



Sheriff Curtis N. Fell
ROCK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
 Jude G. Maurer, Chief Deputy



Aaron K. Burdick
 Commander, Law Enforcement Services

"A Tradition of Service"

Kimberly A. Litsheim
 Commander, Correctional Services

MEDIA RELEASE

Sheriff Fell Announces 17th Annual Awards Ceremony

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Sheriff Fell is pleased to announce that the 17th Annual Rock County Sheriff's Office Awards Ceremony will be held on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., at the Dr. Daniel Hale Williams Resource Center in the Beckman Mill Room, located at 1717 Center Avenue, Janesville, WI 53546. This event is open to the public. All are welcome to attend.

This ceremony recognizes Sheriff's Office staff and a citizen for exceptional public safety achievements in the past year. Below are details on the 2023 Awards.

Deputy of the Year: Deputy Matthew Michalski

Matthew Michalski started at the Rock County Sheriff's Office on January 2, 2020, as a Deputy Sheriff. He previously served as a Police Officer for the Town of Beloit Police Department and the City of Beloit Police Department. He completed a 520-hour Law Enforcement Academy at Southwest Wisconsin Technical College on August 29, 2008. Deputy Michalski currently works in the Bureau of Identification as an Evidence Custodian. In this capacity, he conducts crime scene investigations for complicated, large, or otherwise unusual incidents. He also acts as a trained Evidence Technician locating, documenting, collecting, processing, and preserving evidence. Deputy Michalski serves on the SWAT Team, the Sniper Team, and the Peer Support Team. He is certified as a General Law Enforcement Instructor and a Handgun & Rifle Instructor through the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Standards Board. He is also a GLOCK Armorer and a National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) Technician. He previously received a Unit Citation for processing the crime scene of a multiple victim shooting that occurred on December 9, 2021. Deputy Michalski is a Beloit native who resides in Janesville with his family. He volunteers his time as a local Den Leader for Boy Scouts of America and has coached YMCA youth basketball. He participates in the Rock County Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Wisconsin. He graduated from F.J. Turner High School and earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Wisconsin – Platteville.



Deputy Michalski's supervisor nominated him for this recognition for his dedication and expertise in evidentiary concerns. His supervisor cited his vast knowledge of specialized equipment and advanced techniques for the recovery of both physical and digital evidence. As a NIBIN Technician, Deputy Michalski submits images of cartridge cases from crime scenes and test fires of recovered crime guns for ballistic comparison to aid in solving and preventing violent crimes



involving firearms. Deputy Michalski conducted crime scene investigation, evidence collection, and evidentiary follow-through efforts for multiple major incidents in 2023. He instructed a block of training on evidentiary procedures during Fall 2023 Sworn Staff In-Service. He also played a significant role in preparing for the transition to the new Sheriff's Office building. His supervisor noted his commitment in responding to many activations outside of his regular work hours. Deputy Michalski consistently goes above-and-beyond the normal call-of-duty making personal sacrifices and continued contributions to the agency and community.

Correctional Officer of the Year: Correctional Officer Craig Weberg



Craig Weberg began employment at the Rock County Sheriff's Office on March 1, 1995, as a Correctional Officer. He completed a 120-hour Jail Academy at Blackhawk Technical College on March 24, 1995. Correctional Officer Weberg currently works in the Community Corrections Bureau as a Diversion Officer and the only Huber Officer. He first assumed this role on May 19, 2003. He assisted with the Workender Program until it ended in 2023. Correctional Officer Weberg routinely covers the jail when additional staff are needed. He previously received Correctional Officer of the Year in 2002. He graduated from Beloit Memorial High School and obtained a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice – Corrections from the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh.

Correctional Officer Weberg's supervisor nominated him for this award for his exceptional job performance as evidenced by exceeding expectations in several areas on his yearly performance evaluations. Correctional Officer Weberg holds the most seniority of any Correctional Officer. His supervisor highlighted his knowledge of the jail and his ability to fill-in for other staff. Correctional Officer Weberg works well with others and keeps a positive attitude. His supervisor stated that he "has a good sense of humor and is a joy to be around and work with." Correctional Officer Weberg earned and maintains the respect of his peers and ranking staff alike. As programming and staffing changed in 2023, Correctional Officer Weberg worked with his colleagues in Diversion to learn electronic monitoring and take on new responsibilities. His dedication and dependability throughout his tenure have not gone unnoticed.

Civilian Employee of the Year: Evidence Records Specialist Lindsey Bittorf

Lindsey Bittorf resumed employment at the Rock County Sheriff's Office on May 10, 2021, as an Administrative Assistant assigned to the Bureau of Identification. Her position was reclassified to Evidence Records Specialist on October 1, 2023. She previously worked as a Legal Support Specialist for the District Attorney's Office, a Public Safety Utility Clerk for the Sheriff's Office, and a Police Officer. In her current role, she coordinates the proper storage, maintenance, and provision of body, squad, and interview camera videos and systems. Bittorf fulfills requests for digital evidence from the District Attorney's Office as well as open records. She serves on the Real Time Operations Center (ROTC) Committee and the Community Engagement Team. Bittorf resides in Janesville with her husband and son. She earned a Bachelor of Science as a double major in Criminal Justice and Psychology with a Mental Health Certificate from the University of Wisconsin – Parkside. She graduated with a Master of Arts in Psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Bittorf's supervisor nominated her for her significant contributions to transitioning the agency's digital evidence storage to new systems, processes, and programs. In 2023, she assisted with several major projects involving transitioning the entire agency to new body cameras, squad cameras, digital evidence management program / library, body / dash cam management application for deputies' cellphones, and an Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) squad camera program. Bittorf meticulously documents technical issues that she encounters and attends weekly meetings with the digital evidence system vendor. She spearheads communication with the vendor, Information Technology, and Sheriff's Office staff to enhance operational ability and hold parties accountable to fix issues and provide services as intended. She consistently checks videos and other digital evidence to ensure successful importation. When she identifies videos that did not upload, she works with staff to rectify the situation. She often notices service interruptions before anyone else. Her attention to detail has saved the county time and money. She recently transitioned to a new "Judicial Sharing" feature, which allows for the secure remote computerized provision of digital evidence to the District Attorney's Office. Staff frequently seek her out for assistance or clarification with a multitude of digital evidence concerns, or other issues regarding various technologies and programs. She is always ready, prompt, and thorough in her response to these requests. She instructed a training block on digital evidence management systems at a midwest conference and garnered praise for her informative content. Her workstation is currently in the Front Office. When the lobby is busy, Bittorf will often help the public with questions or concerns. Bittorf surpasses her job duties and is always willing to assist with any task that arises.



Retired Sheriffs Leadership Award: Sergeant Jay Williams



Jay Williams began his career at the Rock County Sheriff's Office on March 2, 1998, as a Deputy Sheriff. He was integral in establishing the Diversion and Electronic Monitoring Programs. He received a promotion to Sergeant on April 18, 2011. For the past 12 years, Sergeant Williams has worked in the Community Corrections Bureau as the Rock County Education and Criminal Addictions Program (RECAP) Supervisor and Drug Court Administrator / Coordinator. He also oversees the Jail Treatment and Re-Entry Programs and coordinates with adjunct instructors from Blackhawk Technical College. Sergeant Williams organizes the annual RECAP Farm to Table Dinner. He is a certified Handgun & Rifle Instructor and a GLOCK Armorer. He also teaches ATV Safety, Boater Safety, and Snowmobile Safety. He previously instructed Defense and Arrest Tactics. He was on the Recreational Safety Team for 18 years. Sergeant Williams serves on the Wisconsin Association of Treatment Court Professionals Board of

Directors, belongs to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, is a Janesville Mobilizing 4 Change (JM4C) Board Member, volunteers on the Edgerton Teen Center Board of Directors, sits on the Leadership Committee for the Rock County Substance Misuse Taskforce, and is part of the Risk Reduction Subcommittee for Rock County's Evidence Based Decision Making Project. He earned an Associate Degree in Police Science from Blackhawk Technical College. He resides in Edgerton with his family.

Sergeant Williams received this award for his instrumental role in building the Community Corrections Programs throughout his tenure. His expertise is invaluable, and he will be greatly missed upon his upcoming retirement. Captain Josh Lund nominated Sergeant Williams for his leadership, dedication, passion, and the energy he puts into his work which allows those around him the opportunity to succeed. In her nomination, Deputy Emily Miller cited Sergeant Williams as displaying the leadership qualities of empathy, integrity, flexibility, commitment, and passion.

Lifesaving Award: Correctional Officer Nicholas Simler

On March 16, 2023, Correctional Officer Simler was assigned as a Booking Officer with Correctional Officer Sime. While Correctional Officer Sime processed the property of a fresh arrestee and known narcotics facilitator, he encountered an unknown powdery substance hidden in a wrapped dollar bill. The substance caused Correctional Officer Sime to lose consciousness. Correctional Officer Simler observed this and immediately retrieved Narcan and radioed for additional Correctional Officers and Medical staff. Correctional Officer Simler administered a dose of Narcan to Correctional Officer Sime and maintained care of him until others arrived. Correctional Officer Simler stayed with Correctional Officer Sime until he was safely evacuated to a hospital via ambulance.

Sheriff's Award: Treatment Coordinator Verence Sandoval

Verence Sandoval started on March 7, 2022, as the Jail Treatment Coordinator. Sandoval oversees jail programming and treatment for pending inmates to include Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, church services, pastoral visits, Houses of Healing, Creative Writing, an illustration contest, AODA Services, and more. She is also in charge of the Narcan Vending Machine Program and assists with Re-Entry Services and Mental Health Services. Her work is invaluable to the inmates housed at the Rock County Jail. Since November of 2023, Sandoval has filled in as the acting counselor for the Rock County Education and Criminal Addictions Program (RECAP). In this capacity, she provides individual and group counseling, teaches Seeking Safety for AODA programming, and instructs Thinking 4 Change for cognitive intervention programming. This is her second time as the acting RECAP Counselor. Additionally, Sandoval was instrumental in securing funds for the Narcan Vending Machine, obtaining an Opioid Abatement Grant through the Department of Human Services, and utilizing Opioid Settlement Funds for training and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) in the jail. Sandoval motivates others, works diligently, and is a true professional in her field. This award recognizes her hard work, perseverance, and dedication.

Unit Citation: Detective Ross Wenger, Deputy Margaret Albeck, Deputy Zachary Anacker, Deputy Ryan Bittorf, Deputy Kyle Hathorn, and Deputy Garrett Whitehead

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) achieved more drug seizures and arrests in 2023 than any prior year. SIU seized over \$365,000 in street value of drugs, including 9,420 grams of cocaine / cocaine base, 34,613 grams of THC, 211 grams of methamphetamine, 89 Oxycodone pills, 116 grams of psilocybin mushrooms, 262 grams of fentanyl, 5,794 grams of THC edibles, and 34 grams of THC wax. SIU arrested a total of 55 individuals and charged over 221 criminal offenses to those arrestees. A majority of those arrests were felony charges which disrupted the drug trade in Rock County and surrounding areas.

Commendations:

Financial Office Supervisor Michelle Wilson and Payroll Specialist Lucia Esquivel

On May 8, 2023, the Sheriff's Office began transitioning to the new payroll software selected by Rock County. Learning and setting up the new software while continuing to complete payroll within the old software placed a substantial amount of additional work on Payroll Specialist Lucia Esquivel and Financial Office Supervisor Michelle Wilson. Getting the new payroll software to accurately calculate wages for the 219 employees at the Sheriff's Office, who work a variety of shifts and represent multiple contracts, presented significant challenges. Their dedication and hard work ensured that staff continued to be paid throughout the transition. On June 11, 2023, the new payroll software went live. The cutover came with numerous issues as the nuances of payroll for the Sheriff's Office had to be input in the new system. Esquivel and Wilson have worked tirelessly since the implementation to facilitate the completion of payroll functions.

Deputy Logan Shelby

On March 9, 2024, at approximately 6:13 p.m., Deputy Logan Shelby responded to a rural Rock County address for a report of a missing child. As the first on scene, Deputy Shelby interviewed several subjects. He obtained consent to search the residence from the homeowner. The search by patrol personnel did not locate the missing child. Deputy Shelby determined that an adult subject on scene was not forthcoming with information and was displaying deceptive behavior. Deputy Shelby stayed with this subject and assessed the individual for possible injuries and any signs of evidentiary value. Deputy Shelby coordinated a group of civilians to search the neighborhood. The search party did not locate the missing child. Deputy Shelby detained the subject. The Detective Bureau responded and determined that a homicide occurred. The subject Deputy Shelby detained was later arrested for 1st Degree Intentional Homicide, Hiding a Corpse, Neglecting a Child Causing Death, Bail Jumping, and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. Deputy Shelby's actions with initially taking command of the scene and detaining the subject contributed to the resolution of this case.

Captain Mark Thompson and Sergeant Allen Peters

On February 8, 2024, a historic EF2 tornado touched down several times in the northwest section of Rock County causing substantial damage to over thirty different properties and knocking out power to over 3,200 customers.

Captain Mark Thompson was off duty in his personal vehicle when he noticed the storm front coming in. He then witnessed a tornado form and touch down three times. Captain Thompson immediately traveled north trailing the tornado towards his subdivision. He stopped at his residence to check on his family and immediately donned his badge and weapon. Captain Thompson checked on other residences in the area. He found trees and power lines down all over the roads as well as strewn debris from destroyed buildings. Captain Thompson put himself in danger to render aid if necessary to individuals whose homes were severely damaged. He provided status updates to the Rock County 911 Communications Center to assist in coordinating resources. Captain Thompson assisted these resources as they arrived. He showed courage, resourcefulness, and a commitment to duty during this crisis.

Sergeant Allen Peters was the on-duty patrol supervisor at the time of the incident. Understanding the significant damage and potential for injuries, Sergeant Peters deployed on-duty resources and contacted Command Staff and Emergency Management. As reports of damage and injuries

came in, Sergeant Peters quickly realized the affected area was extensive and increasing need for resources. He requested assistance from all the satellite agencies in the northwest part of the county and from Janesville Police Department. Sergeant Peters scouted a recommended Command Post location, determined the site insufficient, and made the decision to utilize the Evansville Piggly Wiggly parking lot. Sergeant Peters remained the Incident Commander for the Sheriff's Office as Unified Command was established with other public safety agencies. Sergeant Peters worked diligently with fire and emergency medical services leaders to isolate the affected area and implement a plan to conduct a door-to-door search. He effectively managed dozens of law enforcement officers to ensure the safety and welfare of citizens during this natural disaster. Sergeant Peters' calm demeanor led to a positive outcome during this high stress event.

Citizen Award: John Kopecky

On February 8, 2024, a historic EF2 tornado touched down several times in the northwest section of Rock County causing substantial damage to over thirty different properties and knocking out power to over 3,200 customers. As the emergency response progressed, a Command Post was established in the parking lot of the Evansville Piggly Wiggly. Sheriff's Office Command Staff contacted store owner John Kopecky and explained that due to the large emergency response his parking lot worked best. Kopecky was understanding of the needs and informed Command Staff that he planned on staying in the store all night. He offered to keep the building open for emergency responders even though the store was without power. Kopecky provided emergency responders with food and water. He continued to allow the use of his parking lot even after reopening his store once power was restored. Furthermore, Kopecky supplied food and water to victims of the tornado and spent several hours in the affected area assisting with cleanup efforts. Kopecky displayed tremendous dedication to the community and first responders throughout this natural disaster.

The Rock County Sheriff's Office congratulates these award recipients for their outstanding contributions to public safety!

CURTIS N. FELL
SHERIFF

By: Nicole Barrington