R.I. Police Chiefs present first individual Community Policing Award to URI officer

North Kingstown resident’s hard work, upbeat approach lead to strong connections with faculty, staff, students

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KINGSTON, R.I. — January 5, 2018 — Whether organizing dodgeball and corn hole tournaments, coffee with a cop, serving free hot dogs and popcorn from a food truck during URI events, running an annual holiday toy drive for area children or serving as an instructor in the URI Citizens Police Academy, University of Rhode Island Police Officer Paul Hanrahan makes URI a better place.

The Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association recognized that in presenting the North Kingstown resident its first individual Community Policing Award during ceremonies last month. The association honored the entire Central Falls Police Department for its overall community policing excellence.

Hanrahan’s award cited his “efforts to engage in significant problem-solving activities, the creation of productive community partnerships and implementing community policing programs and initiatives that have built and enhanced trust within the community he serves.”

URI Police Maj. Michael Jagoda said when the department launched its community policing

URI Police Maj. Michael Jagoda, left, congratulates URI Police Officer Paul Hanrahan for being named the first individual recipient of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association’s Community Policing Award. URI photo by Randy Osga.
program about 18 months ago, Hanrahan bought in immediately.

“He has also taken it to a new level because he sits down with community members, listens to their concerns and responds with strong programs.

In his nomination letter, Jagoda said Hanrahan has made “a substantial impact on our community and in the communities of South County because of his efforts and his community policing philosophy.

“The programs Officer Hanrahan has developed are making a positive difference, have built a partnership with our diverse community and have reduced crime.”

Jagoda saw the need for a community policing approach after witnessing violent confrontations between police and citizens nationwide, many of which ended in death. He named Hanrahan the department’s first community liaison officer in 2015. In that role, he helped Jagoda put in place a new community policing policy for the department.

One of Hanrahan’s first initiatives was the acquisition of an old box truck, which was converted into a food truck with help from Prison Industries and URI Dining and Catering Services. In 2017, Hanrahan attended nearly 70 campus events and distributed 14,000 hot dogs, 300 pounds of popcorn, 600 hot fudge sundaes, 300 pounds of coffee, 200 dozen doughnuts and 100 cases of water.

Hanrahan also revitalized the URI Police Bicycle Patrol, which allows officers to engage more directly with community members. He has increased participation and expanded the program to include motorized bicycles, which make it easier for officers to travel up the steep hills of the Kingston Campus.

He is the police liaison with Student Affairs, fraternities and sororities, Housing and Residential Life and Athletics, as well as the National Guard and local police departments. He recently attended an active shooter instructor program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and oversees active shooter training for URI officers.

His efforts extend well beyond the campus. In September 2016, he worked closely with the South Kingstown and North Kingstown school districts to collect school supplies for the Kids, Cops & Classroom program. In November of that year, he organized a local food drive, which collected more than 2,000 canned goods. And in December, he oversaw the department’s third annual Stuff A Cruiser program, which has resulted in close to 15,000 toys, clothing and cash gifts being donated to South County social service agencies and Hasbro Children’s Hospital.

“It’s a job that I love to do,” Hanrahan said. “I get tremendous support from Public Safety Director (Stephen) Baker, Maj. Jagoda, Capt. Michael Chalek and my family.”
He is very proud of a picnic table he and his son built that now sits outside the Police Department’s Barlow Hall Substation. “We equipped it with an umbrella, and when the good weather is here, students and staff members stop by for lunch or coffee. It’s nice because they know me by name.

“But you can't just do these things once. Every fall, we get 3,000 new students and that’s a whole new group that has to be introduced to the URI community.”

Media Contact:

Dave Lavallee <mailto:dlavallee@uri.edu>
401-874-5862
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