



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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 14 Beyond the Badge presented twelve 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, Deputy Michael Menard of the Lafayette 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.

“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 Charlie Spillers, former U.S. marine, Baton Rouge police officer, Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics regional commander, career federal prosecutor, U.S. Department of Justice attaché for Iraq, and bestselling author, 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, coffee cup, and t-shirt.

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

Sheriff Jason Ard
Officer Jorge Badilla
TFC Jeffrey Bennett
TPR Brandon Blackburn
Detective Robin Ducote
Deputy Paul Golmon
Senior TPR Carl Holiday

Livingston Parish Sheriff’s Office
Baton Rouge Police Department
Louisiana State Police
Louisiana State Police
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Senior TPR Chase Huval
Deputy Michael Menard
Deputy Benji Phelps
TFC Taylor Scrantz
Constable Terrica Williams

Louisiana State Police
Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office
Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office
Louisiana State Police
Baton Rouge Constable's Office

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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2023 Beyond the Badge Heart of Law Enforcement Award Honorees

SHERIFF JASON ARD LIVINGSTON PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Jerry and Beatrice had just purchased a washer and dryer for Jerry's Mom. With the washer and dryer in the back of Jerry's truck, they were traveling down I-49 when the tailgate flew open and the units tumbled out of the vehicle into oncoming traffic. Well, some may call it luck, but Jerry, Beatrice, and Sheriff Jason Ard call it "God's plan" that the Sheriff just happen to be traveling a very short distance behind the truck.

On his way to a conference in Natchitoches, and in a bit of a rush because he was running late, Livingston Parish Sheriff Jason Ard immediately shifted his mind set and didn't give a second thought to his destination. Instead, Sheriff Ard took advantage of the fact that no one else was traveling on the interstate and immediately stopped to aid the couple. He checked on the couple to ensure they were healthy and safe and then jumped into action to clear the heavy machines from the roadway.

In her nomination, Beatrice reflects on what could have been. "Looking back on this, so many things could have gone wrong with traffic going 80+ MPH someone could have been looking down, texting, adjusting the radio or air and ran into Jerry or Jason. The washer and dryer could have hit another vehicle after the tailgate came open." Beatrice concluded with, "The devil was busy but God is real. I'm so thankful for his grace and continued favor."

Now as if that wasn't enough, Sheriff Ard and his wife Erica contacted Jerry and Beatrice shortly after the encounter with an offer to pay for a new washer and dryer considering all the damage that was sustained from the accident. The financial blessing after such a kind act of helping on scene is something Jerry and Beatrice will never forget.

OFFICER JORGE BADILLA BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

As part of his routine patrol on December 15 of last year, Officer Badilla was dispatched to a business located on O'Neal Lane in reference to homeless persons who had set up camp nearby. Officer Badilla arrived at the business, took the report from the employees, and then located the camp a short distance away. Officer Badilla approached the scene and engaged with the couple who had set up a tent.

During the course of his interview, the officer confirmed the male was recently released from the hospital. He and his companion had no permanent residence and no means to relocate. Officer Badilla let the couple know they couldn't remain in the location, but he assured them he would help, not just run them off.

Officer Badilla made good on his promise by bringing Christmas candy and coffee and also worked with the couple so they would remain safe and warm during the dip in temperatures. During this time, the officer was also working the phones and was able to locate a relative who committed to come to Louisiana and give them a ride to something more permanent.

Officer Badilla recognized that he had a commitment to the businesses in the area as well so he stayed in touch with the folks in the area to about what he learned from the couple as well as his plan immediate and hopefully permanent solutions to the situation.

During the busy holiday season with an overwhelming call volume, Officer Badilla could have taken a very different approach and would have been within the parameters to do so. However, Officer Badilla chose kindness, compassion, and love for his fellow man as he worked to find an acceptable solution for all involved.

**TROOPER FIRST CLASS JEFFREY BENNETT, TROOPER BRANDON BLACKBURN, and TROOPER
FIRST CLASS TAYLOR SCRANTZ
LOUISIANA STATE POLICE TROOP A**

The story begins with a call made to Troop A by a concerned citizen, Mr. Brodie Wynn, to obtain the names of some Troopers who had stopped his wife the previous night. This call, however, wasn't to file a complaint. Instead, Mr. Wynn went on to say that his wife was stopped because Troop A had received complaints of a possible impaired driver that was swerving on I-10. Once his wife was stopped, the Troopers checked her to make sure she wasn't impaired. The road side interview determined she was actually an elderly female falling asleep at the wheel with her grandkids in the vehicle.

It was the following actions of these troopers that Mr. Wynn said he would never forget, and would be forever grateful. Instead of recommending that she go to a nearby store or pull over somewhere, the troopers escorted Mrs. Wynn and the grandkids to Troop A. After arriving at Troop A, his wife was offered coffee, food, and snacks. Additionally, the children were offered candy and drinks while the troopers interacted with them.

During the phone call, Mr. Wynn became overwhelmed with emotions, and was actually crying while recounting the story. He explained that his wife and grandkids are his world, and he was so thankful for the actions of these troopers. Mr. Wynn told the Sergeant that one of the grandkids actually wants to be a police officer when he grows up. Instead of having a negative interaction that could have discouraged his grandson, he felt this positive interaction will actually encourage him to want to become a police officer. Mr. Wynn went on to tell the Sergeant "please don't take this the wrong way, but my wife and grandkids are black, and all 3 of these troopers are white." He said he only felt the need to say this because of negativity the media has tried very hard to spread across the country, when all of us bleed red, regardless of race. He also said no matter how you are raised, men have to be taught how to be men. These troopers showed his grandson how to be men, and how to treat people with respect.

CORPORAL (NOW DETECTIVE) ROBIN DUCOTE
BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

In November and December 2022, Corporal Robin Ducote went above and beyond by helping a family that live in her apartment complex. She reached out to officers in her department, asking for help on behalf of this family. Members of the BRPD donated clothing, furniture, food items, and much more to this family.

Separately, Cpl. Ducote started a GoFundMe page, which was shared through social media. After a couple weeks, her campaign raised over \$2000, with a \$1000 goal. Here's the Corporal's request in her own words.

"Hello my name is Robin Ducote and I'm a police officer in Baton Rouge, LA. I'm raising money for Regan (seen in the photo) and his mother to provide them with much needed items as a gift for Christmas. Regan and his mom live in my apartment complex and I recently met them during a call for service while on duty. Regan is 3 years old and is autistic. He is a very active, curious little guy and gets into everything. Unfortunately, he has only one toy (a football) to keep him occupied. He is so sweet and loving and always wants to be held. His mom is a single parent with no help or support system and is struggling to take care of him. Their house is extremely bare (they don't even have a TV) and mom can only afford the basics such as rent, food and electricity. Any donations to make their Christmas the best ever would be greatly appreciated. Thanks in advance and Happy Holidays!"

Her nominator wrote, "Cpl. Robin Ducote obviously did this because she has a big heart and loving character. She would never have thought or wanted any type recognition. She just wanted to help this family, by them having a great and wonderful holiday Christmas season." No doubt Robin and Regan will be bonded for life.

DEPUTY PAUL GOLMON
LIVINGSTON PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Deputy Paul Golmon is a School Resource Officer at the Live Oak schools in Livingston Parish which means he knows the school faculty very well. One teacher has a special needs son named Benjamin at the school who has developed a special bond with the Deputy.

One day, Deputy Golmon, who is a skilled drummer, noticed Benjamin "playing drums" on his desk one day. Shortly thereafter, Deputy Golmon surprised Benjamin with a cool pair of drumsticks. A few weeks later, an even bigger surprise was bestowed on Benjamin when he received a brand new set of drums, again courtesy of Deputy Golmon. Not only did he give such an incredible gift, he went to the family's home on his own time and put the entire set together.

Benjamin and his mom cannot thank Deputy Golmon enough for the great generosity and love he has shown their family. Apparently, Benjamin has been drumming his heart out ever since! In her nomination, Benjamin's mom offered a scripture, 2nd Corinthians chapter 9 verses 6-8...Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows

generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

SENIOR TROOPER CARL HOLIDAY
LOUISIANA STATE POLICE INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT

For over ten years, Senior Trooper Carl Holiday has visited St. Helena and Tangipahoa parish Schools with an emphasis on building positive relationships between the students and Louisiana State Police. Senior Trooper Holiday talks with every student he can, especially the kids who are hesitant to speak with police officers. He uses kind and optimistic words to win over every student. He routinely teaches the kids about making good choices and that using your head combined with determination will lead to a successful life.

Also, Senior Trooper Holiday established a monthly program with St. Helena Early Learning Center to reward the school's "students of the month." Senior Trooper invites other troopers to eat lunch with the students and then the Star Students get time to see State Police equipment and explore their vehicles.

Senior Trooper Holiday uses his own time to engage with these students and has never sought accolades for his actions. His satisfaction comes from seeing the smiles on the students' faces and the apprehension at interacting with police melt away.

SENIOR TROOPER CHASE HUVAL
LOUISIANA STATE POLICE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

On October 18, 2022, Louisiana State Police responded to an alert from the Harris County Sheriff's Office (Texas) regarding two individuals wanted for First Degree Injury to a Child. The two adults were likely traveling to Louisiana with five juveniles. After hearing the alert, Senior Trooper Chase Huval drove to where he thought the vehicle might pass while coordinating with other agencies and sections of LSP. Ultimately, he located the suspect vehicle on Interstate 10 traveling eastbound in West Baton Rouge Parish. Senior Trooper Huval remained behind the vehicle while they traveled through heavy traffic. The suspect vehicle entered East Baton Rouge Parish, where a multi-agency response converged on the suspect vehicle and conducted a traffic stop. Officers took the two individuals into custody without incident.

In the car with the individuals was one juvenile. Officers learned through investigative means that the remaining juveniles were safe with family. A welfare check helped identify everyone and confirmed they were in good condition.

After reuniting all of the juveniles, Senior Trooper Huval wanted to give the kids something positive to think about. What better way to do that than to arrange for the children to go on a shopping spree where they were able to pick out some much needed clothing items, toys, and snacks.

DEPUTY BENJI PHELPS
NATCHITOCHE PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Deputy Benji Phelps was on patrol along Interstate 49 north in Natchitoches on Saturday, June 13 when he noticed a large suitcase in the middle of the road. After safely securing the luggage, Deputy Phelps checked the contents of the suitcase and noticed some medication had a patient's name on it. The prescription originated from a pharmacy in Henderson, Texas. Using his investigative skills, Deputy Phelps tracked down the phone number for the pharmacy and called them up. He explained that he was a member of a sheriff's office in Louisiana and he found a suitcase with medications for one of their patients. He quickly got the pharmacist to agree to assist by tracking down the family of the patient. He left his name and phone number with the pharmacist with the hopes that the patient or family member would call him back.

One of the parents of the suitcase's owner called Deputy Phelps to thank him. She revealed they had lost their daughter's suitcase while traveling through Louisiana from Houston to Florida for a vacation. The family was in the process of attempting to replace the lost items in time for their daughter to be dropped off at water skiing lessons in Zachary, La on the way back home. Mom was so excited to know that they wouldn't have to replace everything, especially since some items were personal and had sentimental value.

Deputy Phelps committed to keeping the suitcase secure until the family traveled back through the area. Then, he would meet up with them to return the bag. On June 18, the deputy and the family met at French Market Express off I-49 for a joyful reunion.

CONSTABLE TERRICA WILLIAMS
BATON ROUGE CONSTABLE'S OFFICE

Constable Terrica Williams has been a close friend of Ms. Deshannon Robinson, a hairstylist and small business owner, here in Baton Rouge for many years. Over the years, Constable Williams has gotten to know all of Ms. Robinson's family, including her granddaughter, Chass Auzene.

In November 2021, the unspeakable happened when 8-year-old Chass was diagnosed with stage 3 cancer. The outlook was not good, but Chass's family committed not to give up without a fight, and neither did Constable Williams. She wanted to find some way to help the family so she created a prayer circle, ensuring that every day five people could pray for the family and pray for the healing of Chass. She helped to provide for the family through fundraising and donations while the sweet young girl was in the hospital.

The cancer moved quickly, and sadly, Chass passed away February 8, 2022. Knowing that the family would need help with final medical expenses as well as funeral costs, Constable Williams contacted a personal friend and many others to help raise funds to lay this beautiful child to rest. In addition, she created flower arrangements and memorial cards herself for the funeral. Finally, she worked with Miss Lillie of Lillie's Kitchen in Glen Oaks, to set up a drive-through donation station so the public could make donations to help with costs. On the day of the funeral, Constable Williams personally decorated the hall for services and tribute. Because of her efforts

and personal commitment, the family was able to bury their beautiful angel without having expenses at the time of this tremendous loss.

2023 Service Before Self Honoree

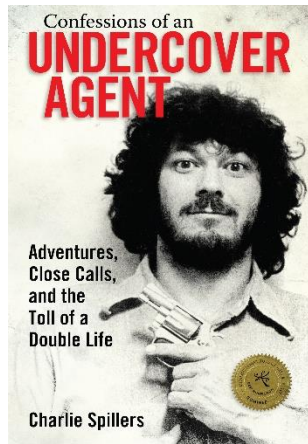
DEPUTY MICHAEL MENARD **LAFAYETTE PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer Deputy Mike Menard has been making Valentine's Day extra special for the students at his assigned school, Woodvale Elementary, for three years running. Since back in 2020, Deputy Menard has raised funds and even reached into his own pocket to ensure every student at Woodvale Elementary feels extra special at least one day out of the year. Deputy Menard even goes as far as creating custom valentines for students with food allergies, translating them into Braille for students with sight impairments and caters to just about any other of the students' needs.

This past year, 2022, Deputy Menard organized a "Disguise a Badge" contest at the school. Students were allowed to customize their own Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office patch. The 31 winners of the competition each received a handmade customized "sheriff" cookie. The celebration also included a K9 demonstration for some of the younger students.

The above story is just one example of "Deputy Mike's" acts of kindness he continually displays throughout the school year. Deputy Menard actively participates in school clean up days where parents and students go to the school on a weekend and spruce up the campus. On any given day, you can find Deputy Menard walking the school campus, playing stack the cups with the kindergarteners or even playing bean bag toss outside with the older kids. His dedication to the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office as well as Woodvale Elementary School is unwavering.

Deputy Menard is an exceptional law enforcement officer and, more importantly, he is an outstanding humanitarian. It is for this reason that we have selected him to receive our most prestigious honor, the Heart of Law Enforcement **Service Before Self** award.



Bestselling author, **Charlie Spillers**, is a former Marine, Baton Rouge Police Officer, Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) regional commander, career federal prosecutor, and U.S. Department of Justice Attaché for Iraq.

He has more than 42 years of experience as a law enforcement officer, commander, and federal prosecutor. Mr. Spillers served with the Baton Rouge Police Department for six years, working undercover as an Intelligence and Narcotics officer. After Baton Rouge he served for 12 years with the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics and rose to the rank of Regional Commander for all of north Mississippi.

His book, *“Confessions of an Undercover Agent,”* describes his experiences during 10 years of undercover crime fighting and narrow escapes with BRPD and MBN. Playing different roles, he infiltrated rings of burglars and safecrackers, drug trafficking groups, Dixie Mafia auto-theft rings, and Mafia and Mexican drug smuggling operations. During his last undercover role, smugglers delivered 3,000 pounds of marijuana to him in Houston, Texas.

He capped off a unique career by becoming a career federal prosecutor working on major drug trafficking organizations, criminal street gangs, and white-collar crime. He volunteered and served three tours in Iraq for the Department of Justice. First as an attorney-advisor to the Iraqi court that tried Saddam Hussein and other regime leaders. He then served as the U.S. Department of Justice Attaché for Iraq and led a joint project to disrupt al Qaeda financing. His work related to Iraq was recognized by the FBI Director, the Deputy Attorney General, the Italian Embassy, the British Ambassador and Britain’s Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. Spillers earned renown as an instructor in law enforcement academies and in training courses for federal, state, and local officers. He served as an instructor in DOJ courses for new federal prosecutors and as an adjunct professor in graduate criminal justice courses. He has made presentations to the prosecutors' association on search and seizure law, and on investigations and prosecutions of violent street gangs.

He’s been innovative in developing law enforcement training programs. He led development of the Mississippi highway patrol interdiction program and organized an air and marine drug smuggling investigation course attended by MBN and LSP narcotics agents, along with state agents from TN, TX, AL, and GA. He developed the first MBN Basic Agent Academy to be certified by the state minimum standards board.

Amazon declared his book “Confessions of An Undercover Agent” a #1 New Release nationwide in law enforcement memoirs. It became required reading in criminal justice courses at two universities. Mr. Spillers was a featured author at the Louisiana Book Festival and at the state book festivals in Mississippi and Tennessee. He has been featured in more than 180 book appearances and speaking engagements, including newspaper, magazine, radio and TV interviews. He is also the author of “Whirlwind: A Frank Marsh Novel,” and is currently working on the sequel.



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 a POST certified law enforcement officer.
- 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.