

NEWS RELEASE

Saint Paul Police Department
367 Grove Street
Saint Paul, MN 55101



John M. Harrington
CHIEF OF POLICE

Sergeant Paul Schnell
651-755-1520 - Cellular
paul.schnell@ci.stpaul.mn.us – E-mail

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Saint Paul Police to Issue Citizen Awards

On Wednesday, April 21, 2010, at 3:00 p.m., Police Chief John M. Harrington will present Chief's Awards to the following individuals for their valued and critical assistance to the Saint Paul Police Department. The brief ceremony will be held at the Western District Community Room (389 North Hamline Avenue) with a reception to follow.

Danielle Assie, Barry Gustafson, Jim Portmann, and Kyle Smisek: On April 26, 2009, these four individuals, members of the University of Saint Thomas Rowing Club and the Minneapolis Rowing Club, were working on a project on the Mississippi River. They heard a male yelling from the riverbank that he and his friend were swept into the river, but his friend was not able to make it out safely and was quickly moving downstream. Realizing the urgency of this situation Ms. Assie and Mr. Portman jumped into a motorized boat, while Mr. Gustafson and Mr. Smisek got into another boat and began searching for the missing man. After approximately twenty minutes the body of the missing man was found. He was given CPR and transported to the hospital with a faint pulse. Unfortunately, the victim did not survive. Their willingness and courage to take action on a fast moving river in unfavorable weather is to be commended.

Sarah Hedberg: On May 25, 2009, a customer at Michael's Pizza was assaulted. The victim was a frail, eighty-year-old male who had his wallet, rosary, and other religious medallions stolen as he left the restaurant. The victim had been tossed around by a much larger suspect and was beaten and kicked repeatedly. Just prior to the assault, Ms. Hedberg, an employee of Michael's Pizza, was in the parking lot and noticed a car parked in the lot, shared by Michael's and Burger King, with two occupants. A few seconds later, someone ran towards the car and hopped into the back seat. After realizing the customer had been assaulted, Ms. Hedberg immediately called the police and was able to provide an excellent description of the vehicle, the names of the two occupants, and a description of the third person who ran to the car. Officers were able to take that information and make three arrests later that evening. Without her attentiveness and willingness to become involved, the individuals may not have ever been arrested.

Christopher Newman: On June 29, 2009, Mr. Newman was driving on Arcade Street near Geranium Avenue when he saw Officer Jeffrey Stiff struggling with a man. He saw the individual push Officer Stiff and without hesitation ran to assist him. Officer Stiff was lying on his stomach with his arm around the suspect's neck, and the suspect was on his hands and knees trying to escape. Mr. Newman put his knee on the suspect's back and his hand on his neck and told him to quit resisting. Officer Stiff advised Mr. Newman that he was injured and asked if he could handcuff the suspect. Mr. Newman willingly took the cuffs and was able to place them on the suspect. Without Mr. Newman's willingness to intervene, the suspect may have escaped and/or caused further injury to the officer. His brave and selfless actions that day are commendable.

Col Michael Huddleston, CW5 Curt Skoog, CW5 Steven Shoemaker, CW4 Darin Skopek, & CW4 Paul Adamson: On May 6, 2005, Sergeant Gerald Vick from the Saint Paul Police Department was killed in the line of duty. Early that morning, the department determined that aerial support would be needed to safely search the surrounding neighborhoods, not only for suspects, but for evidence not be readily visible to officers on the ground. Sergeant Axel Henry went to Holman Field seeking assistance from the military. He was greeted with the utmost respect and immediately was placed on a helicopter and the search began over the East Side of Saint Paul. Col Huddleston, CW5 Skoog, CW5 Shoemaker, CW4 Skopek and CW4 Adamson were supportive and willing to search wherever we needed their assistance. Their cooperation and humbleness were deeply appreciated during such a tragic and emotional time for the department and the entire City of Saint Paul.

Members of the media are welcome and encouraged to attend this brief award ceremony and reception.