



Roxana Kennedy
Chief of Police

CHULA VISTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Chula Vista, California 91910-3801

POLICE MEDIA ADVISORY

Date: May 1st, 2024
To: San Diego Media
From: Chula Vista Police Department
Contact: Sergeant Anthony Molina, Public Information Officer
Phone: (619) 691-5111
Email: pio@chulavistapd.org
Subject: **MEDIA INVITE – 32nd ANNUAL AWARDS AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY – THURSDAY MAY 2nd, 2024 AT 11:30 A.M.**

Message: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

****MEDIA INVITE ONLY – NOT A PUBLIC EVENT****

On Thursday, May 2nd, 2023, at 11:30 A.M., the Chula Vista Police Department will be holding a ceremony to honor the officers and members of the community who performed above and beyond in 2023. Their stories are compelling and often go untold. This ceremony helps tell the story of the daily efforts our men and women make to serve others and of the exceptional efforts made by members of the community for the greater good.

FEATURED STORIES:

- **[Agent Natalie Garnsey, Officer Donald Truong, and Officer Daniel Hernandez \(Life Saving Award\)](#)**

Just after 11:00 p.m. on Friday, October 13th, 2023, the Chula Vista Police Department received several 9-1-1 calls regarding a vehicle fire on Interstate 5 in Chula Vista. While freeway calls in San Diego County are typically transferred to the California Highway Patrol (CHP), this one caught the attention of a Chula Vista Police sergeant who was listening to the calls for help in real time through Live911.

The sergeant heard the callers' voices and believed someone's life might be at risk. Knowing that officers in Chula Vista would likely be closer than responding CHP officers, the sergeant asked the dispatcher to send Chula Vista Police officers "CODE 3." Although the location of the incident was somewhat unclear and many details were lacking, a Chula Vista Police drone was overhead quickly and the Drone as First Responder (DFR) pilot provided the responding officers with a more accurate location.

Chula Vista Police officers arrived on scene to find a man screaming for his life while trapped inside a burning car on the side of the freeway. The officers worked quickly – battling the flames and their own fears – to reach the man trapped in the car; breaking out a rear window and pulling him to safety just seconds before the car was fully engulfed. It took bravery, teamwork, and tremendous courage. This man is alive in part because of the men and women of the Chula Vista Police Department and innovative technology which played a vital role in his rescue.

When the man awoke from a coma four weeks later, he learned what the officers did to save him. He expressed gratitude and acknowledged how differently things might have ended if not for the actions they took. He said, “I feel like I got a second chance. I’m so appreciative that they were able to get there in time and do what they did. If they didn’t, I wouldn’t be here today.”

The Chula Vista Police Department will recognize the bravery and professionalism of these heroes as they are presented with this award at the ceremony. Chief Roxana Kennedy said, “I want people to see how police officers put their own lives at risk every single day to save people they don’t even know. I’m grateful this man survived and so proud of my officers for what they did to rescue him.” A video titled “Man Rescued from Burning Car” can be found on the Chula Vista Police Department YouTube page, which shows footage of the intense rescue: <https://youtu.be/3LT0nCt4WNo>.

- **Detective Eddie Chavira (Crime Stoppers “Enough is Enough” Award)**

Several firearms and dozens of baggies of dangerous fentanyl pills were recovered after the arrest of a violent criminal who assaulted and seriously injured his girlfriend – thanks to Detective Eddie Chavira.

Detective Chavira, who is assigned to the Special Investigations Unit, became involved in the investigation after the arrest, when the department learned the suspect was known to carry firearms. Detective Chavira went to work immediately, advocating to get the suspect placed on a parole hold and obtaining a search warrant to check for firearms. His training and experience steered him in the right course. After serving a search warrant, not only did Detective Chavira and his team recover a loaded stolen firearm, but also dozens of baggies containing fentanyl pills.

Detective Chavira didn’t stop there. He had a hunch there was more to the story. He continued his investigation, which uncovered a larger network of criminal activity with multiple suspects involved. Detective Chavira’s relentless pursuit of the truth culminated in the seizure of multiple firearms, including AR-15 rifles, ghost handguns, and thousands of rounds of ammunition. A total of five suspects were arrested, four of which pled guilty to felonies.

The Chula Vista Police Department will be recognizing Detective Chavira for his dedication, tenacity, and commitment to serving justice, which exemplify the best qualities of law enforcement officers. His actions in this case undoubtedly made a significant impact on public safety and underscore the importance of specialized units like the Special Investigations Unit in addressing complex criminal activity.

- **James Moore and Nicolas Castro (Citizen Exceptional Service Award)**

In the early morning hours of October 6th, 2023, a single vehicle collided into a tree in the 1500 block of East H Street, catching on fire in the process. It was just after 2:30 a.m., but the sound of the crash caught the attention James Moore and Nicolas Castro, two separate residents in

the area. As the 9-1-1 calls began coming in, James and Nicolas each walked out of their homes and saw the car on fire. James noticed the driver was trapped in the car and hurried to his aid. The driver was unresponsive as the fire started growing in the rear compartment. James and Nicolas worked together in an effort to free the man before the flames reached him. They started breaking the windows and ended up removing the windshield, where they were able to pull the man out to safety just before the car became fully engulfed.

Officers arrived to find the rescued man and a car fully overtaken by flames. Public safety truly is a community effort... had James and Nicolas waited for first responders to arrive, the driver in this incident might not have survived. The Chula Vista Police Department will be recognizing James Moore and Nicolas Castro for their selflessness and quick thinking to save a man's life.

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF THE AWARDS AND RECIPIENTS:

MADD/DUI Award – Agent Ryan Culver, Officer Carson Tabor

Proactive Narcotics Officer Award (Top 3) – Officer James O'Mahony, Officer Roman Buyson, Officer Kevin Havrincea

Joshua Cox DUI Award – Officer Carson Tabor

Field Training Officer of the Year – Officer Tanner Winslow

Cadet of the Year – Diego Nava

CSO of the Year – CSO Emily-Grace Haus

Senior Volunteer of the Year – Marilyn Shelton

Auto Theft Advisory Committee Award – "10851" Officer of the Year – Officer Daniel Santana

10851 Awards (Auto Theft) – Officer Daniel Hernandez, Officer Tanner Winslow, Agent Carlos Marques, Officer Gavin Baptiste, Officer Daniel Santana

Department Exceptional Service – Parking Enforcement Officer Monica Medina, Officer Alex Guevara, Officer Seth LaMonica, Sergeant Chris Fisher, Sergeant Evan Linney

SD POA Officer of the Year – Officer Donald Truong

Dispatcher of the Year – Dispatcher Issac Jeitler

Civilian Employee of the Year – Police Support Services Manager Shannel Honore

SRO of the Year – Kiwanis Club – Officer Jose Aguayo

Crime Stoppers "Enough is Enough" – Detective Eddie Chavira

Citizen Exceptional Service – CDCR Officer Jumel Moises, Brian Constante, James Moore, Nicolas Castro

Rotary Award – Detective Tyler Wall

Scottish Rite Award – Agent Freddy Dominguez

VFW Officer of the Year – Officer Alfonso Perdomo

Lifesaving Award – Agent Natalie Garnsey, Officer Donald Truong, Officer Daniel Hernandez

***MEDIA PERSONNEL:** Please advise if you plan to attend and/or would like to arrange interviews. You can contact Sgt. Molina at (619)691-5111, cell phone number (619)385-6775 or email pio@chulavistapd.org to RSVP. The ceremony starts promptly at **11:30 AM** on Thursday morning.

Prepared By: Public Info Specialist Cait Clark
Copies Sent To: San Diego Media

Approved By: Sgt. Anthony Molina
Date/Time: 05-01-2024 / 1100