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ORGANIZATION RECOGNIZES ACTS OF KINDNESS BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

(Baton Rouge, LA) – When law enforcement officers violate their oaths and the public trust, it ends up in the news. But what about the much more common scenario – when officers perform acts of kindness that go way beyond what they are professionally required to do?

To recognize those kindnesses by so many law enforcement officers in Louisiana, Baton Rouge resident Linda Hull created a non-profit organization, Beyond the Badge, Louisiana.

On March 12 Beyond the Badge presented fourteen law enforcement officers from across the state with a Heart of Law Enforcement Award at a ceremony and luncheon held in Baton Rouge, LA. One recipient, Captain Patrick Johnson of the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office, was presented with the Beyond the Badge Service Before Self award. The Service Before Self award is given to the officer whose act of kindness stands out in the field of nominees. On December 11 of last year, Captain Johnson donated his kidney to a total stranger, Herbert Davis, a high school coach from Mississippi. Coach Davis was present at the ceremony when Johnson received his award.

“At a time when there is so much negative attention directed toward law enforcement in general, I thought someone needed to honor all the officers who go beyond the call of duty. We need to let the public know about their acts of kindness and generosity,” Hull said.

The annual ceremony was attended by more than 200 guests, including state elected officials and area police chiefs and sheriffs. Honorary Event Chair Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser gave brief remarks, and Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill was the keynote speaker for the event.

The officers were given an award packet that included a \$100 Visa gift card and a framed Louisiana state flag that had been flown over the Louisiana State Capitol for a day in his or her honor. The Service Before Self honoree received a \$500 Visa gift card in addition to the flag, and all officers received a tactical gear bag containing a Beyond the Badge challenge coin, charging cable, and t-shirt.

Officers receiving a Beyond the Badge Heart of Law Enforcement Award were:

Captain Kenneth Albarez	West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office
Deputy Wanda August	Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office
Corporal Chase Craig	Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office
Major Lafate Elliott Day, Jr.	Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office
Officer Anjel Jaurides	Blanchard Police Department
Deputy Michael Jenkins	Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office

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Corporal Sara Leger	Lafayette Police Department
Deputy Erica Plaisance	Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office
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Senior Trooper Michael Smith	Louisiana State Police
Sergeant Christopher Sollie	Louisiana State Police
Officer Michael Taylor	Greenwood Police Department

Beyond the Badge was incorporated in April of 2016 and is operated entirely by citizen volunteers and funded by corporate and private donations. "We have no paid staff and no office space, so every penny donated to Beyond the Badge goes directly into the project," Hull said.

Nominations of officers for Beyond the Badge's Heart of Law Enforcement award can be made throughout the year. Members of the general public or law enforcement agencies can submit nominations online at www.beyondthebadgelouisiana.org. Nominations are accepted until Jan. 31 for acts performed during the previous calendar year. Each year, Beyond the Badge will select law enforcement officers who have been nominated for acts of kindnesses during the prior year to receive a Heart of Law Enforcement Award during a special ceremony and luncheon honoring the recipients.

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Beyond the Badge
17415 West Lakeway Drive
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www.beyondthebadgelouisiana.org

2024 BEYOND THE BADGE AWARDS

Heart of Law Enforcement Award Recipients

Captain Kenneth Albarez
West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office

On Thursday, August 10, 2023, just after 3:30 A.M. Captain Kenneth Albarez was called out to a two-vehicle crash on U.S. Highway 190 in Erwinville, La. The crash resulted in serious injuries to the two front seat occupants (who turned out to be grandparents) and their 4-year-old grandchild who was in the back seat. All three were transported to a local hospital with Albarez escorting the ambulance. Captain Albarez stayed with the child at the hospital, communicating and sending pictures to the parents who were traveling to the hospital from North Louisiana.

In addition to providing moral support, Albarez helped obtain a child safety seat for the family, as the only one they had was involved in the crash. He also collected monetary donations from the Baton Rouge communities on both sides of the river, providing the family with necessities to travel back home.

Deputy Wanda August
Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office

Encourage. Educate. Empower. These are the tenets of the Triple E Program operated by the Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office. And, Deputy Wanda August is committed to using these tenets to instill valuable lessons and foster positive experiences for the young people participating in the program.

Thanks to her leadership and masterful persuasion skills, August secured sponsors to orchestrate a trip to Atlanta for 11 underserved youth. This unique and enriching experience occurred during the 2023 Martin Luther King Day weekend. During the trip, these young citizens had the opportunity to learn about the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and gain firsthand understanding of the historical significance of the Civil Rights movement and its last legacy, thus contributing to their personal growth and awareness. While the lessons learned were crucially important, Deputy August's actions provided a living testament to how law enforcement can go beyond their conventional responsibilities to showcase a genuine passion for making a positive impact on the lives of those they serve. Undoubtedly, these young people now have a very different perspective from which they view law enforcement and first responders.

Corporal Chase Craig
Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office

In late summer of 2023, Corporal Chase Craig found out about sweet little Nora Kay Meredith. Nora Kay is a vibrant 5-year-old from West Monroe, but unlike most preschoolers, she has cancer...a very rare form of cancer, Hepatosplenic T-cell Lymphoma, also referred to as HSTCL. There have been only 30-40 cases of this rare cancer identified worldwide to date, and Nora Kay is the youngest person to be diagnosed with it. The only hope of treatment is finding a matching bone marrow donor which requires DNA testing of possible donors.

Testing immediate family members did not identify anyone with a 100% match, so the family began pursuing other ways to attract donors. Corporal Craig contacted the local Administrator of the search program with his idea. Working together, they organized a "Swabbing Night" for those Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office deputies and employees who wanted to voluntarily have their DNA tested. The response was so great; they had to host a second night of testing. Word spread quickly through local news and social media posts. Within days, the Richland Parish Sheriff's Office offered DNA collection opportunities as well.

Unfortunately, as of the date of the Corporal's nomination, a 100% match has not been located. Young Nora Kay continues to receive the treatment available and testing for a match is still underway.

Major Lafate Elliott Day, Jr.
Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office

Hurricane Ida slammed into the Louisiana coast as a Category 4 hurricane in August 2021. Its destructive winds and water were particularly devastating to Lafourche Parish. Now, imagine not only losing your house to this horrible disaster, but, after a year and a half, you still have nowhere to live, so you've had to fashion a home out of tarps to provide some shelter for your family. When Major Lafate Day received a report about this exact instance last summer, he knew he had to do something. Upon interviewing the family, Day started trying to identify housing options for the family. When he came up empty handed, he took it upon himself to donate a camper to restore some sense of security and stability to the family. Day even helped the couple connect with a local non-profit organization called Bless Your Heart which donated and built a wheelchair accessible ramp for the camper.

Day's nominator, a previous Heart of Law Enforcement honoree himself, explained that this act is simply the tip of the iceberg to describe the Major's kind nature. He went on to explain that the Major can rarely be found in his office because he is always out in the field assisting where needed and volunteering with many different community events. Additionally, Day serves as a friend and mentor to many...from youth involved in the agency's Beyond the Bell program to new officers who've just joined the agency. For better or worse, Day can even be found hanging out and lending a hand at community

events even when he's on vacation. His motto is, "I can't ask my deputies to do anything I'm not willing to do myself."

**Officer Anjel Jaurides
Blanchard Police Department**

In a town of 3,500 people, Officer Anjel Jaurides is a major celebrity. We received three separate nominations for him with one stating, "He is always taking time to get out of his vehicle and talk to everyone and make sure everyone is okay. He really takes care of our community."

Officer Jaurides' nominators all emphasized his extraordinary efforts to engage with the youth in Blanchard. On his patrols, he regularly stops and take photos with kids, plays games with them, and donates snacks and toys when he can. This past year, he dipped into his own pocket to purchase and donate turkeys to several families during the Thanksgiving holiday period. Additionally, he leveraged his own financial resources with those of other generous community members to provide Christmas gifts of clothes, food, shoes, video games, and toys for at least 4 families in his community.

**Deputy Michael Jenkins and Deputy Erica Plaisance
Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office**

At around noon on January 21, 2023, the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office received a 911 call from a young boy. This anxious child was distraught. You see, his brother was turning 2 years old that day, and he was unable to buy a gift for his brother's party. The young boy went on to explain that his brother loved law enforcement officers and wanted to know if deputies could pass by for his brother's party as his present. Using this as a teachable moment, the communications deputy advised the boy on the proper use of 911, but she assured him she would let deputies in the area know.

Deputies Erica Plaisance and Michael Jenkins were advised of the incident and stated they would take care of the call. At that point, they set off to a local department store, and purchased a Paw Patrol police character using their own money. They then headed to the boy's house, where they were the life of the party. They arrived with overhead lights activated and parked in front of the home to surprise the 2-year-old. The boy's mother took him outside to meet the deputies, receive his gift, and take some memorable photos. Mom was extremely appreciative of the sheriff's office and deputies.

**Corporal Sara Leger
Lafayette Police Department**

For this next honoree, we have no information on the backstory, but our Executive Committee chose it for the lack of history. You see, someone named Brittany Billedeaux posted a message with three photos on a Facebook group called "What's going on in Acadiana." The message read, "Good Job to this police officer! I was at a stop light and witnessed this interaction. It seemed like the officer had given this

gentleman a ride. The officer then handed him cash from her own wallet and got him a warm blanket. Keep up the great work, officer!”

Another kind person named Lydia Melancon heard about our award program and submitted the nomination using just the information from the Facebook post. Both Ms. Billedeaux and Ms. Melancon wanted to make sure the Lafayette community knew that their police are protecting everyone, including the most vulnerable and overlooked without a second thought about recognition or reward.

**Deputy Brian Reeves and Deputy Clayton Rucker
Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office**

Being dispatched to domestic violence calls is equal parts danger and delicacy. Luckily, when Deputies Brian Reeves and Clayton Rucker were dispatched to this particular domestic violence call, they didn't find much danger, but they did a fantastic job of exhibiting tact, sensitivity, and delicacy when interacting with the woman and her daughter.

The Deputies noted that the daughter was particularly scared, so they took extra time to hang out and take her mind off the situation. The daughter made a real impression on them so they decided to do something special to show that there are good people out there. In sharing the story with other deputies, some pitched in funds which Deputy Reeves and Deputy Rucker combined with their own resources to purchase gifts for mom and daughter. They surprised the women a couple days later when they stopped by to check on their welfare and deliver the gifts. Mom was particularly thankful and impressed with the deputies for being there in their time of need.

**Senior Trooper Michael Smith
Louisiana State Police**

Senior Trooper Michael Smith with the Louisiana State Police is our next honoree, and his act of generosity was inspired by another one of our former honorees. Deputy Turner Barran with the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office was honored by Beyond the Badge in 2018 for his efforts to help kids see police and first responders as friends during times of grief by providing them with stuffed teddy bears. Since then, the program has become even more well-known with many people motivated to contribute, including Senior Trooper Smith.

Smith presented his concept to his superiors and received approval. Then, he collaborated with Deputy Barran to make his project a reality. Under his initiative, Smith raised \$7,000 to bring 1,000 teddy bears to the Louisiana State Police. Trooper Smith then ensured the teddy bears were deployed to all 9 Troops across the state. These bears will be used to help console children at crime scenes, car accidents and during other traumas they face.

Sergeant Christopher Sollie
Louisiana State Police

In July 2023, Sergeant Christopher Sollie responded to a head-on collision crash involving a woman and a 1-year-old child. When Sollie arrived on the scene, he observed that the Mom was knocked unconscious from the crash and the child was still trapped in the vehicle. Sollie stood vigil while the child was extricated, and both mother and child were on their way to a local hospital.

Sergeant Sollie promptly finished his on-scene examination and then traveled to the hospital to check on the family and continue his investigation. Upon arriving at the hospital, Sollie met the grandparents of the child. They were fretful about their daughter, but also realized they would need to get the baby to their home three hours away, and with no supplies. Neither wanted to leave the mom, so while they were waiting for updates on her status, Sollie went to his house and grabbed diapers, supplies, snacks, and toys including a Barran's teddy bear to tide the baby over during the journey. Sollie brought the items back to the hospital and gave them to the grandparents.

Officer Michael Taylor
Greenwood Police Department

Though a small police department, Greenwood PD is an excellent example of the saying, "iron sharpens iron" with Officer Michael Taylor being the third BTB honoree from this agency. His nominator, Police Chief Shayne Gibson (a past honoree) provided two acts worthy of award.

First, on August 26, 2023, the community was hosting a fundraiser benefit for an officer that had been injured in the line of duty. Officer Taylor had just become aware of a family in town that was struggling financially and had not eaten in several days. He picked up several plates from the benefit and delivered them to the family in need. Officer Taylor contacted Assistant Chief Steele (another past honoree) to see who else could help. A/C Steele jumped in to help by delivering groceries to the family. Officer Taylor bonded with the family and regularly stops to speak with, play with, and even dance with the children as he patrols the neighborhoods.

In a separate incident, on November 24, Ofc. Taylor responded to a welfare concern at a local truck stop along with Ofc. Hopkins. Upon arrival, the officers encountered a mother, teenage daughter, and five dogs who had been living in their car at the truck stop for a couple of days. During his interview, Taylor discovered they had no money, food, or a safe place to stay. Conversations with the mother led the officers to believe they were fleeing an abusive, inappropriate relationship between the daughter and an adult. Officer Taylor began making phone calls to find a place for the women to stay. He summarized the situation to the Truckstop employees who donated enough money to get the family a hotel room. Officer Taylor dug into his own pocket and purchased a \$50 gift card to a nearby dollar store so they could purchase toiletries and food.

Service Before Self Award Recipient

Captain Patrick Johnson Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office

During the spring of 2023, Captain Patrick Johnson, a graduate of the FBI National Academy, was attending an FBI re-trainer class and learned of an NYPD detective who donated a kidney to a program to go to someone he didn't even know. Johnson became interested in the Kidney Donation program at that time. After much prayer and even more research, he came to the realization that he was being led to do the same. Ultimately, he selected the kidney donor program at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

Testing to determine if he was a candidate for donation began in the fall of 2023. In November, after numerous tests and consultation with various medical professionals, he was told he would be a good candidate for donation. He learned that the hospital was planning a chain of 7 donation events in December, in which the program would select 7 recipients who did not have familial or other matches identified to provide donations. He was selected to participate in that program.

On December 11, 2023, Johnson's donation surgery was performed and the transplant process went perfectly. Once the recipient received the kidney, it immediately began to function without any issues. In Captain Johnson's own words, "It was a blessing from God to have led me down this road. To know that I have truly helped someone in need is a privilege that will never be taken away".

Being an organ donor is a difficult decision, and potentially dangerous to one's health, when the individual receiving your organ is known, but to commit to organ donation when you don't know the life you're saving is even more selfless. For this act, Captain Patrick Johnson is the 2024 Heart of Law Enforcement Service Before Self award recipient.



**2024 Heart of Law Enforcement Awards Ceremony Keynote Speaker
Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill**

Liz Murrill was inaugurated as Louisiana's Attorney General on January 8, 2024. Prior to this, she served as Solicitor General for Louisiana's Department of Justice where she spent the past six years defending Louisiana and its laws in state and federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

Murrill has devoted herself to making her community a better place to live. She served as a volunteer Den Leader and Cubmaster for her sons' Cub Scout pack. As a crisis-line volunteer for the Zolta House Battered Women's Shelter, she helped female victims of domestic abuse. Additionally, she served as a board member for Family Services of Baton Rouge and established the Baton Rouge Bar Association Disaster Recovery Legal Service Project.

A wife and mom to four boys, General Murrill is an eighth generation Louisianan with degrees in journalism and law from LSU. She served as Editor-in-Chief of the Louisiana law review during her senior year of law school. Murrill was a U.S. Supreme Court Fellow in 2007-2008 and completed a master of law degree in 2010



2023 Heart of Law Enforcement Awards Ceremony Event Sponsors

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WHAT IS BEYOND THE BADGE?

Beyond the Badge is a non-profit organization begun in 2016 by Baton Rouge resident Linda Hull to recognize law enforcement officers in her community who perform acts of kindness beyond that required by their oaths of service. *Beyond the Badge* is operated entirely by citizen volunteers and funded by corporate and private donations.

The mission of *Beyond the Badge* is to educate the public about ordinary law enforcement officers performing extraordinary acts of kindness in their communities. Each year, *Beyond the Badge* will select law enforcement officers, who have been nominated by their agencies or the public, to receive a Heart of Law Enforcement award in recognition of acts of kindness they performed during the previous calendar year. The nominee whose act of kindness stands out among the field of nominees will receive the Service Before Self award. Awards will be given during a special luncheon honoring the recipients.

Criteria for nomination:

- Nominations may be made by anyone – supervisors, fellow officers, citizens, family members, friends.
- Nominees must be employed in the state of Louisiana as police officers, sheriff's deputies or state troopers.
- Nominees must have performed acts of kindness that were not required of them in their regular duties as law enforcement officers.
- Nominees will be considered for acts performed while on duty or off, and whether or not they were in uniform at the time.

Nominations will be accepted until January 31 for acts performed during the previous calendar year.

To submit a nomination online, or to make a donation to *Beyond the Badge*, please visit our web site at www.beyondthebadgelouisiana.org, or find us on Facebook.