

## Deputy of the Year Award: Deputy Sheriff Andrew Yessman, Schuyler County

The Deputy of the Year Award is given to a Deputy who during the year 2019, performed an act of exceptional valor heroism, above and beyond the normal call of duty. This award was first presented in 1977 and this year recognizes Schuyler County Deputy Sheriff Andrew Yessman.

Last September, Deputy Sheriff Andrew Yessman was dispatched to assist the Watkins Glen Police and Fire Departments for a structure fire. Schuyler County 911 System operators communicated there was a possibility of a person trapped on the burning building's second floor and it was believed that they had special needs.

Upon Deputy Yessman's arrival, Watkins Glen Police Officer Ethan Mosher (who had also just arrived), confirmed that an individual was trapped on the second floor. Heavy smoke poured out of the building and flames could be seen in the front windows of the multi-family building.

Deputy Yessman and Officer Mosher were quickly joined by New York State Trooper Joseph Crane. They worked together to locate the rear entrance at the ground level and forced the door open. Deputy Yessman then entered the residence crawling under the thick gray and black smoke that filled the house.



Schuyler County's Andrew Yessman receives the Deputy of the Year Award for an unprecedented second time. Shown here with his wife Breana.

Three feet inside the door, Deputy Yessman located a bed, but after blindly sweeping, he knew it was empty. Nearby, Deputy Yessman could hear a man yelling for help, so he continued the blind search on his hands and knees through the home towards the voice.

Deputy Yessman was able to locate an interior door. When he opened it, it too was full of smoke. Through the darkness he saw a foot. He made contact with the foot's owner and grabbed

his left hand. Deputy Yessman then proceeded to drag the man across the floor towards the exit. Once back near the door, Officer Mosher and Trooper Crane were able to assist Deputy Yessman in fully removing the man from the residence.

Watkins Glen firefighters escorted the victim to safety in the street. Due to shock and fear, the victim struck one of the firefighters in the face. Deputy Yessman sat down with the victim and provided first aid to the lacerations the debris had caused as they exited the building. He then walked the victim to meet the ambulance. The victim once again lashed out and struck Deputy Yessman in the nose, causing it to bleed. Deputy Yessman then returned to the scene to further assist with the fire investigation.

The Schuyler County Sheriff's Office thanks Deputy Yessman for his heroism and bravery in the line of duty. Deputy Sheriff Yessman also won the 2012 Deputy of the Year Award for his involvement in an incident where shots were fired.

Deputy Yessman becomes the first two-time winner in the award's 43-year history.

## Civil Officer of the Year Award: Sergeant Charles Kennedy, Chemung County



From left to right: Chenango County Sheriff Ernie Cutting, Executive Comm. Chair NYSSA, Yates County Sheriff Ron Spike, Board Chairman NYSSI, the Civil Deputy of the Year Sergeant Charles Kennedy, Chemung County, Undersheriff Sean Holley, Chemung County, Oneida County Sheriff Robert Maciol, President NYSSA.

The Civil Department of a Sheriff's Office is authorized by law to act as the enforcement agent for courts. All papers coming into the Sheriff's Office from the courts are processed through the Civil Division, including summonses, subpoenas, petitions or orders. They also serve as enforcement for evictions, executing on real and personal property, sale of levied property, orders and warrants of arrest for civil contempt.

The New York State Civil Officer of the Year Award is given annually to a Civil Officer who excels in carrying out those responsibilities. This year's winner is Sergeant Charles Kennedy of Chemung County.

After a notable career in the road patrol division, including commanding the Sheriff's Special Services Unit, Sergeant Kennedy transferred to the Sheriff's Civil Division. Transitioning from a known role to take on new and unique responsibilities can be challenging, but Sergeant Kennedy quickly learned how to navigate the complexities of a Civil Deputy Sheriff. He also took on the role of Evidence Custodian.

Chemung County Sheriff Bill Schrom says that Sergeant Kennedy balances numerous responsibilities exceptionally well and is known to step up to any challenge. This was evident as early in his new role, his direct supervisor was pulled into other unrelated work, and Sergeant Kennedy assumed all Civil Department duties himself. He balanced this workload with his other responsibilities, including conducting the training classes for the Sheriff's Pistol Permit Class and the HR 218 program. Sergeant Kennedy is also a Crisis Negotiator and a trusted Chemung County Sheriff's Office firearms instructor.

## Supporting Crime Victims

The New York State Sheriffs' Institute supports crime victims through [www.Sheriff-Assist.org](http://www.Sheriff-Assist.org).



Opens June 28th  
A New Camp Season

We are busily preparing for the start of a new camp season, set to kick off on June 28. Every year New York State Sheriffs' Summer Camp hosts more than 800 children from across the state at its facility located on the shores of Keuka Lake in Yates County.

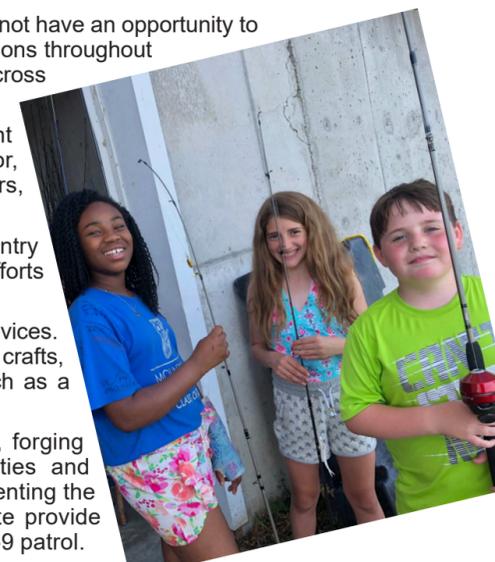
This camp is for economically disadvantaged kids who may otherwise not have an opportunity to experience summer camp. The NYS Sheriffs host six, weeklong sessions throughout the summer and the camp is attended by children from 58 counties across the state.

"We believe this year's camp experience may be the most important season we've ever had," said Christopher O'Brien, Executive Director, New York State Sheriffs' Institute. "Kids get the chance to be outdoors, learn new things, make friends and have an adventure."

Schools across New York State and throughout the rest of the country have been closed since early March to support the social distancing efforts associated with containing the Coronavirus pandemic.

At the Sheriffs' Summer Camp, there are no video games or mobile devices. Children learn to swim, kayak, sail and fish. They participate in arts and crafts, sports, music and more. Nightly campfires and special events, such as a beach party, six-mile hike and field days round out the week.

The children also interact with law enforcement in a positive way, forging better understanding for all involved. There are Sheriffs' Deputies and Corrections Officers onsite in plain clothes as counselors, complementing the camp's permanent staff, and Sheriffs' Offices from across the state provide demonstrations—from scuba to mounted patrol and helicopters to K-9 patrol.



## NYSSI Board Members

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The Award Issue  
Spring 2020

The New York State Sheriffs' Institute held its annual awards ceremony in Albany on January 21. Law Enforcement professionals from across the state were recognized for their contributions in their field. All 2020 award winners are featured in this issue of The Empire State Sheriff.

## Grover Cleveland Award Winner: Sheriff Butch Anderson, Dutchess County

The New York State Sheriffs' Institute (NYSSI) honored Dutchess County Sheriff Adrian "Butch" Anderson with the prestigious New York State Sheriff Grover Cleveland Award.

United States President Grover Cleveland is the only President to have served as an elected Sheriff. He served as Erie County Sheriff in New York State from 1871-73. Cleveland demonstrated unwavering loyalty to his duty—whether being Sheriff, Assistant District Attorney, Mayor, Governor, or the President. He is often quoted as saying, "A public office is a public trust."

The Grover Cleveland Award recognizes a dedicated law enforcement professional and public servant known for honesty, courage, firmness, independence and great common sense. Like Cleveland, Sheriff Anderson possesses these traits, along with a lifelong dedication to public service.



From left to right: Dutchess County Sheriff Adrian "Butch" Anderson receives the Grover Cleveland Award. Shown here with his wife Danielle and colleagues.

This is only the eighth occasion in NYSSI's history to honor a Sheriff in this way.

Sheriff Anderson became a Deputy Sheriff in 1970. He advanced through the ranks at the Dutchess County Sheriff's Office as Deputy, Detective, Major Case Supervisor and Undersheriff. Since his election as Sheriff in 1999, he has been re-elected for the past 20 years. Sheriff Anderson also led his agency to accreditation in Corrections, Civil and Law Enforcement, and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

Sheriff Anderson has received recognition as a patriot, distinctive citizen, community service, humanitarian, community builder, child protective services advocate and ambassador of peace.

Before being elected as Sheriff in 1999, he was an elected mayor for eight years and serves proudly on the Republican executive committee. In 2016, Sheriff Anderson was vice chair of President Trump's New York State campaign.

In 2018, the Grand Healthcare System's opened the Butch Anderson Cardiopulmonary Center in Poughkeepsie. The center is named in honor of Sheriff Anderson who underwent risky heart surgery at the age of 38 and credits the role rehabilitation played "in enabling him to get back on his feet and tackle life's challenges."

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## Innovative Program Award: Erie County Sheriff's Office

The Erie County Sheriff's Office and Peaceprints of Western New York have come together to develop a program to reduce recidivism called Project Blue.

Recidivism is the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend.

Peaceprints is a 501c3 non-profit organization offering comprehensive reentry services to men and women involved in the criminal justice system.

Project Blue is designed to reduce recidivism of those released from the Erie County Holding Center and the Erie County Correctional Facility.

This is a true collaboration between a community based not for profit and a county jail that is both innovative and unprecedented. By partnering with a community-based organization, whose primary goal is improving the lives of returning citizens, the incidents of crime have dropped.



Not only are released inmates successfully transitioning into society, those who need additional support services, such as mental health or substance abuse are getting those services.



Lindsey Allen of Peaceprints of Western New York speaks during the award ceremony as Erie County Sheriff Tim Howard looks on.

## Innovative Program Award: Ulster County Sheriff's Office

Ulster County is ranked second in New York State in opioid deaths per 100,000. This epidemic is taking lives, devastating families, and gutting communities. It is also contributing to crime rates in Ulster County.

To address this widespread issue, the Ulster County Sheriff's Office worked with its community partners to create the program Opioid Response as County Law Enforcement (ORACLE).

### Four phases of the ORACLE program include:

**Phase 1:** Education, awareness and community outreach with a team made of a mental health expert, police officer, peer advocate and a planner who go into the community to try and get addicted individuals in rehab. Included in this effort is NARCAN training and a brochure advising loved ones who to call for help.

**Phase 2:** The establishment of an 800 number hotline, which family and friends of those afflicted with addiction can use to contact the team and help can be deployed. This is done without arrest.

**Phase 3:** The establishment of a medical assisted treatment program at the county jail. Individuals who meet certain criteria will be evaluated for the program. At post-release, the program will follow the individual for 12 months during recovery.

**Phase 4:** Creating partnerships with local businesses on a First Chance program for individuals who were incarcerated and are given the ability to get trained and receive employment.

ORACLE is an example of law enforcement partnering with mental health experts, peer advocates and loved ones to break down the barriers of mistrust and bring hope and opportunity to the addicted, their families and the community.

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## Emergency Communicators Award: Police and Emergency Dispatcher Brenda Katta, Chautauqua County

The Emergency Communicator of the Year Award is given to an emergency communicator who has exhibited an exceptional degree of dedication and commitment to the professional fulfillment of the difficult duties of Sheriffs' Offices in operating an emergency communications center.

This year's winner is Police and Emergency Dispatcher Brenda Katta of the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office. Dispatcher Katta is well respected in Chautauqua County for her consistent work supporting all that agencies that rely on the Sheriff's 911 Center.



Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office Emergency Dispatcher Brenda Katta accepts the Emergency Communicators Award. Shown here with Sheriff James Quattrone and a group of local Chautauqua County first responders.

At the awards ceremony in Albany earlier this year, Chautauqua County Sheriff Jim Quattrone shared examples of how Katta's skillful use of instinct and asking the right questions aided first responders at the scene to limit injury, death and danger.

December 10, 2018: Dispatcher Katta took a cellular 911 call from a female reporting a medical emergency involving a male individual. Based on the caller's responses to her questions, Dispatcher Katta felt something else was going on at the scene. She immediately alerted Fredonia Police, who sent officers to assist the Fire Department and EMS teams at the scene.

Upon arrival, Police and Fire personnel located a distraught man locked inside a bathroom. Though the man exited the bathroom, he was found to have severely stabbed himself, and proceeded to go after a Fredonia Police Officer with his knife.

Fortunately, the Officer was trained in self-defense and suspect apprehension and was able to end the threat with no further injuries to any first responders or bystanders. Without Dispatcher Katta sensing something was wrong with this call, Fire/EMS personnel would have responded alone, and the outcome could have been much worse.

June 9, 2019: Dispatcher Katta took a call from a woman who indicated her boyfriend was threatening suicide by shotgun and also indicated he was going to commit "suicide by cop" —a term used to describe a suicidal individual who deliberately acts in a threatening way, provoking a lethal response from law enforcement, such as being shot to death.

Although the caller was not on location, Dispatcher Katta got pertinent information regarding the type of weapon, location of

weapon and the best way to access the inside of the residence. Dispatcher Katta continued to obtain additional information throughout the incident, all of which was immediately relayed to officers on scene and to the SWAT team upon their arrival.

The incident was resolved peacefully and the subject was taken into custody without further incident. Dispatcher Katta's experience and ability to ask the right questions were instrumental in allowing patrol officers and SWAT team members to take the subject into custody safely.

## Sheriff Carl Draxler Award: Sergeant Kim Smith, Delaware County

This award is presented annually to a Sheriff's Office employee whose exceptional career achievements and conscientious devotion to duty have demonstrated a spirit of selfless public service. This year's winner is Sergeant Kim Smith of the Delaware County Sheriff's Office.

Sergeant Smith has spent her entire career devoting herself to the people of Delaware County through her work with the Sheriff's Office. She perfectly reflects the concept of selfless devotion to public service.

Although originally hired by the Sheriff's Office as a Corrections Officer in 1997, Sergeant Smith quickly set her sights on moving to the law enforcement division. She attended the police academy and became a road patrol deputy in February of 2000. There she honorably served for 15 years before being promoted to Corporal in June of 2015. Then in February of 2018, she was promoted to Sergeant.

During Sergeant Smith's 20 years of service she has assumed and volunteered for a spectrum of additional duties assignments, including:

- >> Evidence Technician
- >> Evidence Room Supervisor
- >> Field Training Officer
- >> Accreditation Manager
- >> Director of Training
- >> Director Delaware County Police Academy
- >> Director of Public Relations
- >> Press Information Officer

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## Sergeant Kim Smith

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From the time Sergeant Smith initiated her career with the Sheriff's Office, she has been an impeccable employee. In one of her early evaluations, Sergeant Smith's supervisor documented the following:

"Kim is a well-rounded and knowledgeable police officer. Kim is not afraid to tackle any assignment that is given to her. She exercises sound judgment and is meticulous in her performance."

Sergeant Smith does not perform her duty for glory or recognition. She never dodges difficult assignments and can always—without hesitation—be counted on.

## Inaugural President Ronald Reagan Award: Ron Bill, NYSSI

President Ronald Reagan is known as a champion of crime victim awareness and advocacy. He established the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund, which took money collected in federal crime adjudications and made it available to protect and support the advocacy of crime victims.

The President Ronald Reagan Award is a new award this year that honors law enforcement professionals and others working in the field of crime victim services. The first winner of the President Ronald Reagan Award is Ron Bill.

Bill currently serves as the Crime Victim Notification Services Project Manager for the New York State Sheriffs' Institute (NYSSI). Through his work with the Sheriffs' Institute, Bill has built coalitions and partnerships with trust, honesty and sincerity. He has traveled throughout the state to conduct training programs that help law enforcement better serve the crime victim community.



Yates County Sheriff Ron Spike, Board Chairman NYSSI, presents Ron Bill with the inaugural Ronald Reagan Award as Chenango County Sheriff Ernie Cutting looks on.

Bill joined the NYSSI staff in 2016, after retiring from a 38-year career with the Broome County Sheriff's Office, where he was the Chief Civil Deputy. As Project Manager of the NYSSI Order of Protection Notification program, Bill meets with Sheriffs, Undersheriffs, Domestic Violence Advocates, Family Court Judges, Clerks, Emergency Services personnel and others to support the NYSSI Order of Protection program.

# 2019 Award Winners

**Civil Deputy of the Year**  
Lt. Jaymes Hurley, Onondaga County

**Correction Officer of the Year**  
Sergeant Alan Weaver, Delaware County

**Court Officer of the Year**  
Deputy Jeffrey Ingham, Monroe County

**Deputy of the Year**  
Deputy Joshua Day, Steuben County

**Emergency Communicator(s)**  
Dispatchers Melody Houck, David Houck and Lena Lansing, Yates County

**Innovative Program Award**  
Erie County Sheriffs' Office  
School 318 – High School within the Erie County Holding Center

**Sheriff Carl Draxler Award**  
Sergeant Kerry Ann Wood, Livingston County

**Traffic Safety Award**  
Livingston County Sheriff's Office

Bill learns about the needs of each agency and assists in any way he can, including writing policies and providing trainings, to make the program work for the victims. He is as comfortable walking into a Sheriff's Office as he is into Crime Victims Advocacy meetings. Like Ronald Reagan he understands and is committed to helping the crime victim. This commitment and dedication to building positive relationship between law enforcement and the crime victims' community has been invaluable, as he's taken the Order of Protection Notification Program from inconsistent use to mainstream.

Law enforcement trusts Bill, and the crime victim community trusts him, too. This trust has helped break down barriers and build bridges for the betterment of crime victims across the state.

The President Ronald Reagan Award was established by the 2020 Awards Selection Committee with the approval of the NYSSI Board of Directors.