nowotny, Captain Richard L. Piercy, Carole Pippin, Division Chief John E. Radeleff, Carli Sherman, Glade Smith, Michael Zwick.

2009

Kevin Arias, Firefighter Paramedic Ron Castro, Russell Collison, Deputy Andrew Emch, Deputy David Harrison, Fire Fighter Chiyoshi Hasegawa, Katherine Hinsche, Deputy Cesar Hinojosa, Adam Hobbs, Captain Garry Isaacson, Deputy Eliseo Lopez, Jr., Emelda Lopez, Deputy Brian Nowell, Deputy Alberto Romero, Patricia Rubio, Sandi Ruyle, Firefighter Paramedic Theodore T. Saraf, Jr., Thomas Sherwood, Sr., Joseph Stranges, Jr., Sam Torres, Deputy Neil Wendland, Cameron White.

2010

Deputy Willie Agustin, Firefighter Paramedic Allan Anolin, Stephanie Baca, Michelle Bracy, Deputy Freddy Brown, Howard Chambers, Deputy John Denney, Deputy Jose Diaz, Sandra Endsley, Deputy Matthew Ferguson, Deputy Christopher Gensel, Cynthia Guardado, Joel Hernandez, Sergeant Scott Hogle, Sharon Jaffke, Ronald Kuiper, Firefighter Paramedic Trainee Kenneth Lee, Jean Marksbury, Deputy Michael McCarty, Deputy Grant Oberle, Richard Olson, Firefighter Paramedic Greg Perez, Gabrielle Pineda, William Pollack, Miguel Ramirez, Deputy Francine Rizzio, Deputy Christine Roam, Florence Robinson, Joe Sapien, Sally Shipley.

2011

Everett Avila, Deputy Brian S. Bank, Deputy Chris Bronowicki, Detective Thomas E. Brown, Uwe Bruhn, Firefighter Jameson Burmeister, Firefighter Paramedic Patrick Cary,

Deputy Sergio Cosio, Firefighter Paramedic Michael Depew, Deputy Andrew Emch, Deputy Matthew Ferguson, Craig Hendrix, Firefighter Paramedic Cheryl Hoffman, Sergeant Jodi L. Hutak, Captain Craig Ibanez, Deputy Anthony A. Johnson, Engineer Marc Lecocq, Charles & Dorie Lopez, Tyler Marlowe, Firefighter Paramedic Eric McNamara, Alice Mitchell, Deputy Charles Nowotny, Deputy Grant Oberle, Deputy Samuel Orozco, Deputy Osvaldo Santa Ana, Deputy Robert Solorio, Firefighter Mike Thompson.

2012

Deputy Jeffrey Burke, Richard Dykens, Paul Gallegos, Captain David Garcia, Engineer Lawrence Hann, Deputy Michael Herrera, Sergeant Scott Hogle, Elisha Hollens, Deputy Janette Leo, Barbara Liberator, Karen Lutz, Virginia Martinez, Firefighter Paramedic Aaron Morris, Edward Newby, Justin Nguyen, Deputy Grant Oberle, Guyla Romero, David Romero, Firefighter Paramedic Aron Rowe, Detective Shawn Snyder, Deputy Roberto Solorio Jr., Daryl Takaki, Brian Thatcher, Firefighter George Youssef.

2013

Firefighter Paramedic Christopher Barth, Gilbert Bonilla, Laura Brown, Officer Daniel Camarillo, Diana Carlos, Deputy Keith Collinsworth, Cindy Del Orbe, Diane Dietrich, Donna Domingo, Firefighter Paramedic Antonio Felipe, Deputy Matthew Ferguson, Wanda Figueroa, Deputy Anthony Johnson, Danny King Jr., Thomas Laing, Linda Manis, Dorothy Meyer, Charles Meyer, Deputy Grant Oberle, Captain Richard Piercy, Barbara Schoolmeester, Chazz Siqueiro, Deputy Robert Solorio, Deputy Steven Vranek, Gary Wills, Trevor Wills.

2014

Deputy Willie Agustin, Deputy Jose Arciga, Sailesh Chintada, Devyn Collado-Nicol, Deputy Keith Collinsworth, Gaurav Datta, Deputy Rachel De Hoyos, Richard A. Frederick III, Deputy Tera Frudakis, Marcel Galima, Raymond Garcia, Deborah Gonzales, Ray Grier II, Elia Huerta, Captain Stephen R. Kolstad, Ayub Manjra, Brenda Nowak, Lisa Osterman, Firefighter Paramedic Michael Pradin, Deputy Michael Sanchez, Ivone Santos, Michael Schicora, Diane Searer, Glade Smith, Deputy Nicholas Stewart, Firefighter Paramedic Mark Suarez, Deputy Chad Vanden Berg, Clifford Vanderwal.

2015

Ahmed Abouzid, Ed Arnold, Dale Scott Atkinson, Firefighter Specialist Brian T. Audet, Firefighter Paramedic Kevin Banfield, Firefighter Paramedic Chris Barth, Christie Bettendorf, Ramzi Bettendorf, Lane Bixlerk, Edward Blanchard, Joe Brown, Detective Mark Campbell, Firefighter Paramedic Michael Depew, Michael L. Hopwood, Stephanie Janisse, Captain Brian Jones, Deputy Samantha Lee Jones, Nancy Kirstenpfad, Deputy Clark Lopez, Captain John Lopez, Jimmy Ngo, Firefighter Paramedic Michael Nielsen, Deputy James Perkins, Andy Pham, Cheryl Portugal, Veronica Portugal, Firefighter Paramedic Michael Pradin, Deputy Michael Rinden, Sally A. Shipley, Deputy Stephanie Sloan, Deputy Roberto Solorio, Jr., Sergeant Thomas Vernola, Sandra Weisenstein, Firefighter Specialist Cary Windes.

BOLO

In 2013, the BOLO (Be on the Lookout) award category was created in response to a positive movement in the community—conscientious citizens making a concerted effort to look out for their neighbors. These residents take responsibility for making a real difference and for improving the safety of their Lakewood neighborhoods. When these residents “see something, they say something,” and quickly report unusual activity in their neighborhoods that should be brought to the attention of authorities.

This year, six individuals didn’t ignore their sense that something was amiss in their neighborhoods, and it resulted in their either preventing or stopping crime right in its tracks. They are the honorees of the 4th annual BOLO Awards.

In each incident, BOLO honorees saw activity that raised their suspicions. Keeping careful watch until the moment seemed right, each contacted the Sheriff’s Department to further investigate an unfolding situation. They have modeled behavior that is appreciated not only by law enforcement, but especially by their fellow neighbors. ■



Laura Havlik



Marylou Van Pelt



Joe Perez



Brian Cahill and Jessica Stout-Ryder



Steve Turner

Welcome to the 2016 Lakewood Award of Valor Luncheon. We thank you for joining with the Lakewood city family in paying tribute to the 25 men and women who have shown a commitment to public safety in our community. Their selfless acts will leave you inspired and heartened by the level of bravery and courage demonstrated right here in Lakewood.

To all of this year’s honorees, we applaud and thank you for your service and contributions to the Lakewood we all love.



Lakewood Award of Valor

The Lakewood Award of Valor reflects six categories of exceptional service to our community:

- The **Award of Valor** is given to deputies, firefighters and other uniformed officers whose courageous actions or command of a life-threatening situation is worthy of special commendation.
- The **Distinguished Service Award** is given to someone with exemplary service over many years in a public safety capacity for the Lakewood community.
- The **Mayor’s Award** is given to residents or others visiting Lakewood who assisted deputies, firefighters or paramedics in the performance of their duties or who stepped forward in an emergency to aid a neighbor.
- The **Community Service Award** is presented to volunteers whose time and energy are directed toward improving public safety in Lakewood.
- The **Dave Powell Community Policing Award** is given to a Sheriff’s deputy who has provided a high level of service as a PAVE (Partnership, Accountability, Visibility, and Enforcement program) Deputy and who supports the objectives of the “beat policing” philosophy in Lakewood.
- The **BOLO Award**, named after the law enforcement term for “Be On the Look Out,” is presented to those whose keen observations and timely reporting of suspicious or unusual activity led to the apprehension of criminal suspects and/or the return of stolen property.

Award of Valor

On a spring day, Lakewood Station Sergeant Sean O’Donoghue and Deputy Torre Williams responded to a call reporting a man on his front porch armed with a shotgun and threatening his wife. Further information was received that the man was a Vietnam veteran having a psychotic episode.

Arriving at the residence, Sergeant O’Donoghue opened a dialogue with the man to try to persuade him to lay down his weapon. Sergeant O’Donoghue and Deputy Williams tried to ascertain the whereabouts and safety of his wife, who was not visible. The man became agitated and yelled at Sergeant O’Donoghue and Deputy Williams to shoot him...or he would shoot them. He began to ramble on about being Jesus and that Sergeant O’Donoghue and Deputy Williams were devils. Additionally, he yelled racial slurs at Deputy Williams.

Sergeant O’Donoghue and Deputy Williams continued to negotiate with the man in an attempt to get him to lay down his gun. Sergeant O’Donoghue also gave Deputy Williams specific tactical instructions concerning “shoot/don’t shoot” situations.

After a few minutes of a tense standoff, Sergeant O’Donoghue was finally able to persuade the man to slowly put his shotgun on the ground, walk off the porch and lie down on the grass face first. He was quickly taken into custody for a mental health evaluation. His wife was fortunately found safe next door.

While detained in the patrol car, the man regained some clarity and thanked deputies for not shooting him.

For skillfully defusing a very dangerous situation with a mentally impaired person that could have resulted in a violent tragedy, the City of Lakewood is proud to present Sergeant Sean O’Donoghue and Deputy Torre Williams with the Award of Valor. ■



Sergeant Sean O’Donoghue and Deputy Torre Williams

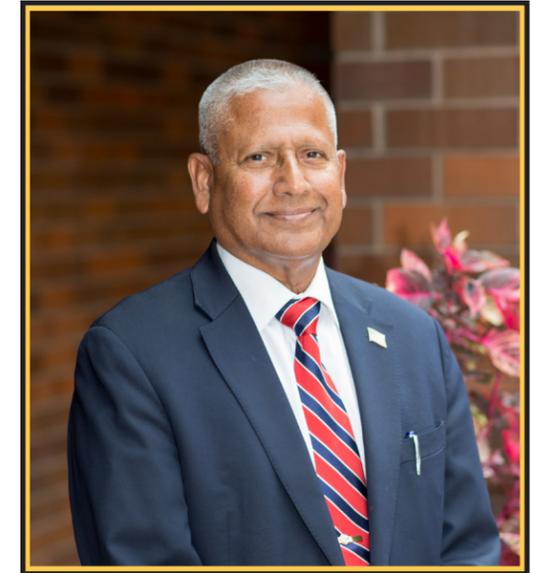
Community Service Award

Ahmed Rafi—who prefers to just be called “Rafi”—has been a block captain in Lakewood for 12 years. He definitely believes in supporting his community, and he shows it regularly through his involvement in numerous Lakewood programs and events, including the Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast, the Award of Valor (which he has attended for many years), and Lakewood Celebrates receptions. He has also been one of many local religious community members to lead invocations at the start of Lakewood City Council meetings.

Rafi goes the extra mile in other ways too, such as staffing information tables at events like the Pan American Fiesta, to encourage other residents to join Neighborhood Watch.

First and foremost, Rafi is a very active Neighborhood Watch Block Captain, attending almost every quarterly seminar and educational event the program organizes.

For his commitment to public safety and his dedication to Neighborhood Watch and his community, the City of Lakewood is proud to name Ahmed Rafi as the 2016 Neighborhood Watch Block Captain of the Year. ■



Ahmed Rafi



Community Service Award



Tony Ruiz

After retiring from the Compton Police Department as a commander, Tony Ruiz wanted a way to give back to the community, and fortunately he chose the Lakewood Sheriff's Station.

Tony has put in over 5,775 hours since he began serving as a volunteer in 2004. His volunteer duties include conducting vacation checks, daily mail runs, laundry runs and any errands the station may need.

Tony's dedication to the station's Volunteer Program and to Lakewood is unquestioned. Even after heart surgery this past February, Tony went straight back to volunteering in April ...on the same day his doctor released him for activity.

When asked why he puts in so much time at the station when he could be enjoying hobbies and his well-deserved retirement, Tony says, "I'm proud to be a volunteer and to help the men and women who protect our cities any way that I can."

For his impressive 12 years of volunteer service to the Lakewood Station Volunteer program, the City of Lakewood and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department are proud to name Tony Ruiz as the 2016 Lakewood Station Volunteer of the Year. ■

Award of Valor

On February 15, 2016, Emergency Support Team 94, Engine 94 and Paramedic Squad 45 responded to a traffic collision at Bellflower Boulevard and Carson Street. One of the vehicles had sheared off a fire hydrant, flooding the area. They found an approximately 50-year-old man in full respiratory and cardiac arrest. The victim had been removed from his car by a sheriff's deputy who was performing CPR. Firefighter Paramedic Edward Brehm and Firefighter Michael Dussinger took over from the deputy and moved the victim out of the water to a stable location.

Unfortunately, the firefighters determined that the victim was not improving from the CPR, and they decided that cardiac intervention from an external defibrillator was quickly needed. Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) patches were applied by Firefighter Paramedic Brehm, and an electrical shock was given. Fortunately, after the shock, the victim's pulse returned and his vital signs quickly improved. The victim was transported by Paramedic Squad 45 to Long Beach Memorial Hospital where he made a full recovery.

On a regular basis, firefighters are faced with life-and-death decisions that do not allow for lengthy contemplation – just immediate action. The best possible training and technology are key tools in helping a firefighter take the right action. In this case, Brehm and Dussinger put their training and technology to excellent use in recognizing that a victim was in peril and needed advanced treatment immediately.

For their decisive and life-saving action in the middle of an accident scene, the City of Lakewood is proud to award Los Angeles County Firefighter Paramedic Edward Brehm and Firefighter Michael Dussinger with the Award of Valor. ■



Firefighter Paramedic Edward Brehm



Firefighter Michael Dussinger



Award of Valor

On July 6, the Los Angeles County Fire Department responded to a major fire at a two-story residence on Elderhall Avenue in Lakewood.

Every fire unit in Lakewood responded, along with units from surrounding cities. The first units on the scene reported heavy smoke and fire in the garage, with the fire extending into the house. On any day this would be a challenging and exhausting fire to bring under control, but the temperature on this hot July day was over 100 degrees.

As firefighters began their work, it was evident the fire had spread into the walls and attic of the home. Quint 45 of Lakewood responded (a quintuple combination pumper, known as a quint, serves the dual purpose of an engine and a ladder truck), along with a team from Paramount, attacked the fire, and limited its spread with aggressive tactics.

Fire companies on the roof performed top-side ventilation by cutting holes in the roof to allow the super-heated smoke and gasses to ventilate. To make sure the fire was completely extinguished, firefighters pulled down the walls and ceilings from inside the house, as well as cut holes in and dismantled the roof.

During the incident, four firefighters sustained injuries because of the complexity of the fire and the extreme heat.

In recognition of the aggressive and sustained firefighting tactics employed by the fire crews at this difficult incident and their ability to reduce the amount of damage sustained at the home, the City of Lakewood is proud to present the Award of Valor to Captain Brian Jones, Firefighter Specialist Michael Depew, Firefighter Paramedic Michael Nielsen and Firefighter Specialist Cary Windes of Quint 45 of Lakewood. ■



L to R: Firefighter Specialist Michael Depew, Firefighter Specialist Cary Windes, Firefighter Paramedic Michael Nielsen & Captain Brian Jones.

Community Service Award

Terry Benas has worked with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Volunteer On Patrol (VOP) program since 2014. Terry attended the VOP academy at the Star Center, and has put a lot of time in developing his skills, going to conferences and participating in various scenario trainings. He is also trained in CERT emergency preparedness.

Terry's job as a property manager allows him the flexibility to volunteer during day or night shifts, and he gives his time generously. He's worked with the fleet, handled the front desk, scheduled vehicles for other VOPs, participated in DUI checkpoints, and helped with the station mail run. He also helps with station tours.

Terry is an integral part of Lakewood Station, but is always willing to help other stations too. He's assisted with traffic and crowd control for special events like Lakewood's Haunted Jail and Community Run, and events at other stations, such as the South Station Cinco de Mayo celebration and the Lawndale Parade.

Terry is known as a person you can always count on. He's listed on the call-out emergency list, and is always willing to help when special circumstances arise.

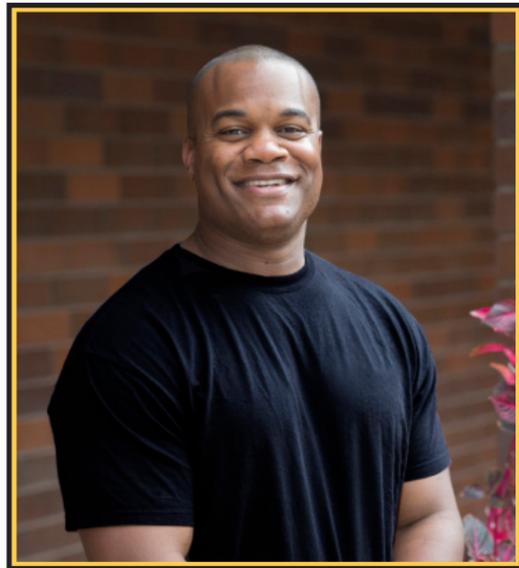
For his strong commitment to the Lakewood Sheriff's Station and his enthusiasm to help the community, the City of Lakewood and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department are proud to honor Terry Benas as the Volunteer on Patrol of the Year for 2016. ■



Terry Benas



Mayor's Award



Teron Mays

On a September day at noontime, Teron Mays was at the Lakewood home of his friend, Nigel Patton, helping Nigel repair his pickup truck. Using a floor jack, Teron and Nigel raised up the front end of the truck and did some work there.

They lowered the vehicle, and used jack stands to raise up the rear end. They proceeded to remove the rear tires, and Nigel got under the truck to begin working on it there. Suddenly, the truck shifted and its full weight fell on Nigel's chest.

Teron, being an off-duty Long Beach firefighter, knew he had to act fast and get the weight of the truck off his friend. He grabbed the floor jack and found a spot near the rear spare tire, and raised up the vehicle. While doing this, he noticed his friend appearing to lose consciousness.

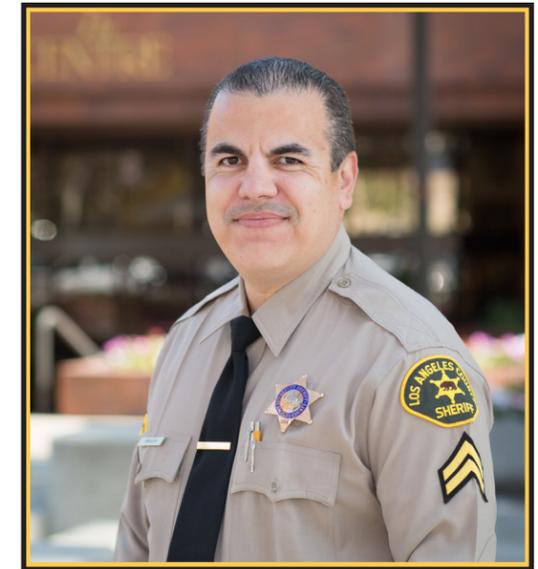
Once the vehicle's weight was off Nigel, Teron grabbed hold of Nigel's upper body and pulled him away from the vehicle. Teron quickly began a medical assessment of Nigel, who now became alert to his surroundings. Teron kept talking to Nigel, trying to keep him from losing consciousness again.

Lakewood Sheriff's deputies arrived and began to talk to both men. Los Angeles County Fire Department Engine Company #94 arrived moments later and began to treat Nigel. Due to his injuries, Nigel was transported to Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, trauma unit, for further treatment.

It was the opinion of the first deputy on scene, Deputy Grant Oberle, that if Teron Mays had not taken the swift actions that he did, then the outcome for Nigel Patton would have been much worse.

For his quick, calm and successful reaction to a dangerous life-and-death situation, the City of Lakewood is proud to present the Mayor's Award to Teron Mays. ■

Dave Powell Community Policing Award



Deputy Cesar Hinojosa

A young Cesar Hinojosa was a student at Paramount High School when he was assigned a career mentor. That mentor took him on a tour of the Lakewood Sheriff's Station, which ended up changing his life.

He applied to join the Sheriff's Explorer Program, and graduated from the program in a few years, while also excelling in his school studies. In fact, he was so good that he earned his diploma from Paramount High School in just three years and was named class valedictorian. At his graduation, Deputy Dave Powell joined the principal in presenting Cesar with his diploma.

After high school, Deputy Hinojosa attended the Sheriff's Academy, and was then assigned to Lakewood Station. After four years on duty, Deputy Hinojosa became a Training Officer and also a Lakewood Special Assignment Officer.

He has proven himself to be a proactive deputy who handles his calls all the way to completion, thereby solving problems and improving the community where he works. He takes pride in showing his trainees the importance of doing the same thing.

He's known for his ability to address quality of life concerns such as DUIs, trash scavenging and transient issues. He's educated himself thoroughly in the Neighborhood Watch program and maintains good relationships with Watch Captains throughout the city.

For his enthusiasm, professionalism and commitment to the community-oriented policing concept, the City of Lakewood is proud to present Deputy Cesar Hinojosa with the 2016 Dave Powell Community Policing Award. ■



Distinguished Service Award



Firefighter Paramedic Pete Martinez

Firefighter Paramedic Pete Martinez is a 30-year veteran of Los Angeles County Fire Department who has shown remarkable dedication and versatility throughout his career.

He has been a member of the department's Urban Search and Rescue team for 27 years, and has also served as an instructor with the team for many years, providing confined space and rescue systems training. His other contributions include providing emergency medical training and testing to over 4,000 uniformed personnel; being an instructor for Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Pediatric Advanced Life Support; serving on the Board of Directors for the Los Angeles County Fire Museum; and being a member of the department's Peer Support Team and Pipe and Drum Corps.

Firefighter Paramedic Martinez is well known in Lakewood for his dedication to teaching residents about disaster preparedness through the Community Emergency Response Team (or CERT) program. He has trained over 150 Lakewood residents in three-day CERT programs in basic disaster response skills, fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, disaster response skills and disaster medical operations.

For a versatile and dedicated career spent helping his fellow first responders and the residents of Lakewood and Los Angeles County, the City of Lakewood is very pleased to recognize Firefighter Paramedic Pete Martinez with the Distinguished Service Award. ■

Mayor's Award



Chad Swanson

Around 2:00 a.m. one morning in Lakewood, a 7-Eleven store clerk, Sarath Vong, secured the front doors of the store on the inside with a bicycle lock so he could use the restroom. He placed a sign on the door saying he would return in a few minutes.

Not long after, Chad Swanson and his girlfriend walked up to the 7-Eleven and saw it was locked. Chad walked to the Red Box kiosk nearby and then noticed a black Honda drive into the parking lot. A male exited from the vehicle and approached the store. He began to manipulate the front doors and squeezed inside through a narrow opening he had created.

Once inside the store, the man ran to the beer refrigerator, grabbed two cans of beer, and then jumped the front counter and began to pick out cigarettes and lottery tickets.

During this time, Sarath heard the doorbell ring and the commotion, and knew something was up. He caught the suspect crouched behind the counter removing the lottery tickets and cigarettes.

As soon as the suspect saw Sarath, he took off running. Sarath was able to grab him, but the suspect elbowed him in the face and made it through the door.

Chad believed a robbery was occurring and helped Sarath detain the suspect outside. Deputies arrived, and the suspect was arrested for strong-arm robbery.

For his quick and fearless action in helping stop a robbery in progress and coming to the aid of a store clerk in need, the City of Lakewood proudly presents the Mayor's Award to Chad Swanson. ■



Mayor's Award



Eric Moren

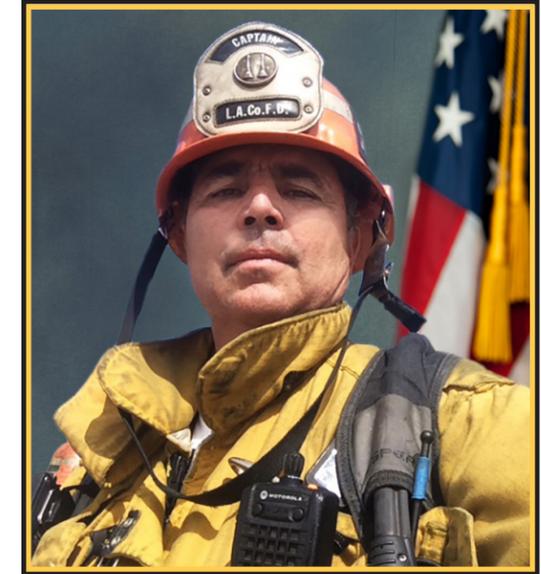
In the dark hours of an early Sunday morning, Eric Moren was startled when he saw his neighbor's home on fire. He ran over and loudly knocked on the front door to try and alert the occupant. No one came to the door after repeated tries, so Eric grabbed a hose and attempted to put out the fire.

Meanwhile, two motorcyclists saw the house fire and stopped to help with waking the neighbor. Getting no response, they moved on to neighboring homes to alert them of the fire.

Upon arrival, Sheriff's deputies instructed Eric to move away from the area because it was unsafe. Unfortunately the sole occupant of the home was subsequently pronounced dead.

For his bravery and valiant attempt to save the life of his neighbor, and to keep the fire from spreading to his other neighbors' homes, the City of Lakewood is proud to present the Mayor's Award to Eric Moren. ■

Distinguished Service Award



Fire Captain Joseph (Joe) Woyjeck

Los Angeles County Fire Captain Joseph (Joe) Woyjeck knows Lakewood inside and out. He attended Madison Elementary School in Lakewood, played Little League baseball here, and when he was eight years old, toured Lakewood's Fire Station 122, which had a big impact on him. Captain Woyjeck and his wife Anna also bought their first home in Lakewood.

Captain Woyjeck has spent over 36 years in the fire service. During those years, he has served as a Wildland Firefighter, Structure Firefighter, Firefighter Paramedic, Engineer, and Fire Captain.

Captain Woyjeck has been able to spend many years in Lakewood, including service at Station 45, Station 34, and currently as Captain at Station 122.

Captain Woyjeck has received numerous awards and accolades over his outstanding career including receiving the Lakewood Award of Valor in 2005. He has been involved in other important ways in Lakewood too. He has served on the Board of Directors for Pathways Volunteer Hospice – which is dedicated to helping the terminally ill, frail, and elderly, and providing compassionate support to grieving families.

Unfortunately, Captain Woyjeck and his wife Anna know something about grief. Their oldest son Kevin was one of the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshot Firefighters killed fighting a brush fire near Yarnell, Arizona in 2013.

Captain Woyjeck and Anna decided to honor and share the memory of their 21-year-old son through the Kevin Woyjeck Explorers for Life Association. The organization raises scholarship funds for young men and women who participate in Fire Explorer programs nationwide.

In recognition of his heartfelt dedication to helping others both on and off the job and an exceptional career spent serving Lakewood and Los Angeles County, the City of Lakewood is proud to present Captain Joseph Woyjeck with the Distinguished Service Award. ■



Distinguished Service Award



Detective Theo Gekas

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Detective Theo Gekas is an 18-year veteran of the department. He graduated first in his class at the Sheriff's Academy and remains an outstanding performer today.

After a starting assignment in the Custody Division, Detective Gekas came to the Lakewood Station 15 years ago. He has worked a variety of assignments since, including training officer, special assignment officer and now detective.

He serves as the team detective for Lakewood's Special Assignment Team, investigating crimes such as burglaries, robberies, forgeries and narcotics. Throughout his career he has authored and participated in hundreds of successful search warrants, arrests and case presentations to the District Attorney's Office. He now mentors other team members in doing the same.

Over the years, Detective Gekas has consistently performed at the "outstanding" level. He continues to expand his education with numerous investigative certificates. His knowledge and expertise regarding Lakewood and effective law enforcement procedures are a tremendous asset to deputies, sergeants and others at the Lakewood Station.

For his dedication, commitment to public safety and longstanding service to the community, the City of Lakewood is proud to present Detective Theo Gekas with the Distinguished Service Award. ■

Mayor's Award

On an August day, Evalie Napohaku parked her car at Lakewood Center and began to walk towards Costco. She passed an older woman standing by a car and noticed a young man sitting on the ground, applying something to the car's bumper.

Evalie was aware of the recent trend of con artists scamming money by pretending to repair body damage to cars in parking lots, so she decided to walk back and take another look.

She now saw the older lady in her driver's seat--but with the young man in the passenger seat beside her.

Evalie knew she had to act quickly. She walked up to the car and rapped on the driver's window to get the woman's attention. Evalie asked her, "Do you know this person?" The lady said she did not. Evalie then found out that the lady was in the process of driving the man to her ATM to get money so he could "fix her car."

Evalie explained to the surprised woman that she was being scammed, and firmly told the young man to get out of the car. He yelled at Evalie, jumped out and ran to an accomplice's awaiting car and quickly drove off.

Relieved that no harm had come to the older lady, Evalie nevertheless gave her a friendly scolding for being far too trusting of strangers.

For her sharp observation, courage and willingness to act quickly to help a vulnerable person avoid financial loss – or worse – the City of Lakewood proudly presents the Mayor's Award to Evalie Napohaku. ■



Evalie Napohaku

