

200 Club of Monmouth County

P.O. Box 6518

Freehold, New Jersey 07728

www.monmouth200club.com

Eight Members of Law Enforcement Honored by 200 Club of Monmouth County with Valor Awards for Exceptional Bravery

More than 30 Additional First Responders in Monmouth County Receive Commendation and Merit Awards

Spring Lake, New Jersey, June 3, 2022 – *The 200 Club of Monmouth County* is proud to recognize the outstanding achievements of first responders in Monmouth County. Today, we honor eight members of law enforcement with our highest honor, the Valor Award, in recognition of particularly exceptional bravery, putting their own lives at risk to save and protect others.

“They deserve, and have earned, our utmost respect and appreciation,” said Benjamin J. Lucarelli, the new President of *The 200 Club of Monmouth County*. “These fine men and women have served with distinction, and we recognize their heroism and dedication to the community.”

In the Keansburg Police Department, we honor Patrol Officer Jillian Putkowski, Lieutenant Dennis Valle, Detective Richard Johnson, and Detective Christopher Rogan each with Valor Awards. The four of them responded to a hostage situation at Keansburg Pharmacy on January 6, 2022, where an employee was being held at knifepoint. The suspect was killed during the incident, and the hostage was successfully rescued. The officers risked their own lives to save the life of the employee. Lt. Valle suffered a stab wound and multiple gunshot wounds during the exchange.

The 200 Club of Monmouth County also presented three members of the Monmouth County Emergency Response Team (MOCERT) with Valor Awards. Patrolman Eric Voorand (Manalapan PD), Police Officer Daniel Murphy (Howell PD), and Police Officer Omar Akel (Middletown PD) are the honorees. On November 5, 2021, a warrant to apprehend a suspected murderer led to a standoff in Long Branch and nine hours of hostage negotiations. The suspect pretended he was turning himself in, but instead set fire to the apartment building and fired on officers while carrying a two-week-old infant. MOCERT returned fire, and the suspect was killed. The child was successfully rescued, unharmed. Detective Stephen Borchard, with the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office Narcotics Bureau, was also honored with a Valor Award in this incident. Det. Borchard was struck in the lower leg when the suspect fired.

In addition to the Valor Awards, Commendation and Merit Awards were presented to more than 30 other first responders at *The 200 Club’s* Annual Awards Luncheon at the Spring Lake Golf Club. Among the Merit Awardees is Detective Sergeant First Class Erin Smith with the New Jersey State Police. She – along with a Good Samaritan - rescued two women struggling in the water near the Glimmer Glass Drawbridge in Manasquan after their kayak capsized. In Long Branch, two officers also received Merit Awards. Detective Conor Mullan and Officer Francis Sheldrick chased down a known gang member, arrested

him, and confiscated his firearm. In Middletown, Patrolman Kevin Mahon and Patrolman Tim Walden received Merit Awards. The officers struggled with a knife wielding suspect in a hotel parking lot and disarmed her.

In 2021, we were not able to have a large gathering for our Awards Luncheon due to the pandemic, so we visited police departments and made presentations in smaller groups. We enjoyed that opportunity so much that some award presentations this year will be in-person at various police headquarters. *The 200 Club of Monmouth County* looks forward to sharing those details about the incidents and awards as those presentations take place in the weeks ahead.

The 200 Club of Monmouth County thanks Edward Cetnar, Superintendent of the Port Authority Police Department, for being the keynote speaker at the Awards Luncheon. Special appreciation also goes to Colonel Patrick Callahan with the New Jersey State Police for speaking and introducing the Superintendent.

About *The 200 Club of Monmouth County*

The 200 Club of Monmouth County's main mission is to provide financial assistance to families of first responders who die or are seriously injured in the line of duty.

Each year, *The 200 Club of Monmouth County* also awards college scholarships to deserving children of first responders. In 2021, *The 200 Club* gave 68 students college scholarships totaling nearly \$88,000. To date, the club has given out about \$2.5 million in college scholarships.

The 200 Club of Monmouth County was founded by Bill Wingard and other Monmouth County philanthropists in the 1970s, when each pledged an annual donation of \$200.

The organization is governed by officers who serve a two-year term and a Board of Trustees. It is a 501(c)3 charitable organization with about 1000 members. Community support allows *The 200 Club of Monmouth County* to continue its mission. To make a donation or apply for membership, please visit our website at www.monmouth200club.com. Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

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Contact:
Karla Bardin
Think Media Communications
karlab@thinkmedianj.com
732.996.9789