



KITSAP COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

614 DIVISION ST. MS-37 • PORT ORCHARD, WASHINGTON 98366 • (360) 337-5698 • FAX 337-4923

For immediate release:
KCSO news release #09-049 / 125

Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2009

Medal of Valor

Sheriff's Office awards ceremony

Port Orchard, Wash. – Sheriff Steve Boyer will award the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office Medal of Valor to Deputy Donald Moszkowicz, for his actions in saving the life of a man injured in a motor vehicle crash and trapped inside his burning vehicle. The presentation will occur during a sheriff's awards ceremony next week.

The medal of valor is the highest award that may be bestowed upon an employee of the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office. Upon recommendation of the sheriff's awards committee, a recipient of the medal of valor is nominated to the governor's office for consideration for the award of the Washington State Law Enforcement Medal of Honor.

This ceremony is one of two that are conducted each year to recognize sheriff's office personnel. The ceremony includes administering the oath of office to new employees and volunteers; length of service awards; divisional awards, promotions / retirements and sheriff's level awards.

The Sheriff's Office Awards Ceremony is scheduled for 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2009, in the main auditorium of the Christian Life Center, 1780 SE Lincoln Avenue, Port Orchard.

Family members and friends, interested persons and media representatives are welcome to attend.

###

Medal of Valor

The award of the Medal of Valor is reserved for those employees of the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office whose actions during a specific incident rise above and beyond that normally expected of law enforcement personnel.

The Medal of Valor requires extraordinary action that involves the immediate risk to life in the prevention of harm to others, or for extraordinary action involving immediate risk to life in the apprehension of dangerous persons.

During the very early morning hours of Saturday, March 21, 2009, Deputy Donald Moszkowicz was on duty and on the road, operating his patrol vehicle in the 4000 block of Chico Way NW in the Central Kitsap area.

Around 12:30 a.m. Deputy Moszkowicz noticed a white-colored sedan traveling towards him at a high rate of speed. He observed the sedan cross the fog line onto the shoulder of the southbound lane of travel as it passed him, then abruptly cross both lanes of travel onto the northbound roadway shoulder.

Deputy Moszkowicz turned his patrol car around and attempted to catch up to the erratically driven vehicle, later determined to be a 1993 Buick Le Sabre. The driver of the sedan, a 29 year-old Bremerton man, accelerated and turned onto Northlake Way NW. The driver continued southbound on Northlake Way, passing through an intersection with Seabeck Highway while disregarding the intersection stop sign.

In the 1900 block of Northlake Way the driver of the Buick failed to negotiate a left hand curve. The car left the roadway and struck a utility pole resulting in numerous downed power lines across the roadway and around the vehicle. The Buick came to a stop on top of a rock wall. The Buick's engine compartment erupted in flames.

Deputy Moszkowicz arrived on-scene almost immediately following the crash. This entire scenario, up to this point, had taken 40 seconds.

Unsure if the driver or any passengers were inside the car, Deputy Moszkowicz negotiated his way to the burning vehicle through the maze of downed power lines. The passenger compartment of the Buick had filled with smoke. Unable to see inside the car Deputy Moszkowicz used his patrol vehicle fire extinguisher to attempt to control the engine compartment fire.

With the driver's door jammed shut, Deputy Moszkowicz entered the car through a rear passenger door and found the driver lying across the front seats. No one else was in the car. The young man told him that he was trapped and was unable to get himself out of the burning vehicle. Deputy Moszkowicz couldn't extricate the driver through the rear doors.

As flames from the engine compartment grew more intense, it was readily apparent that the driver's safety was in imminent peril.

In order to gain valuable time for the man's life, Deputy Moszkowicz decided to try and contain the flames until fire and rescue units arrived.

The vehicle fire became so hot that the front windshield glass began to melt.

With assistance from additional responding patrol units, Deputy Moszkowicz continuously placed his own personal safety in jeopardy by making no less than seven repeat forays, back to the Buick Le Sabre, to battle the fire with extinguishers from other sheriff's units and passers-by, all the while operating in close proximity to the downed live power lines.

The fire caused a number of small explosions, one which knocked Deputy Moszkowicz to the ground. There was fear that the Buick was going to erupt into a fireball.

Throughout this incident, Deputy Moszkowicz remained in the lead of sheriff's deputies' assistance effort to keep the driver alive. This continued for the next seven minutes until Bremerton Fire Department engine and medic units arrived with fire fighting and rescue equipment.

The driver of the Buick Le Sabre fortunately sustained only minor injuries as a result of this ordeal. He is alive today, due in large part to the great personal risk and selfless efforts of Deputy Moszkowicz, who placed himself in harm's way in order to save the life of a person unknown to him.

A native of Houston, Texas, Deputy Donald Moszkowicz is an eight-year Navy veteran who previously lived in Kitsap County from 1989 – 1993, while assigned to Naval Hospital, Bremerton and USS Carl Vinson. While stationed here he volunteered and served as a sheriff's reserve deputy.

Deputy Moszkowicz began his full-time law enforcement career as a deputy constable with Harris County Constable Precinct 4, North Harris County, Texas, from 1996 – 2005. When deputy sheriff applicants were sought here, Deputy Moszkowicz elected to transfer back to Kitsap County, in September 2005, to continue his career with his "first" law enforcement agency.

Deputy Moszkowicz is assigned to the patrol division. He resides in Central Kitsap with his wife and daughter.

In the history of the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office there have been 16 awards of the Medal of Valor. Of that number, seven recipients are currently on active duty with this agency: Deputy Dave Anderson, Detective Sgt. Eric Bockelie, Deputy Justin Childs, Deputy Jack Clampitt, Deputy Mark McVey, Detective Mike Rodrigue and Chief Gary Simpson, chief of patrol operations.

###