



TOWN OF VERNON

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Vernon Police Honor Officers and Residents for Heroism and Lifesaving

(VERNON, Connecticut) – The Vernon Police Department on Wednesday honored officers for their good work and residents from the community who went above and beyond to save lives, protect children and assist in criminal investigations.

It was the first time in three years the Vernon Police Department has been able to host its annual awards program, which took place in the Council Chambers at Vernon Town Hall. More than 100 awards and commendations were handed out, and three officers were named Officer of the Year for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

“Day in and day out, the men and women of the Vernon police department, and officers across our state and nation, do exemplary work,” Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne said. “They save lives. They handle difficult, emotional situations and restore calm. They tenaciously investigate crimes and bring order to disorder.”

Vernon Police Chief John Kelley said the awards handed out Wednesday night were but a representation of the good work Vernon Police Officers do.

“The men and women of this department do extraordinary things every day,” Kelley said. “Almost weekly I hear from grateful residents, and I am regularly stopped by people who praise the professionalism and kindness of our officers. I am proud of our officers and their commitment to our community.”

“Public safety is always our top priority,” Town Administrator and Emergency & Risk Management Director Michael Purcaro said. “These awards illustrate our officers’ willingness to do the utmost to protect and serve the residents of Vernon. I am also struck by the heroic actions of our residents that results in lives being saved and crimes being prevented.”

Officers Ethan Roberge, Danny Macaulay, Kerry Reynolds, Dale Lagace and Jamie Grzegorek were honored for their heroic and life-saving response to a fire at 26 Union Street on Dec. 20, 2020. The officers arrived before the fire department and found flames and heavy smoke pouring from the building. Macaulay, Reynolds and Grzegorek charged into the building from the front and pounded on doors to alert and evacuate residents. Lagace and Roberge went into the burning building through a rear door, but were forced to retreat because of the fire and smoke. They did alert firefighters to residents trapped by fire and smoke and directed firefighters with ladders to rescue them. The officers accounted for every building resident, administered first aid to the injured and then walked through across Union Street to Rockville General Hospital for treatment.

“The actions of every Officer on scene exemplified selflessness and courage and contributed to the successful evacuation of every resident with no loss of life,” the officers’ citations reads.



Vernon Police Chief John Kelley, left, is joined by Officer Andre Lisee, Detective Cody Flanigan and Officer Matthew Guilmette. Lisee and Flanigan were recognized as officers of the year and Guilmette as rookie of the year.

Another team of Vernon officers was honored for its response to a shooting and homicide at a local motel on June 27, 2021. First arriving officers found the victim and began lifesaving measures. They then controlled the scene and began collecting evidence, which led to the recovery of a weapon used in the assault and the quick capture of the man who was ultimately charged in the killing.

“Because of officers’ actions and response, the suspect was contained within the perimeter and apprehended by officers,” the citation reads. “Every police officer and dispatcher involved played an invaluable role in the successful and quick apprehension and arrest of an armed and dangerous suspect.”

Michael Deane, a school crossing guard, was honored for assisting police and saving a child from potential exploitation. In December 2021, police asked Deane to report any unusual activity. Deane did just that, spotting an adult question and call a child over to his vehicle as the child got off a school bus. Deane took photos of the suspect and his vehicle and then provided the information to police which resulted in an arrest and saved the child.

Emily Young was honored for going to the aid of her father, who suffered a heart attack. She began CPR and continued until Vernon officers arrived. The police officers took over, administering CPR and using an AED. Her efforts, along with those by the responding officers, resulted in her father making a full recovery.

Jacob Melia, a lifeguard at Camp Newhoca, and Jayden Thompson, a camper, were honored for saving another a boy who was having trouble in the water. Jayden held the boy and kept his head above the water and Jacob took the boy to shore and cared for him until police and the ambulance arrived. The boy made a full recovery.

Fourteen Vernon officers received lifesaving awards for going to the aid of and saving people who suffered heart attacks, were attempting suicide or suffered gunshot wounds.

Officers selected their colleagues for “Officer of the Year” for their hard work and outstanding performance. Those recognized were Detective Thomas Van Tassel for 2019, Detective Cody Flanigan for 2020 and Officer Andre Lisee for 2021. Each showed exceptional dedication to duty, superior performance and a positive attitude in serving the department and community.

Officer Matthew Guilmette was selected as “Rookie of the Year” for his exceptional dedication to duty, superior performance, motivation and positive attitude in service to the department and community.

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of more than 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870- 3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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