

HUNTLEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2012 McHenry County Officer of the Year Award

This press release is being sent out on behalf of the McHenry County Chiefs of Police Association.

On Saturday night January 12, 2013 the McHenry County Chiefs of Police Association will announce the recipient of the 2nd Annual McHenry County Officer of the Year. The award will be presented at the McHenry County Chiefs of Police Association Holiday Reception at the Bull Valley Golf Club in Woodstock Illinois.

This year there were 8 nominees from 6 McHenry County Police Agencies. The nominees included:

1. Officer Amy Bucci from the Algonquin Police Department
2. Officer Kathy Eiring from the Cary Police Department
3. Officer Jason Williamson from the Cary Police Department
4. Detective Joe Willard from the Huntley Police Department
5. Officer Jason Draftz from the Lake in the Hills Police Department
6. Detective Craig L'Esperance from the McHenry County Sheriff's Office
7. Detective Jennifer Garafol from the McHenry County Sheriff's Office
8. Detective George Kopulos from the Woodstock Police Department

Update: 1/12/2013

Detective Joe Willard of the Huntley Police Department was presented the Officer of the Year award for his work on the following cases.

The first case involved a major insurance scam. A local insurance agent was taking insurance payments from customers but not actually writing a policy. This resulted in numerous businesses and residential customers operating without insurance while they believed they were fully covered. This complex investigation involved several subpoenas and search warrants and required Detective Willard to review several file cabinets of documents that were seized. Detective Willard spent several months examining the documents and information found on seized computers. The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation assisted with the investigation.

During this investigation Det. Willard uncovered numerous other people who appeared to be victims of the same circumstances. Det. Willard contacted these potential victims and included them in his investigation. These unsuspecting victims had also been paying insurance premiums to their insurance agent who was not applying payments to their policies. These new victims

also thought that they had insurance policies only to find out that they were uninsured for several years.

Through his investigation Det. Willard was able to determine that the insurance agent had maintained an elaborate scheme in which he claimed to have been maintaining insurance policies for the victims but instead was stealing their premiums and had successfully stole thousands of dollars. After several months of investigating this crime Det. Willard was able to collect an overwhelming amount of evidence which lead to his filing of 33 felony charges of insurance fraud.

In the second case, Det. Willard was assigned to investigate a residential burglary. The suspects in this burglary stole cash and a 38 revolver from a residence. Det. Willard obtained information which led him to a possible suspect. He then worked quickly to positively identify all the suspects involved. He developed information leading him to the fact that the weapon had been sold to a member of the Vice Lords from Elgin IL. Understanding the urgency of the situation involving the weapon now being in the hands of a gang member, Det. Willard was able to identify the gang member who was now in possession of the weapon and work with Detectives from the Elgin Police Department to locate that suspect. The weapon was found and subsequently confiscated before it was used in a more serious crime. Det. Willard was able to get 20 charges filed in this case against 4 different offenders.

Det. Willard was able to make an arrest in this case and recover the stolen firearm within 48 hours of the original report bringing an extremely fast closure to a difficult case. Det. Willard showed great dedication to both these cases and used his skills as a veteran investigator to successfully close both cases.

Huntley Police Chief John Perkins stated, "Detective Joe Willard's ability to give maximum effort to every detail of this complex case prevented many of our citizens from suffering serious financial problems. Even though they were scammed out of insurance premiums, the situation could have been much worse if there was an incident requiring an insurance claim. Both of these cases demonstrate the tenacity that Detective Willard put into his work."

Chief John Perkins
President – McHenry County Chiefs of Police Association.