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Dear Friend,

Each year our agency recognizes the outstanding performance of our members. And this newsletter is filled with accolades which were presented to agency members during our annual awards ceremony on May 24, 2011. But I wanted you to read a letter from a former inmate who felt it important to share his experience about the deputy who arrested him. We received this letter the week before our Awards Ceremony. Please see his letter below:



"I was arrested 9 years ago on drug charges. Story short, I spent the last 9 years getting my life turned around from being a meth addict to being a flight instructor. Crazy I know. My question is in regards to finding out who my arresting officer was. I wish I could remember his name but there are quite a few details I've forgotten since then. He left an impression on me that made me know he wasn't just another officer looking for a bust, but someone who genuinely cared about my well-being. I don't know how often they get to hear the positive results of the work they have done, but regardless I'd like to share my story with him and thank him for doing his job with character and concern. If this is something you can help me with let me know what information from me that you would need."

The "arresting officer" in the letter was Sergeant Wes Whitmore. Wes died in the line of duty on December 12, 2010. This letter is a source of inspiration for me and for our members, just as Wes was an inspiration to us as well.

The hard work and dedication of the men and women of the Polk County Sheriff's Office is without question, the best in the nation, and I am proud of each and every one of them.



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Polk County Sheriff's
Office



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Sincerely,
Sheriff Grady Judd

The Sheriff's Citation

Sergeant Wes Whitmore, 15-year veteran of the Polk County Sheriff's Office, and a 26-year veteran officer of the United States Air Force, was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart



Medal and the highest citation issued by the Sheriff's Office, the Sheriff's Citation, during the agency's annual awards ceremony. Sergeant Whitmore was killed on Sunday, December 12, 2010, when he conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle with an expired tag. Whitmore directed the driver to pull into the nearby 7-11 store in order to complete his investigation, when his patrol car was struck by an out-of-control SUV being driven by an elderly man who was having a medical emergency. The collision propelled the patrol car into Sergeant Whitmore, fatally wounding him.

Sergeant Whitmore gave his life while serving his community, keeping the peace, and helping improve the quality of life for the citizens of Polk County.

2010 Deputy Sheriff of the Year

Deputy Sheriff Michael Braswell and Deputy Sheriff Paul Fairbanks were proactively patrolling the area of South Wabash due



to gang related problems on June 25, 2010. At about 2:30 a.m., both deputies checked out with an unknown person who was riding a bicycle with no light on it at the intersection of Plateau Avenue and Josephine Street in Lakeland. During the stop, the suspect, Matthew Tutt, without warning, produced a handgun from his waist area and shot Deputy Fairbanks three times gravely wounding him and rendering him unable to fight back. Tutt then turned the gun on Deputy Braswell as he continued to fire. Deputy Braswell was struck twice in the chest, once in the buttocks and once in his gun hand from a distance of 5-6 feet by the suspect's .45 caliber handgun. Braswell was able to draw his firearm and return fire on suspect Tutt. Both Braswell and Tutt fell to the ground from their injuries. As Tutt reached for his gun despite numerous warnings not to, Braswell shot Tutt, ending the threat. Both Deputies Braswell and Fairbanks survived their injuries, through grit and determination. They risked their lives together to keep Polk County safe.

While Deputy Braswell awaited treatment at Lakeland Regional Medical Center, he was constantly asking for updates about his partner Deputy Fairbanks, who was in very serious condition. Deputy Braswell never showed concern for himself. During an interview with detectives just about an hour after the event, all Deputy Braswell could do was praise the agency for its training, leadership and support.

Deputy Braswell's demeanor after the shooting defines a hero. He reacted assertively based on his training and he relied on his strength and will to live. Because his actions undoubtedly saved not only his life, but also the life of his partner, **Deputy Braswell was honored as Polk County Sheriff's Office 2010 Deputy Sheriff of the Year. Deputy Sheriff Paul Fairbanks received an Honorable Mention for his actions on June 25th.**

Detective Alejandro Angulo received an Honorable Mention for Deputy Sheriff of the Year for his undercover expertise investigating and infiltrating the Pizano Drug Trafficking Organization, whose members were subsequently were Indicted by The United States Attorney on Federal Methamphetamine Trafficking Charges.

Sergeant Theresa Edmiston and Detective Ed Hoiler also received Honorable Mentions for Deputy Sheriff of the Year for their undercover expertise investigating the Erick Chavez Drug Trafficking Organization, which was suspected of smuggling large shipments of Cocaine and Methamphetamine into Polk County.

2010 Detention Deputy of the Year

Detention Deputy Michelle Hallback was viciously attacked by an inmate during an escape attempt at the Lake Wales Medical Center on May 11, 2010. During the process of moving the inmate from his bed to take a shower, he began striking Hallback



repeatedly on the right side of her head with a metal faucet removed from the bathroom sink. Though she initially fell to the floor from the force of the attack, she actively engaged the inmate by pushing back and kicking him, effectively prevented him from his repeated attempts to remove her agency handgun from its holster. The struggle continued from the hospital room out into the hallway. Despite help from two Good Samaritan hospital visitors, the inmate was able to flee into the stairwell area. Although Deputy Hallback was bleeding profusely from a laceration to the right side of her head and she was extremely dizzy, she immediately radioed for assistance and began pursuing the inmate into the stairwell. The inmate continued down the stairwell and out of the hospital. Because of her level-headed and timely call for assistance on the radio, the inmate was quickly apprehended by a number of Polk County Sheriff's Deputies and Lake Wales Police Officers. Because of her courageous resolve and professional determination, **Detention Deputy Michelle Hallback was honored as Polk County Sheriff's Office 2010 Detention Deputy of the Year.**

Bailiff Juan Quintana received an Honorable Mention for his performance on December 21, 2010, when an individual who had been remanded into custody, tried to escape from the Bartow Courthouse. As the individual fled from the 6th floor, Quintana immediately responded and apprehend the escapee as he exited the 1st floor stairwell of the courthouse, preventing his escape

from the building.

Detention Deputy Troy Denby received an Honorable Mention for his action on May 21, 2010, when he rendered lifesaving aid to a fellow agency member.

2010 Civilian of the Year

Gwendolyn Laughery was recognized as Polk County Sheriff's Office 2010 Civilian of the Year after having consistently displaying exemplary performance throughout the year. Laughery was recognized as Civilian of the Quarter on June 22, 2009 due to her exemplary performance



while working dispatch on Central District. She received a Department of Law Enforcement Commendation on April 13, 2010, for helping relay information to deputies on the road quickly and efficiently so that a murder suspect from Plant City could be apprehended.

She also demonstrated her professionalism on June 25 as the dispatcher on duty when Deputies Braswell and Fairbanks were shot. She maintained her composure under the most extremely stressful conditions. Her calmness, and professional control cut through the chaos of the situation and she was able to effectively get help to the fallen deputies.

Laughery also demonstrated her character and compassion in the aftermath of the tragic accident that resulted in the death of Sergeant Wes Whitmore. Though she was off duty, she came into the Emergency Communications Center on her own initiative to help provide support and relief to the shift on duty.

David Houts received an Honorable Mention as a result of his attention to detail and conscientiousness in recovering a stolen vehicle, and his assistance in the thief being taken into custody.

Jenifer Sample received an **Honorable Mention** as a result of her productivity as an analyst in gathering and documenting gang members and their activities throughout the county, as well as her assistance in returning stolen property during a large scale investigation. Jenifer also donates her time and talents selflessly in the community.

2010 Reserve Deputy of the Year

Reserve Deputy Yener Tugrul has served as a Reserve Deputy Sheriff for more than 28 years, and in that time he has worked tirelessly volunteering thousands of hours of assistance to this agency. For his tenacity, hard work, and outstanding contributions to the people of Polk County, **Reserve Deputy Tugrul is awarded Reserve Deputy Sheriff of the Year.**



2010 Volunteers of the Year

Richard and Anita Kokes have both served as volunteer members of the Polk County Sheriff's Office since 2007. Collectively, they have donated hundreds of hours through the Sheriff's Office



Citizen's Assisted Patrol program by patrolling the Ft. Fraser Trail between Lakeland and Bartow. Both Richard and Anita also donate a significant time in the PCSO Crime Prevention Section conducting many administrative and clerical duties. For their willingness to devote their personal time to serve the people of Polk County, together they are awarded the **2010 Volunteers of the Year**.

Medal of Valor and Purple Heart

Deputies Mike Braswell and Paul Fairbanks

For his valor and heroic conduct during the shooting that occurred on June 25, 2010, and for his heroic grit and determination overcoming adversity during the recovery of his serious injuries received in the line of duty, **Deputy Sheriff Paul Fairbanks was awarded the Purple Heart Medal and the Medal of Valor.**



For his extreme conspicuous bravery above and beyond the call of duty during a life-threatening and perilous encounter with an armed felon, and for serious injuries sustained in the line of duty, **Deputy Sheriff Michael Braswell was awarded the Purple Heart Medal and the Medal of Honor**, the highest award presented by the Sheriff's Office.

Deputies Jessica Daniel and Matthew Radabaugh

For injuries sustained in the line of duty, **Deputy Sheriff Jessica Daniel and Deputy Sheriff Matthew Radabaugh** were awarded the



Purple Heart Medal. For their courageous and selfless actions attempting to save a woman who had crashed her car into a deep retention pond, they were awarded the Medal of Valor.

**Detention
Deputy Michelle
Hallback**

For serious injuries sustained in the line of duty,

**Detention
Deputy Michelle
Hallback**

was awarded the Purple Heart Medal. For her bravery and courageous effort to continue to

fight for her own life and the lives of others, she was awarded the Medal of Valor.



Purple Heart

**Detention
Deputy Terrence
Mizell**

For serious injuries sustained in the line of duty on Friday, September 3, 2010, when he was attacked by a jail inmate,

Detention Deputy Terrence Mizell was awarded the Purple Heart Medal.



Medal of Valor

**Deputy Sheriff
Dennis Primeau**

Deputy Sheriff



Dennis Primeau was awarded a Medal of Valor for extreme bravery and courage demonstrated when he defused a dangerous situation in Lake Wales with a combative and armed suspect who lashed out at law enforcement and EMS personnel.

Sergeant Michael Bissett and Deputy Sheriff Michael Weppelman

Sgt. Bissett and Deputy Weppelman were awarded Medals of Valor for using their skills and quick thinking in taking decisive and effective action in the face of life-threatening circumstances. Together the two deputies eliminated the deadly threat posed by a gun-wielding suspect in Winter Haven.



Detention Deputy James LaChance

For placing his own safety at risk to assist a fellow officer in need, eliminating the potential threat of a multi-car accident on Interstate 4, and protecting the life of a mentally ill man, **Detention Deputy James LaChance** was awarded a Medal of Valor.



Meritorious Service Medal

The Meritorious Service Medal is awarded for individual service to the Sheriff's Office. It is awarded to members who

demonstrate exceptional performance of duty and who have distinguished themselves by performing exceptional service in a duty of great responsibility of critical importance to the Sheriff's Office.

For her outstanding leadership skills and exceptional performance during the planning, designing, building, and relocation to the Sheriff's Office Operations Center and Emergency Communications Center, **Executive Director Beatrice Ann Dickey** was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.



Captain Andy Ray was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal for his efforts in implementing the Florida Sheriff's Association Teen Driver Challenge program in Polk County.



instinct and conducting further investigating into a call for service, which ultimately led to solving a domestic-related homicide.

Sergeant Gerald Dorman and Detention Deputy Robert Hill were awarded Meritorious Service Medals for taking the initiative and partnering with local government to construct new bus stops, at a cost-savings to taxpayers of thousands of dollars.



Lieutenant Ian Floyd and Sergeant Kenny Hill were awarded Meritorious Service Medals for their hard work and dedication in dismantling a large-scale anabolic steroid distribution network.



Lieutenant Tom Laurell, Deputy Sheriff David Lacy, and Detention Deputy Timothy Wienk were awarded Meritorious Service Medals for designing and incorporating new cost-saving and innovative aluminum cages for the jail transport vans.



Bailiff Laura Schlichting was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal for implementing several innovative, creative, and cost-saving ideas in the Polk County Courthouse, demonstrating her commitment to excellent customer service.



Sergeant Ron Smith was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal for using skills he gained in the Certified Public Manager program to improve a process and cut costs, resulting in saving the agency over \$14,000 initially, with more cost savings to follow in the future.



Detective Ed Hoiler (whose photo cannot be shown due to his undercover status) was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal for infiltrating a major drug trafficking organization, which resulted in 3 Federal Indictments, 33 trafficking charges, 4 firearms recovered, 3 vehicles seized for forfeiture, 260 felony charges, 45 misdemeanor charges, and a total of 56 suspects arrested.

Marshall Anderson Award

The following members were awarded the Marshall Anderson Award for their dedicated and outstanding work performance while overcoming adversity:

Linda Boothby
Deputy Sheriff Jeffrey Bradford
Scott Rohrbaugh
Detective Suzan Weiss



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