URI police honor officers, rescuers, community members

Department holds first awards ceremony

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KINGSTON, R.I. – September 8, 2016 — The University of Rhode Island Police Department gathered its ranks inside Swan Hall Auditorium recently to honor the work and daily courage displayed by its officers in its first intra-departmental awards ceremony.

Seventeen officers, several emergency responders and one member of the community were honored for saving lives and outstanding service to the URI community at the event held July 28.

Maj. Michael Jagoda, a former Connecticut State Police commander, said his former department held similar awards ceremonies and he had seen first-hand how it improved the morale of officers within the department. With that in mind, Jagoda, along with Director of Public Safety Stephen Baker and Lt. Ken Olson organized the ceremony to recognize the achievements of officers, emergency responders and civilians at URI’s campuses.

“It’s a great feeling as a leader of this department to see everyone honored for their service not just to this department or the campus, but to the community,” Jagoda. “Our officers and first-responders did some incredible work this year. We had a life-saving effort the night of the Providence College basketball game, we had some complex criminal investigations and some great community projects. All of those things emphasize our philosophy of community policing, and this was a chance to showcase our efforts, to increase department morale and to show our officers that the public has trust, confidence and pride in them.”
Officers Michael McCabe and Salvatore Bugee were honored with the Lifesaving Award for their efforts to rescue a car accident victim, whose vehicle had crashed on Butterfield Road on URI’s Kingston Campus. Upon arriving at the scene, the officers removed Barry Blomstedt, a URI graduate, from his vehicle and performed life-saving CPR on him until rescue personnel arrived on scene. Blomstedt and several of his family members attended an earlier ceremony and expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Officers McCabe and Bugee.

The Meritorious Service Award was earned by Officer Nicholas Detroia, who aided West Greenwich police in the apprehension of a homicide suspect near URI’s Alton Jones Campus. When he arrived on scene, the suspect was bloodied and struggling with two West Greenwich police officers. Detroia leaped into the fray and helped restrain the suspect, who was then transported to Kent County Memorial Hospital for treatment and later charged with murder, assault, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. Detroia was commended for his professionalism, courage and dedication to duty during the course of the incident and the ensuing homicide investigation.

The department also handed out Outstanding Service Awards to seven officers for their performances during a variety of incidents.

Lt. Michael Chalek and Officer Michael Flanagan were honored for their work investigating a felonious assault that occurred at URI’s Bay Campus. Chalek, Flanagan and several assisting officers from outside departments developed probable cause, obtained a search warrant and arrested a felony suspect, helping to provide closure to the victim.

Chalek also was honored for his work coordinating a complex investigation of an extortion case that required him to collaborate with the Department of Homeland Security, authorities in Nashville, Tenn., The Women’s Center, the Rhode Island Attorney General’s Office, the Rhode Island State Police and the Rhode Island Sheriff’s Department. Though many details of the investigation have not been disclosed due to the sensitive nature of the incident, Chalek and his fellow officers were able to obtain warrants that led to the arrest of a suspect in the case.

Lt. Richard Moniz was honored for his work coordinating the complex investigations of several major crimes committed within the URI community. He has effectively taken witness statements, collected and processed evidence while protecting chain of custody and coordinated with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies on numerous complex investigations.

Moniz also was honored for his work with Officer Michael McCabe in proactively educating the University community about the harmful effects of narcotics and their use. Their education and prevention programs allowed them to develop a lead on a suspected narcotics dealer, leading to them obtaining warrants and the successful arrest of the suspect.

Officer Paul Gentile was honored for his work coordinating the flow of information and calls for assistance during an assault in progress at URI’s
Alton Jones Campus. The volume of telephone calls and intercity radio communications during the incident began to overwhelm the dispatch center until Gentile took charge to make sure the proper agencies were contacted and responding to the scenes of the assault and murder. He coordinated the efforts of URI, West Greenwich and Rhode Island State Police, assisting in the safety of the responding officers and helping to track the movements of the assault and homicide suspect, who was arrested.

Officer Paul Hanrahan was honored for his work as the department’s Community Policing Liaison, in which he has planned, organized and implemented several community initiatives that have helped enhance the reputation of the department and helped many members of the community who are in need. Hanrahan has coordinated events such as Safety Week, Dorm Night Out, Coffee With a Cop, Cops and Classrooms and the Stuff-a-Cruiser Toy Drive. These events have helped more than 10,000 community members and assisted eight community service agencies, local public schools and Hasbro Children’s Hospital.

Officer Austin Webb was honored for his large tally of arrests, including the apprehension of two suspects actively engaging in video voyeurism and felony breaking and entering. Webb led the department in arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and 28 drug-related arrests. He also issued 290 civil citations and made 24 misdemeanor motor vehicle arrests.

The department also issued interdepartmental commendations to members of the University’s Emergency Medical Services.

Emergency Medical Technicians Maya Alibrio, Michael Gorman-Smith, Matthew Kan, Raymond Lovell and Michael Tormey were honored for performing lifesaving medical procedures on Blomstedt after his motor vehicle accident on Butterfield Road.

URI police dispatcher Barbara Ray was named Public Safety Employee of the Year for her work as Coordinator of Hazardous Materials and Chemical Waste for the Department of Public Safety. Though eligible for retirement, Ray agreed to continue working to oversee the moving of the Chemistry Department from Pastore Hall to its new location.

Dispatcher Christine Wilkinson was named Dispatcher of the Year for her going beyond the normal expectations of her job while handling communications with the public, other police agencies and employees from other URI departments.

Officer Debra Sheldon was honored with a citation of service by the department and University as a whole for her 35 years of dedication and commitment to the state of Rhode Island.

The evening’s master of ceremonies, David Lavallee, assistant director of Marketing and Communications, was named the department’s Community Member of the Year. Lavallee has been instrumental in keeping the URI community, as well as local and state entities, apprised and updated on the
department’s efforts to uphold its philosophy of community policing, as well as disseminating important information to the public in a timely and accurate manner.

The URI police department thanked all of the honorees, as well as all members of its staff, for their unwavering commitment to serve in a professional manner while going above and beyond the call of duty to make URI a safe and welcoming place for all members of the community.

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