



2026 VACP AWARDS

September 1, 2026
Roanoke, VA



The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation (VACP) each year recognizes officers and individuals in several award categories — Valor, Lifesaving, Outstanding Contribution to Law Enforcement, and a President's Award. It is with great pride that we recognize the exceptional efforts of these fine public servants who are a credit to their agencies and true public servants to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

We wish to thank Facetec, Axon & Daly Computers for their support of tonight's awards banquet.

Sincerely,
Chief John P. Clair
2025-26 VACP President

VACP AWARDS BANQUET

September 1, 2026 • Roanoke, VA

WELCOME

Chief John P. Clair, 2025-26 VACP President

INVOCATION

DINNER

REMARKS

The Honorable Abigail D. Spanberger, 75th Governor of Virginia

VACP AWARDS PROGRAM

Chief Wayne Sager, Chairman, VACP Awards Committee

Announcement of Awards for Lifesaving

Awards for Valor

Award for Outstanding Contribution to Law Enforcement

VACP PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Chief John P. Clair, 2025-26 VACP President

INSTALLATION OF 2026-2027 VACP EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chief Scott C. Booth, VACP Past President (2024-25) &

Chairman, VACP Nominating Committee

VACP BANQUET SPONSORS

*Our sincere gratitude to the following
VACP Diamond & Platinum Partners for
their support of the 2026 Awards Banquet.*



NOTES

Award Recipients & Executive Board:

- ♦ CHIEFS/SHERIFFS OF AWARD RECIPIENTS:
Please accompany your officers on stage for the presentation.
- ♦ AWARD RECIPIENTS & EXECUTIVE BOARD:
Please remain at the end of the banquet for additional group photographs.
Gather near the stage at the front of the room.
- ♦ Protective boxes for your awards are available at the front of the room after the banquet.
- ♦ Please remember to collect your department flags and flagstands, but wait until after all group photographs have been taken at the end of the banquet.

Photography:

- ♦ Photographs of the award presentations will be available online at <https://photos.vachiefs.org/VACP-Conferences/2026-VACP-Annual-Conference/2026-VACP-Awards-Banquet> following the conference. Prints may be purchased from the photo gallery directly, or you may download high-resolution images to make your own prints.



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VACP AWARDS COMMITTEE

Chairman:

Chief Wayne Sager
Strasburg Police Department

Committee Members:

Chief Travis Christian
Petersburg Police Department

Chief Mario Lugo
Manassas Park Police Department

Chief David McCoy
University of Richmond Police Department

Chief Jonathan Shenk
Bridgewater College Police Department

Chief James E. Williams
Staunton Police Department

Chief (Ret) Douglas Goodman
VACP Past President, 2018-19

Chief (Ret) A.J. Panebianco
VACP Past President, 2021-22

GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA ABIGAIL D. SPANBERGER



"On behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia, I congratulate this year's Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police award recipients. Your leadership, courage, and unwavering commitment to protecting your communities strengthens the Commonwealth we all call home.

Thank you for the difference you make every day and for your dedication to keeping Virginians safe. We are grateful for your service and proud to recognize your outstanding acts of service and compassion."





The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation (VACP) is proud to honor forty officers with the 2026 Award for Lifesaving.

The VACP Lifesaving Award is presented in recognition of a law enforcement officer's actions that put that officer in harm's way in an attempt to save the life of another.

This year's honorees risked their own lives in an effort to save others from burning buildings and vehicles, gunshot wounds, assaults, attempted suicides, and other dangerous situations.

The Lifesaving Awards will be presented at the officers' agencies by their chief or sheriff on behalf of the VACP.

2026 LIFESAVING AWARDS

Colonial Heights Police Department

Sergeant Rocky Navarro

Fort Belvoir Police Department

Officer Gannon Sullivan

Halifax Police Department

Officer Jeremy W. King

Hanover County Sheriff's Office

Deputy Troy Breeden

Deputy Peter Chapman

Henrico County Police Division

Officer Glenn P. Keough

Officer Jordan L. Smith

Manassas City Police Department

Sr. Police Officer Joseph Siemek

MPO Stephanie Curry

MPO Shaun Barrett

Officer Luke Godbold

Officer Sean Coates

Sergeant Patrick Crossey

MPO Jonathan Kashinsky

MPO Shaun Barrett

Officer Austin Trivett

MPO Kerri Heiderman

MPO Christopher Daniels

Sr. Police Officer Michael Shegogue

Officer Luis Labrada

Officer Manuel Enrique Mendez Rey

Prince William County Police Department

Police Officer Casey A. Fines

Police Officer Matthew R. Castilla

Police Officer Gary A. Schultz

Richmond Police Department

Officer Quinton Blackwell

Officer Paul Jenkins

Sergeant James Brown
MPO Matthew Cavanaugh

Officer Michael Kirby

Officer Michael Lockard

Officer Jose Marte

Officer Manual Reyes

Officer Samuel Morgan

Officer Zieshia Reed
Officer Beaker Sulaimon

Officer Joe Reynoso

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Conservation Police

Sr. CPO Justin Chambers

Virginia State Police

Trooper Stone Baker

Trooper Dalton Marshall

Sergeant Sloane Page



Tonight, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation honors twenty-six Virginia law enforcement officers with our highest award — the Award for Valor.

The VACP Award for Valor recognizes a law enforcement officer who, in the line of duty, performs an act of extraordinary heroism while engaged with an adversary at imminent personal risk.

These awards recognize the bravery, professionalism and commitment to public service of these fine officers.

2026 VALOR AWARDS

Arlington County Police Department

Sergeant Mark Francis
Corporal Robert Stanley

Fairfax County Police Department

MPO David R. Antal
MPO Michael W. Weaver
PFC Ian H. LaChapelle

James City Co. Police Department

Lieutenant Sterling Perry
Sr. Police Officer Killian Burden

Petersburg Bureau of Police

Lieutenant James Frye
Officer Michael L. Majors, Jr.

Prince William Co. Police Department

Officer Kyle A. Fletcher
Officer Robert S. Niewenhous

Radford City Police Department

Lieutenant Evan S. McManus
Sergeant Jordan Ellis
Officer Jacob Caudell

Richmond Police Department

Officer Antonio Fitzpatrick
Officer Miguel Reyes

Richmond Police Department

Sergeant Brady McWhirter
Sergeant Kelly Morley
Sergeant Taylor Sensabaugh

Richmond Police Department

Sergeant Glenn Gohlke
Sergeant Shane Watson

Shenandoah County Sheriff's Office

Master Deputy Joshua L. Cook

Virginia State Police

Sr. Trooper Pedro Y.A. Salamanca
Trooper William R. Keesee
Trooper Dylan J. Welsh

Virginia State Police

Trooper John D. Winebrenner



Arlington County Police Department

**SERGEANT MARK FRANCIS
CORPORAL ROBERT STANLEY**

On December 10, 2024, at approximately 3:45 p.m., officers were dispatched for a report of a suspicious person inside a business. The investigation revealed that the suspect engaged employees in conversation while displaying a knife before fleeing the scene.

Corporal Robert Stanley and Sergeant Mark Francis quickly located the suspect at the Rosslyn Metro Station. As they attempted to detain him, the suspect produced a knife and actively resisted, initiating a violent physical altercation while armed. In the effort to create distance and mitigate the threat, Corporal Stanley sustained multiple lacerations.

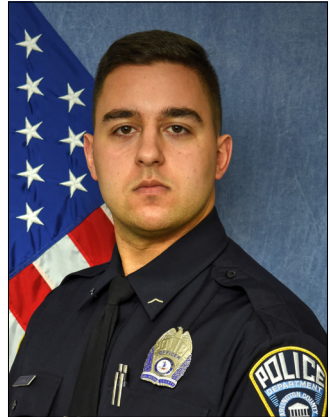
Faced with an immediate and escalating deadly force encounter, Corporal Stanley discharged his firearm, neutralizing the threat. Both officers immediately transitioned to lifesaving measures until medics arrived and transported the suspect to a local hospital, where he was later pronounced deceased.

Corporal Stanley and Sergeant Francis demonstrated exceptional courage, sound judgment, and unwavering commitment under extreme conditions. In the face of a life-threatening situation, they placed themselves in harm's way to protect the community and each other, exemplifying the highest standards of the Arlington County Police Department.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Arlington County Sergeant Mark Francis and Corporal Robert Stanley with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Sergeant Mark Francis



Corporal Robert Stanley



Fairfax County Police Department

MPO DAVID R. ANTAL

MPO MICHAEL W. WEAVER

PFC IAN H. LACHAPELLE



MPO David R. Antal



MPO Michael W. Weaver



PFC Ian H. LaChapelle

On April 23, 2025, Master Police Officer David Antal was working SET Patrol in the Fair Oaks District when he conducted a routine traffic stop.

After observing a vehicle with no valid inspection and exceeding the posted speed limit, MPO Antal activated the lights on his patrol cruiser and attempted to make a traffic stop. The driver of the vehicle slammed on the brakes so hard that the nose of the car dipped and the rear end lifted sharply.

When MPO Antal approached the driver's side window, he was immediately met by an extremely angry male subject. The driver yelled and demanded to know why he had been stopped. (Unbeknownst to MPO Antal at the time, the driver had a history of encounters with law enforcement charges, including eluding police and resisting arrest, and he had recently been stopped for a similar traffic violation.) The subject refused to provide a driver's license and stated to MPO Antal that he was armed. MPO Antal calmly attempted to de-escalate the situation while requesting backup.

While waiting for back up to arrive, MPO Antal continued to try and engage the subject in dialogue while remaining calm and alert to the subject's movements. The subject escalated his rhetoric and was ranting about being a translator for the U.S. forces in Afghanistan. He made several concerning comments to include that he wished he had joined the Taliban instead

continued



of helping the United States, that he wished he had never come to the United States, and “Today’s the day, buddy.”

As arriving units’ sirens could be heard in the distance, MPO Antal relayed to the subject to remain calm and to stop reaching for his weapon.

Master Police Officer Mike Weaver and Police Officer First Class Ian LaChapelle arrived at MPO Antal’s location at the same time and calmly approached the vehicle. MPO Weaver approached the driver’s side and PFC LaChapelle approached on the passenger side. As MPO Weaver began speaking, the subject suddenly attempted to place his license out the open driver window. While reaching for the license, MPO Weaver observed the subject drawing his holstered weapon from his waist. MPO Weaver gave clear commands to drop the weapon and attempted to restrain the subject’s hands. However, the subject was able to draw his weapon and fire a round, which struck MPO Weaver in the right arm. The bullet exited MPO Weaver’s arm and subsequently struck MPO Antal in the left arm.

Both MPO Weaver and MPO Antal were able to retreat from the immediate line of fire while PFC LaChapelle was able to swiftly draw his service weapon and neutralize the threat. As MPO Weaver and MPO Antal sought cover to begin triaging their wounds, PFC LaChapelle relayed the situation to dispatch all while maintaining cover from a safe distance of the subject’s vehicle.

Additional units arrived moments later and quickly worked together to relay critical information to responding units as well as set up a reaction team to extricate the subject from his vehicle. Supervisors handled all communications to shut down intersections and direct responding officers to strategic locations. Officers formed into two teams to safely approach the vehicle.

After the subject was removed from his vehicle and the weapon secured, responding officers applied tourniquets to MPO Antal’s and MPO Weaver’s arms and then transported them to Fair Oaks Hospital where they were treated for their wounds and released from that night. They both quickly returned to light duty.

Officers Weaver, Antal, and LaChappelle relied on their training and experience to survive a life-or-death critical incident. And the officers that responded did not hesitate in their actions to immediately clear the vehicle and render aid to their fellow officers along with the shooter. Their quick thinking, commitment to service, and ability to work seamlessly as a team reflect the high standards of excellence that they bring to the Fairfax County Police Department.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Fairfax County Master Police Officer David Antal, Master Police Officer Mike Weaver and Police Officer First Class Ian LaChapelle with the
2026 Award for Valor.



James City County Police Department

LIEUTENANT STERLING PERRY SENIOR POLICE OFFICER KILLIAN BURDEN

On January 28, 2026, James City County Police officers were notified by dispatch of a stabbing that occurred just outside of James City County at a commercial business in York County. They were advised that a female had been stabbed in the neck by a male suspect, who then fled to the Home Depot store. Multiple James City County officers who were close to the area responded to assist the York County Sheriff's Office with this call and were first to arrive on scene.

Lt. Sterling Perry and Officer Killian Burden were the first officers to locate and confront the suspect inside of the business. As they approached, the suspect armed himself with a metal claw hammer and positioned himself directly in front of the officers. Lt. Perry and Officer Burden repeatedly issued clear verbal commands to the suspect to release the weapon and surrender. However, the suspect refused to drop the weapon. As other officers rushed store patrons away from the scene for their safety, the suspect raised the claw hammer and ran directly at the officers intending to assault them with the weapon.

As both Lt. Perry and Officer Burden were facing an imminent threat of serious injury or even death, both officers discharged their firearms, striking the subject and stopping the threat against them and others. Once the suspect was incapacitated, these officers immediately transitioned from defensive action and began rendering medical aid to the suspect; however, his wounds became fatal.

continued



Lieutenant Sterling Perry



Sr. Police Officer Killian Burden



Lt. Perry and Officer Burden demonstrated exceptional courage, sound judgment, and decisive action under rapidly evolving and life-threatening circumstances. Their swift response and willingness to place themselves in harm's way to protect the public exemplifies the highest standards of law enforcement service. Their ability to transition to life saving measures on a subject who had threatened them with a possibly deadly attack demonstrates the compassion that must still be shown by officers regardless of circumstances.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor James City County Police Lieutenant Sterling Perry and Senior Officer Killian Burden with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Petersburg Bureau of Police

LIEUTENANT JAMES FRYE

OFFICER MICHAEL L. MAJORS, JR.

On March 18, 2026, Petersburg police officers responded in reference to a death investigation. During the initial stages of the investigation, officers developed information that two suspects had fled the scene and were known to be armed with firearms.

Responding personnel quickly established a perimeter, and both suspects were located a short distance from the original crime scene. Upon contact, one suspect surrendered without incident. The second suspect refused lawful commands and fled on foot.

During the foot pursuit, the suspect was carrying a backpack and repeatedly attempted to manipulate it while fleeing. Lieutenant James Frye continued the pursuit with heightened awareness due to the known presence of firearms. The suspect climbed onto the rear porch of an apartment building and continued to reach into the backpack, causing an escalating threat to officer safety.

As the pursuit continued, the suspect entered a cul-de-sac, slowed his pace, began attempting to determine the officers' positions while still reaching into the backpack. The suspect then took a position of cover and concealment behind parked vehicles, further indicating preparation for a potential armed confrontation.

continued



Lieutenant James Frye



Officer Michael L. Majors, Jr.



Officer Michael Majors arrived on scene and immediately challenged the suspect, exiting his marked patrol vehicle and issuing clear, lawful commands for the suspect to drop his weapon. The suspect refused to comply and instead assumed a shooting stance.

The suspect discharged multiple rounds at Officer Majors, placing him in immediate danger of serious bodily injury or death.

Despite being directly fired upon, Officer Majors demonstrated exceptional courage and composure by returning fire and maintaining engagement with the armed suspect. Simultaneously, Lieutenant Frye continued to tactically advance, placing himself in harm's way to assist in neutralizing the lethal threat.

During the exchange of gunfire, the suspect attempted to reposition from his initial cover. Lieutenant Frye, recognizing the imminent and continuing danger, discharged his duty weapon and effectively neutralized the threat.

Lieutenant James Frye and Officer Michael Majors demonstrated extraordinary valor in the face of an armed assailant who knowingly and intentionally attempted to inflict deadly harm upon Law Enforcement Officers. Both officers willingly placed themselves in immediate and grave personal danger, exhibiting unwavering commitment to their duty while under direct gunfire. Their actions required decisive judgment, tactical coordination, and exceptional bravery in a highly volatile situation.

The conduct of both Officers reflects heroism beyond the call of duty, consistent with the highest traditions of law enforcement service in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Petersburg Bureau of Police Lieutenant James Frye and Officer Michael Majors with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Prince William County Police Department

POLICE OFFICER KYLE A. FLETCHER POLICE OFFICER ROBERT S. NIEWENHOUS

On April 26, 2025, at approximately 10 am, Police Officers Kyle Fletcher and Robert Niewenhaus responded to an assisted living facility located on Clipper Drive in Woodbridge. They were dispatched in response to a call regarding a suicide in progress involving a 25-year-old male who was actively stabbing himself with a knife.

Upon arrival, the officers attempted to make contact with the occupants of the apartment but received no response at the door. A staff member from the complex provided officers with a keycard to access the unit and told them the victim was being held at knife point by her grandson.

As both officers entered the apartment, they announced their presence and immediately saw the enraged suspect holding a knife near the two female occupants in the apartment. Officers Fletcher and Niewenhaus quickly entered the very small apartment.

Officer Fletcher immediately moved into the kitchen, separated from the living room by a breakfast bar. Officer Niewenhaus moved forward into the brief foyer of the apartment. Despite their attempts to maneuver, both officers found themselves forced to be within a few feet of the suspect in hopes of interrupting his apparent homicidal intentions.

Both officers drew their firearms, pointed them at the suspect and gave him clear, loud commands to drop the knife he was holding.

continued



Police Officer Kyle A. Fletcher



Police Officer Robert S. Niewenhaus



The suspect redirected his attention away from the occupants and focused on the officers. Without warning, the suspect then charged towards Officer Fletcher, attempting to climb over the breakfast bar to stab him with the knife. Officer Fletcher, in fear that he would imminently be stabbed or killed, discharged his firearm multiple times striking the suspect.

In response to the suspect charging at the officers, both officers backed away from the suspect towards the apartment entryway. The officers then regrouped at the entryway and yelled commands at the subject to drop the knife and stop his attack. The suspect momentarily retreated off of the breakfast bar and focused his attention towards Officer Niewenhous and Officer Fletcher standing in the entryway. Despite having already been shot, the suspect charged and attacked both Officers who were again forced to fire their weapons, striking the suspect multiple times.

During this second attack, the Officers had stepped backwards as the suspect attacked, momentarily placing them just outside the apartment in the hallway. Seeing that the suspect appeared to be retreating back into the living room, both Officers pushed forward and yelled commands at the suspect. As they entered the apartment, they observed the suspect advancing toward his ninety-one-year-old grandmother with the knife. The Officers desperately yelled commands for the suspect to stop his attack and drop the knife, but despite being shot multiple times, he refused to comply and continued to advance towards his grandmother with apparent homicidal intention. Both officers were once again forced to discharge their firearms at the suspect to stop his attack. After this third volley, the suspect finally stopped being a threat and collapsed to the ground. As other Officers arrived, the suspect was placed into handcuffs and Officers began administering first aid until rescue services arrived.

The suspect was pronounced dead at the scene, and the grandmother was transported to INOVA Fairfax Hospital with serious, but non-life-threatening injuries. Amazingly neither Officer was injured during the incident.

The Officers knowingly, and at great risk, placed themselves in harm's way to stop a homicidal subject. Regardless of the outcome, the involved Officers acted quickly and professionally during an extremely stressful encounter, engaged the subject at imminent risk to themselves, and displayed extraordinary heroism in doing so.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Prince William County Officer Kyle Fletcher and Officer Robert Niewenhous with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Radford City Police Department

LIEUTENANT EVAN S. MCMANUS SERGEANT JORDAN ELLIS OFFICER JACOB CAUDELL

On April 20, 2026, Lieutenant Evan McManus, Sergeant Jordan Ellis, and Officer Jacob Caudell responded to a residence regarding a report that a roommate had barricaded himself inside while armed with multiple knives. Upon arrival, the officers established verbal contact from outside the home and immediately evacuated a roommate to a safe location, preventing potential harm to an uninvolved party.

Recognizing the volatility of the situation, Sergeant Ellis demonstrated exceptional tactical foresight by deploying his less lethal shotgun while Lieutenant McManus maintained lethal cover. The subject, later identified as a mental health consumer in crisis, suddenly emerged from the residence armed with a knife and advanced toward the officers in a threatening manner. Despite numerous clear and repeated verbal commands, the subject refused to comply and continued to close distance.

In an effort to resolve the encounter without loss of life, Officer Caudell deployed his Taser. The device proved ineffective, and the subject continued to advance with the knife in hand. With lethal force legally justified and seconds from becoming necessary, Sergeant Ellis fired three less lethal beanbag rounds, striking the subject and stopping his forward movement. This decisive action created the critical opportunity for the officers to safely take the individual into custody and ensure he received immediate mental health treatment.

continued



*Sgt. Jordan Ellis, Lt. Evan McManus
& Officer Jacob Caudell*



Historically, incidents of this nature overwhelmingly result in the justified use of deadly force. In most cases, this subject would not have survived this encounter — through no fault of the responding officers — but due to the immediacy and severity of the threat. However, Lieutenant McManus, Sergeant Ellis, and Officer Caudell demonstrated extraordinary restraint, discipline, and commitment to preserving life, even while facing a subject who was actively threatening to kill them.

Their actions reflect the highest standards of policing. Through exceptional teamwork, sound judgment, and the courageous use of less lethal options under extreme pressure, these officers prevented a fatal outcome and ensured that a person in crisis received the treatment he desperately needed.

For their bravery, professionalism, and unwavering dedication to the preservation of human life, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Radford City Lieutenant Evan McManus, Sergeant Jordan Ellis, and Officer Jacob Caudell with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Richmond Police Department

OFFICER ANTONIO FITZPATRICK OFFICER MIGUEL REYES

On January 17, 2026, Officers Antonio Fitzpatrick and Miguel Reyes responded to an armed suspect. Upon arrival, they observed a suspect actively firing a handgun at the Greater Richmond Transit Company building and threatening nearby civilians.

While under gunfire, Officers Fitzpatrick and Reyes took cover, assessed the situation, and developed a plan to stop the threat. The officers then advanced from cover, issued commands, and engaged the suspect when he continued to present a deadly threat. Their actions successfully neutralized the suspect and ended the immediate danger to the public.

Neither officer was injured, and no civilians were harmed. By courageously confronting an active armed threat and placing themselves in harm's way to protect others, Officers Fitzpatrick and Reyes demonstrated exceptional bravery, professionalism, and devotion to duty.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Richmond Officer Antonio Fitzpatrick and Officer Miguel Reyes with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Officer Antonio Fitzpatrick



Officer Miguel Reyes





Richmond Police Department

**SERGEANT BRADY MCWHIRTER
SERGEANT KELLY MORLEY
SERGEANT TAYLOR SENSABAUGH**

On July 5th, 2025, Richmond Police officers responded to a convenience store for a report of an armed subject who had stabbed someone inside the store. Initial reports indicated that the subject was holding multiple individuals hostage and was under the influence of methamphetamine. When officers arrived, they discovered that the suspect had locked the front doors and was actively blocking the cashier and three patrons from exiting.

The cashier, suffering from a significant stab wound to the arm, was in urgent need of medical assistance. A plan was quickly formulated to evacuate hostages through a rear door, while the suspect held them at gunpoint through the locked front glass doors.

Inside the store, the suspect continued to make violent threats while armed with knives. At one point, he was seen attempting to stab himself in the neck.

After the cashier was evacuated, officers learned that a personal firearm belonging to the cashier was on the store counter, within reach of the subject. This significantly escalated the urgency to act before the suspect could arm himself.

The team developed a tactical plan. The front of the building was cleared and traffic was shut down to prevent risk to the public. The entry team approached from the rear. Sergeant McWhirter led the entry, Sergeant Morley, and Officer Sensabaugh followed, while additional officers flanked the structure. A K9 was deployed as coverage, and the team moved swiftly and tactically. The suspect, still armed with multiple knives and refusing commands, was struck by a single round from Sergeant McWhirter and immediately subdued. The suspect was taken into custody and charged with three counts of abduction, one count of malicious wounding, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Each officer knowingly placed themselves in immediate danger to stop an armed, violent subject and protect the hostages and the public. Their coordinated tactics and decisive actions prevented what could have been a far more devastating incident. Their valor, composure, and commitment to duty reflected the highest standards of law enforcement.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Richmond Police Sergeant Brady McWhirter, Sergeant Kelly Morley, and Officer Taylor Sensabaugh with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Sergeant Brady McWhirter



Sergeant Taylor Sensabaugh



Sergeant Kelly Morley





Richmond Police Department

SERGEANT GLENN GOHLKE SERGEANT SHANE WATSON

On an early morning search warrant on August 20, 2025, the RPD SWAT team, with the assistance of Third Precinct officers, attempted to execute the warrant to secure an apartment for a firearm “switch” device that converts a semi-automatic firearm into a machine-gun-type weapon.

The SWAT team positioned themselves, and announcements were made for the occupants to exit the apartment. The grandmother of the subject of the warrant exited the apartment shortly thereafter and was led to safety.

Officer Glenn Gohlke, holding a rifle shield, positioned himself just outside the open door of the apartment to give commands for the occupants to exit. Gunfire erupted from the residence, striking the shield and also the protective gear of Gohlke, pushing him back. In that moment, Sergeant Watson, without a shield, put himself in harms way to take a position at the other side of the door to provide time and cover for his teammate.

Despite sustaining multiple rounds, Officer Gohlke quickly regained his position and continued to protect his team, demonstrating remarkable courage under life-threatening conditions. His actions helped ensure the safety of fellow officers and contributed to the successful securing of the scene.

Due to the high-capacity firearms found in the apartment, the entry team was in imminent danger prior to the structure being cleared – especially Sergeant Watson, who positioned himself at the door without benefit of a shield. Sergeant Watson displayed bravery, composure, calmness, and professionalism during the chaotic situation.



Sergeant Glenn Gohlke



Sergeant Shane Watson

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Richmond Sergeant Shane Watson and Officer Glenn Gohlke with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Shenandoah County Sheriff's Office

MASTER DEPUTY JOSHUA L. COOK

On August 17, 2025, Master Deputy Joshua Cook responded to a report of a sexual assault involving a juvenile victim and an adult male suspect. Upon arrival, Master Deputy Cook located the suspect seated on the front porch of the residence and attempted to conduct an interview. The suspect refused to cooperate or provide any information.

Master Deputy Cook entered the residence to continue his investigation, where he gathered critical information from family members. He learned that the suspect had recently been released from prison, had a history of assaulting law enforcement officers, and was currently out on bond.



Master Deputy Joshua L. Cook

Master Deputy Cook returned to the porch to detain the suspect. With handcuffs in hand, he instructed the suspect to stand. As the suspect complied, he suddenly and violently shoved Master Deputy Cook off the porch. The force of the push caused Cook to fall to the ground and drop his handcuffs. The suspect immediately began striking him multiple times.

Despite being under attack, Master Deputy Cook attempted to regain control of the situation; however, the suspect gained possession of the handcuffs. Recognizing the escalating threat, Master Deputy Cook created distance and drew his service weapon, issuing multiple commands for the suspect to get on the ground. The suspect ignored these commands, continued to advance aggressively, and again forced Cook to the ground, resuming his assault—this time striking him with the handcuffs.

While being actively assaulted and from a grounded position, Master Deputy Cook discharged his firearm in an effort to stop the attack. After being shot, the suspect continued to strike Cook multiple times in the head with the handcuffs.

continued



The assault persisted until Master Deputy Cook was able to create sufficient distance and the suspect, weakened by his injuries, was no longer able to continue the attack. At that point, Master Deputy Cook was able to notify dispatch that shots had been fired and provided an update on both his condition and that of the suspect.

Despite sustaining injuries during the assault, Master Deputy Cook maintained situational awareness and held his position, ensuring the suspect remained on the ground.

Demonstrating a continued commitment to preserving life, Master Deputy Cook approached the suspect and attempted to render lifesaving aid. However, due to the severity of his own injuries, he was unable to continue providing medical assistance. He then repositioned himself to a location where he could safely observe the suspect while awaiting additional units. Master Deputy Cook remained on scene, injured and without immediate backup, maintaining control and monitoring the suspect until additional responding deputies arrived approximately ten minutes after the assault had ended.

Master Deputy Cook was transported to the hospital with severe lacerations to his head where he was treated and released. The suspect succumbed to his injuries.

Master Deputy Joshua Cook's actions during this incident exemplify extraordinary bravery, resilience, and unwavering dedication to duty. Faced with a violent suspect who had already demonstrated a willingness to inflict serious harm, Master Deputy Cook continued to engage despite being physically assaulted, disarmed of his equipment, and struck repeatedly, including in the head. While under direct and sustained attack, he maintained composure, made critical decisions under extreme duress, and used lawful force to stop a life-threatening assault. Even after sustaining significant injuries, Master Deputy Cook demonstrated remarkable fortitude by communicating with dispatch, maintaining control of the scene without immediate backup, and attempting to render aid to the suspect. His actions reflect a commitment to the protection of others and the preservation of life, placing himself at great personal risk.

For courage and perseverance in the face of imminent danger, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor Shenandoah County Master Deputy Joshua Cook with the 2026 Award for Valor.



Virginia State Police

SR. TROOPER PEDRO Y.A. SALAMANCA TROOPER WILLIAM R. KEESEE TROOPER DYLAN J. WELSH



*Sr. Trooper Pedro Y.A.
Salamanca*



Trooper William R. Keese



Trooper Dylan J. Welsh

On December 1st, 2025, Trooper William Keese and Senior Trooper Pedro Salamanca were part of a tactical team that responded to a barricade incident in northwest Roanoke where they ultimately protected the life of a fellow trooper.

The barricade followed a pursuit by a U.S. Marshals Service Task Force, which was trying to take a violent fugitive into custody. The suspect fled the attempted stop, struck several law enforcement vehicles, and then abandoned the car in a residential neighborhood.

The suspect had been inside a residence for several hours when the Tactical team responded and made numerous efforts to try and resolve the situation peacefully. Chemical munitions were deployed in an attempt to force a surrender. The suspect then emerged from a doorway and aimed a firearm at Trooper Dylan Welsh who, at that moment, was armed only with a Taser device.

Recognizing the immediate and deadly threat to their fellow trooper and responding without hesitation, Troopers Keese and Salamanca confronted the threat with lethal force. Their swift and decisive actions protected the life of Trooper Welsh. The suspect's firearm was later determined to have been illegally modified to allow multiple shots with one pull. Troopers Keese and Salamanca provided medical aid to the suspect until EMS personnel arrived.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor State Police Sr. Trooper Pedro Salamanca, Trooper Dylan J. Welsh, and Trooper William Keese with the 2026 Award for Valor.





Virginia State Police

TROOPER JOHN D. WINEBRENNER

On December 29, 2025, Virginia State Trooper John D. Winebrenner was on duty and assigned as the only trooper working the midnight shift in Pittsylvania County, the largest county in terms of square miles in the Commonwealth. Shortly after midnight, Trooper Winebrenner was notified by the Virginia State Police Sixth Division Communications Center to be on the lookout for a vehicle that had been pursued by deputies with the Pittsylvania County Sheriff's Office. Information was provided that the driver was wanted by the sheriff's office for three counts of brandishing a firearm and one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The charges stemmed from an earlier incident where the subject, armed with a rifle, made threats to a known female. During the deputies' pursuit of the wanted subject, one deputy crashed and law enforcement lost sight of the suspect.



Trooper John D. Winebrenner

While enroute to investigate the crash involving the deputy, Trooper Winebrenner remained vigilant and scoured the roadways to locate the suspect vehicle. Because of this, Trooper Winebrenner was able to locate the suspect vehicle on U. S. Highway 29 in the northern part of Pittsylvania County.

When Trooper Winebrenner activated his vehicle's emergency equipment and attempted to conduct a traffic stop, the suspect failed to stop and a pursuit ensued. During the pursuit, which continued onto rural secondary roads with Trooper Winebrenner as the sole law enforcement officer involved, Trooper Winebrenner was able to successfully perform a Pursuit Intervention Technique (PIT) on the suspect vehicle. The suspect vehicle spun off the roadway and struck a fence as

Trooper Winebrenner's vehicle stopped perpendicular to the driver's door of the suspect vehicle. After both vehicles came to a stop, the wanted suspect suddenly began firing a semi-automatic

rifle from close range into the interior of Trooper Winebrenner's vehicle while Trooper Winebrenner was still inside

With no time to retrieve firearms other than his duty pistol on his side, Trooper Winebrenner drew his pistol and returned fire while quickly exiting his vehicle and engaging the suspect who continued to fire multiple rounds into the State Police vehicle and at Trooper Winebrenner. During the barrage of gunfire aimed at Trooper Winebrenner, he suffered a gunshot wound to his left arm and shrapnel wounds to his face and head.

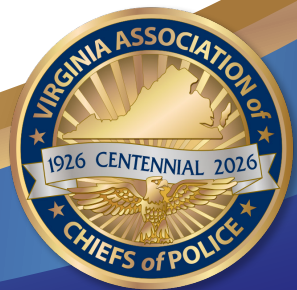
Due to Trooper Winebrenner's quick decision to exit his vehicle, and his proficiency with firearms, Trooper Winebrenner was able to overcome the imminent threat to his life and survive the encounter. The suspect succumbed to injuries at the scene.

After the threat was stopped, Trooper Winebrenner then had to ensure his survival by beginning life saving measures on himself. He was able to apply a tourniquet to his arm, calmly notify his dispatcher of what had occurred, and request emergency medical services.

Shortly afterward, deputies with the Pittsylvania County Sheriff's Office arrived on scene and were able to tighten the tourniquet on Trooper Winebrenner's arm and transport him to a nearby hospital since all medical helicopters in the vicinity were unable to fly due to the weather conditions.

Trooper Winebrenner's actions in this incident reflect his dedication to duty, service to the community, and his bravery. Without Trooper Winebrenner's vigilant response to the be on the lookout given to him by his dispatcher, the suspect would have likely confronted the victim of the earlier brandishing a firearm incident and followed through on his threats. His bravery when suddenly confronted with gunfire from a semi-automatic rifle at close range exemplifies the ideal "shall consider no sacrifice too great in the performance of my duty" as contained in the Virginia State Police Trooper's pledge.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is proud to honor State Police Trooper John Winebrenner with the 2026 Award for Valor.





The VACP Award for Outstanding Contribution to Law Enforcement is presented in recognition of an individual's conspicuous act or achievement in the performance of some duty that results in an exceptional and responsible contribution to law enforcement. The act or achievement must clearly distinguish the individual from others in the same or like circumstances.

This award may be presented to a civilian employee or volunteer whose efforts benefited law enforcement statewide, regionally, or locally; or, to a law enforcement officer whose efforts extended beyond his agency or locality and had a regional or statewide impact.

2026 OCLE AWARD

Fairfax County Police Department

MS. JULIE COUCH

Ms. Julie Couch of the Fairfax County Police Department Criminal Justice Academy is recognized with the VACP Award for Outstanding Contribution to Law Enforcement for her extraordinary service, compassion, leadership, and dedication to the law enforcement community and surviving families of fallen officers.

Although she serves as Testing Coordinator for the Academy, Ms. Couch's impact reaches far beyond her official duties. For more than a decade, she has single-handedly organized the Academy's annual COPS Kids event during National Police Week in partnership with Concerns of Police Survivors, creating a day of healing, mentorship, connection, and joy for children who have lost a parent in the line of duty.

Each year, she coordinates a meaningful experience for approximately 75 to 150 surviving children from across the country, ensuring that both returning participants and first-time attendees feel welcomed, supported, and valued during an emotional week. Her work includes coordinating transportation and bus arrivals escorted by motorcycle officers from across the nation, arranging counseling and mentorship space, securing donations, and transforming the Academy into a welcoming, child-centered environment with meals, gifts, entertainment, and carnival-style activities.

She also helps organize the annual police helicopter flyover and siren salute, a memorable tribute honoring fallen officers and their families.

What makes Ms. Couch's work truly exceptional is that she accomplishes all of this largely on her own while maintaining her full-time responsibilities, motivated not by recognition but by genuine compassion and a deep commitment to honoring the fallen and supporting their families.

Ms. Julie Couch exemplifies selfless service, dedication, and the best qualities of public service. Her work has touched countless lives and has become a deeply meaningful part of National Police Week for surviving children and families nationwide. She is exceptionally deserving of this recognition.



Each year, the President of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation selects an individual for the VACP President's Award to recognize their exemplary service to the the Virginia law enforcement community and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

This year, VACP President Chief John P. Clair is proud to recognize William Carlyle Boyce, Jr. for his decades of service in the education of Virginia law enforcement officers.

2026 PRESIDENT'S AWARD

WILLIAM CARLYLE BOYCE, JR.

William C. Boyce Jr. has devoted his career to law enforcement, the legal profession, and the education of police officers throughout Northern Virginia.

A member of Virginia Commonwealth University's inaugural class in 1968, Boyce earned his degree in criminal justice before joining the Alexandria Police Department. During 11 years with the department, he served as a patrol officer, patrol sergeant, internal affairs investigator, SWAT team member, and instructor at the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy.

While continuing his police service, Boyce earned his Juris Doctor from George Mason University. He subsequently served for two years in the Alexandria Commonwealth's Attorney's Office before establishing a criminal defense practice in Manassas, where he practiced until his retirement nearly three decades later. He also served as a port security officer in the United States Coast Guard Reserve.

Beginning in 1995, Boyce taught criminal law, evidence and procedure, and legal updates at the Prince William County Criminal Justice Academy. Although briefly appointed as a substitute judge, he chose to relinquish that position when a legal ethics opinion prohibited judges from participating in police training. He continued teaching at the academy until his retirement in 2015, influencing generations of law enforcement officers through his knowledge, experience, and commitment to public service.

William Boyce's lifelong commitment to public safety and service and his selfless dedication to educating countless Virginia law enforcement officers over the years exemplifies the spirit of this award. President Clair is honored to present him with the 2026 VACP President's Award.

**Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police &
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