

Law enforcements honored, awarded for life-saving actions, crime control

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The Isanti County Law Enforcement Association held its annual banquet on Feb. 25 honoring law enforcement personnel and community members with awards for their hard work in keeping the community safe in the year 2020.

Distinguished Service Award & Officer of the Year Award

In December 2019, Isanti County Investigators Rob Bowker and Wayne Seiberlich responded to a medical call in Wyanett Township. When they arrived at the scene, Bowker and Seiberlich saw a man who had died from a suspected drug overdose that led to further investigation.

Bowker and Seiberlich's investigation discovered a heroin dealer, called King, who used two middle-men in the selling of controlled substances to at least two men in Isanti County who died from the lethal combination of heroin and fentanyl. The case has been presented to the County Attorney's Office as a third-degree murder on all three identified subjects responsible for the deaths. The case has also been presented to the United States Attorney's Office for consideration of federal charges.

For his investigation efforts, Seiberlich received the Distinguished Service Award. Bowker was presented the 2020 ICLEA Officer of the Year Award for leading the investigation.

Employee of the Year Award

In March 2020, Jasmine Thomas, a crime analyst with the East Central Drug and Violent Offender's Task Force, assisted with the Pine County Sheriff's Office's nine-month investigation of a homicide. Thomas played a pivotal role in the outcome of the investigation, which led to an arrest of a 42-year-old man who was charged with second-degree murder, robbery, first-degree burglary and second-degree assault in crimes in Pine and Kanabec counties.

Thomas was presented the Employee of the Year Award for helping in the successful outcome of the investigation.

Lifesaving Award

Twelve police officers received the Lifesaving Award for their efforts last year. Some of the officers have saved lives on more than one occasion.

On June 16, Deputy Dave Matchinsky assisted fire department and ambulance personnel on an unresponsive man who lacked a heartbeat. Matchinsky provided CPR with other rescue members until the man was airlifted to a hospital.

On June 24, Deputies Miranda Groninga, Matthew Burkhardt and Noah Heiller arrived at a scene of an unresponsive 24-year-old man. The man was breathing but appeared to be suffering from an apparent overdose. He was found in a bathroom and brought to the living room where Burkhardt administered Narcan and Groninga and Heiller rotated applying sternum rubs to bring the man out of unconsciousness. Burkhardt administered a second dose of Narcan. The combined lifesaving efforts quickened the man out of unconsciousness; he was then transported to a hospital.

On July 13, Deputy Dave Matchinsky and Sgt. Chad Meyer responded to an overdose of a woman who was reported en route to the hospital driven by a man who said he wouldn't stop for anyone unless they had Narcan. As the car arrived in the hospital parking lot, Matchinsky found the woman had no pulse, so he administered CPR while inside the car. Meyer retrieved Narcan. The woman was later removed from the car where Matchinsky continued CPR and Meyer administered the Narcan. Hospital staff arrived within minutes of the lifesaving efforts and she was transferred inside the hospital.

On Sept. 9, Deputy Sean Connolly and Sgt. Chad Meyer arrived at the scene of a residence with an unconscious man. The deputies applied pads from an AED and



Isanti County Investigators Rob Bowker (left) and Wayne Seiberlich. Bowker received the Isanti County Law Enforcement Association Officer of the Year Award for leading investigation, and Seiberlich received the Distinguished Service Award. Photos by Sarv Mithaqiyan



Isanti County Investigator Rob Bowker shares some remarks to attendees of the Isanti County Law Enforcement Association annual banquet on Feb. 25 after he received his ICLEA Officer of the Year Award.



Jasmine Thomas, a crime analyst with the East Central Drug and Violent Offender's Task Force, received the Employee of the Year Award given by Isanti County Investigator Wayne Seiberlich.



All of the winners who attended the Isanti County Law Enforcement Association banquet on Feb. 25 stand together for a photo. From left, Isanti County Deputy Matthew Burkhardt, Cambridge Police Sgt. Adam Rackow, Cambridge Police Officer Jesse Peck, Isanti County Deputy Evan Oltz, Isanti County Deputy Sean Connolly, Isanti County Investigators Wayne Seiberlich and Rob Bowker, Crime Analyst Jasmine Thomas, Isanti County Deputy Miranda Groninga and Mark Olson, an active member of the Isanti County Safety Rescue.



Isanti County Deputy Miranda Groninga, Cambridge Police Officer Jesse Peck, Isanti County Deputy Sean Connolly, Cambridge Sgt. Adam Rackow and Isanti County Deputy Matthew Burkhardt all holding the 2020 Lifesaving Award.

administered CPR on the man until ambulance personnel arrived.

On Sept. 15, Cambridge Police Officer Tanner Peetz, Cambridge Police Sgt. Adam Rackow and Deputy Sean Connolly responded to a possible overdose in the city of Cambridge. Officers arrived to find an unresponsive woman. Rackow couldn't detect breathing or a heartbeat and

began CPR. CPR was rotated with Connolly, and Peetz administered Narcan. The woman was administered four doses of Narcan between law enforcement and ambulance personnel.

On Oct. 23, Isanti County Dispatch responded to a call about a missing 75-year-old man who had Alzheimer's. Deputies Jonathan VanderVegt, Jason Sievert and Sgt.

Chad Meyer of the Sheriff's Office arrived on the scene and learned the man was last seen 19 hours ago. The caller told deputies that she believed the man's home appeared as though the man was fighting with someone.

The lights in the home were left on, the overhead garage door was open and doors to the man's car were open parked in the garage. Deputies searched the property and found beaten down grass and snow leading away from the residence into a wooded area. The snow covered lot of the trail and deputies were unable to determine how far the trail continued or the direction.

Deputies contacted the man's family to assist in their search for him. The man's brother walked along the roadside and discovered the man lying on his back in the ditch, which was filled with snow and water. VanderVegt, Sievert and Meyer carried the man, suffering from hypothermia, from the ditch to a warm vehicle where the man's wet clothes were removed and he was wrapped in blankets until the ambulance arrived.

On Nov. 14, Isanti County Sgt. Wade Book responded to a medical of an intoxicated male having a possible heart attack. Book was requested by ambulance personnel to ride with the man to the hospital. During the ride, Book assisted in CPR and bagging oxygen until a faint pulse was detected.

On Dec. 26, Deputy Sean Connolly and Officer Jesse Peck of the Cambridge Police Department arrived at the

scene of a man in cardiac arrest. Upon Connolly's arrival, the man was lying in a hallway not breathing and unresponsive, blue and without a pulse. Connolly began CPR with chest compressions with Peck's help as they determined the cause might be a drug-related overdose. Connolly administered Narcan. Between the CPR and administration of Narcan, the man began to breathe a little. Oxygen was later applied once the man's breathing was more regular. The man went into convulsions, having three seizures. He was transported by ambulance to a hospital alongside Peck's assistance.

The patients in each of these lifesaving responses have survived traumatic events due to the efforts of the officers in combination with firefighters, ambulance and hospital personnel.

Volunteer of the Year Award

Mark Olson, an active member of the Isanti County Safety Rescue, received this year's Volunteer of the Year Award.

Olson's peers have said he "rarely misses a page out and is always willing to do what's needed on a scene."

Olson was recognized in the rescue of a horse. He had waded into knee-deep mud to calm the animal during the rescue efforts. Olson had no formal training with horses. Olson is the current training office for Safety Rescue and is responsible for maintaining those records. Olson was

commended for his willingness to work patrol shifts and participate in community events such as the Shop with a Cop program. Olson has been referred to by his partners as a role model to new members with his constant professionalism and positive attitude.

Meritorious Service Award

On Aug. 8, Isanti County Dispatch responded to a call of a suspicious man and woman walking along gravel roads in rural Isanti Township. The second call from another in the area reported that a man had come to the door and said that he'd been robbed at gunpoint. It was reported to dispatch that a suspect vehicle involved in the robbery was described as a purple Honda passenger car with black rims. The man also said after being robbed, his car was stolen by the suspects.

Deputy Evan Oltz arrived at the scene and met a man and a woman matching the description in the call made to dispatch. Oltz reported that the male explained he and the woman ran out of fuel and were lost. The man explained that the purple Honda approached and that he'd asked for help from the driver and occupant who gave a ride to the two victims. The occupants of the vehicle then robbed the man and the woman at gunpoint, demanding the woman's purse.

Deputy Dave Matchinsky arrived on the scene to assist. While with the victims, a tan-colored passenger car and motorcycle approached on the roadway. The victims said that this was the car involved in the robbery. The two vehicles were stopped by the deputies and the drivers were identified and detained until further investigation.

Oltz said that the victim explained after being robbed, he tried to return to his vehicle, which was out of gas, and that it had been stolen. The victims identified both men in the passenger car and on the motorcycle as the individuals who had robbed them. These two men were detained by law enforcement, one of which actively resisted and was combating while being taken into custody. As Oltz continued to speak with the victims he noted inconsistencies in their statements. Oltz focused on the woman's statements and was able to get an admittance from the female that she knew one of the two assailants.

As the deputies continued to process the scene, it was determined that the man and woman victims had deliberately come to the area to meet one of the two suspects. The purpose of the meeting was drug-related.

A search of the tan passenger car and motorcycle driven by the two suspects resulted in the recovery of methamphetamine. The suspect vehicle described in the robbery was located behind a nearby residence where the woman admitted they would be going.

The vehicle reported stolen was recovered in a cornfield nearby this residence. The robbery did take place after the two suspects did not sell the drugs the victims came for. The victims didn't have the money and the suspects took the purse and vehicle.

This was a confusing call from the start, and Oltz, the lead in the case, investigated the facts, comparing statements to events and realized there was more to the story.

The result of the incident was the release of the man and woman victims and the arrest of the two males suspected of the robbery. Though the victims admitted to being in the area to buy drugs, nothing illegal or anything of evidential value was found on or with them.

No actual sale of a controlled substance took place, therefore there was no crime to hold the reported victims of the incident. One of the two parties taken into custody for the sale of the controlled substance provided a statement under Miranda admitting to the offenses. They were charged with drug possession crimes and first-degree aggravated robbery.

Oltz was nominated by his partners and received the Meritorious Service Award for his clear thinking and professional actions in the incident. Though Oltz had partners who arrived on the scene to assist him, he did what he did with only a four months' experience as a deputy.