



# NEWS RELEASE

## Chicago Police Department

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### Highest Honors Bestowed on Police Department's Bravest at Annual Awards Ceremony

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CHICAGO—Police Supt. Philip J. Cline presented awards today to outstanding officers at the Chicago Police Department's 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Police Recognition Ceremony. The annual event pays tribute to officers who have distinguished themselves and the Chicago Police Department by heroic deeds or meritorious accomplishments during the past year.

The main feature of the afternoon was the presentation of the Department's highest award, the Police Medal, presented to officers whose accomplishments are so outstanding as to justify special recognition.

The event was held in the International Ballroom of the Chicago Hilton & Towers, 720 South Michigan Ave. The ceremony included a Memorial Roll that honored all Chicago Police officers who have died in the past year.

Carol Marin, NBC5 special assignment reporter and *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist, and Ron Magers, WLS-TV anchorman and reporter, served as the event's masters of ceremonies.

The annual ceremony began in 1962 when President John F. Kennedy, with the encouragement of his brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, established the first National Police Month. Ceremonies were held throughout the country by several police departments, including the Chicago Police Department.

This year's **Police Medal** was presented to **Officer Alphonsus A. O'Connor**, of the Englewood (7<sup>th</sup>) District. The officer also received the **Superintendent's Award of Valor**, presented to officers for outstanding acts of heroism, personal courage and devotion to duty.

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## AWARDS – Add 1

On March 26, 2005, offenders lured two men to a bogus party, where the victims were stripped, bound and robbed. One captive attempted to escape to a nearby railroad yard, but an offender chased and brutally murdered him. A railroad officer confronted the offender, who responded with a burst of gunfire, inflicting three wounds.

Off-duty **Officer O'Connor** witnessed the shootings as he was driving by in his personal vehicle. As the gunman stood over the railroad officer and was about to fire again, O'Connor ran up, announced his office and ordered him to drop his weapon. The gunman fired at O'Connor, who returned fire, fatally wounding the murderer and saving the railroad officer's life.

The **Blue Star Award** is presented to officers who have been seriously wounded in the direct performance of duty during an attack from an assailant, personal combat or performance of an act of valor.

Five officers were presented both the **Award of Valor** and the **Blue Star Award** for their actions in three separate incidents: **Officer Petar Brkovic**, Near North (18<sup>th</sup>) District; **Officer John E. Wrigley**, Ogden (10<sup>th</sup>) District; **Officers Nick A. Olsen** and **Eric B. White**, Targeted Response Unit; and **Officer Angel Novalez**, Monroe (12<sup>th</sup>) District.

Also presented the **Award of Valor** for their courageous actions during these incidents were: **Officer Christopher Pinzine**, Near North (18<sup>th</sup>) District; **Officer Timothy P. Finley**, Ogden (10<sup>th</sup>) District; and **George Nichols**, Monroe (12<sup>th</sup>) District.

On Nov. 4, 2004, two offenders forced their way into a woman's home, knocked her down, threatened her with a knife, robbed her, then forced her to go to a nearby ATM to withdraw money. Unbeknownst to the offenders, undercover officers were inside the store on a mission to suppress robberies plaguing the community. When **Officers Brkovic** and **Pinzine** took pursuit of one of the offenders, the offender pulled out a handgun and fired, striking Brkovic in the hand. The officers returned fire and continued their pursuit into an alley. The offender was waiting for them and opened fire when they entered. The officers, however, withheld their fire because of the presence of a citizen in the alley, and transmitted a broadcast that led to responding officers apprehending both offenders.

On Feb. 21, 2005, **Officers Wrigley** and **Finley** observed a mini-van with no lights driving the wrong way on a one-way street. After pulling over the offender, Finley approached the driver's side, just as **Officers Olsen** and **White** drove up to offer support. The driver suddenly sprang from the car and struggled with the three officers who tried to subdue and handcuff the violent man. When Finley saw the offender pull out a gun, he yelled a warning to his fellow officers. The offender fired a burst of gunshots, striking Olsen in the upper right arm, White in the right calf and Wrigley in the left arm. Despite their wounds, the officers were able to return fire, fatally wounding the gunman.

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## AWARDS – Add 2

On May 22, 2005, **Officers Nichols and Novalez**, responding to a “call for help,” entered a dark alley and confronted an offender armed with a semi-automatic weapon. When the gunman did not respond to an order to drop his weapon, Novalez repeated the command in Spanish. The offender answered with a gunshot, striking Novalez in the chest area unprotected by his safety vest. The bullet ripped through the officer’s chest, exited the back and lodged in the vest. Nichols quickly stepped forward to shield his partner and assisted him to safety. As Nichols covered and reassured his wounded partner, he radioed for medical assistance. The offender escaped, but was apprehended the next day. After five weeks of recovery, Novalez was reunited with his partner.

The **Superintendent’s Award of Valor** was also presented to:

**Officers Dwayne A. Collier and Calvin Chatman**, Austin (15<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officer Nicholas F. Cortesi**, Chicago Lawn (8<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officer Henry J. Barsch**, Prairie (21<sup>st</sup>) District;  
**Officer Dewey L. Lee Jr.**, Prairie (21<sup>st</sup>) District;  
**Officers Todd M. Olsen, Luis A. Loaiza and Arnoldo Rendon Jr.**, Ogden (10<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officers Joseph C. Dahl and Michael J. Alesia**, Ogden (10<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officers Hillel Watkins and Edward A. Tibbs**, Englewood (7<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officers Jose A. Pedraza Jr. and Alla K. Awadallah**, Englewood (7<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officers Walter T. Chudzik and Joseph A. Schuler**, Targeted Response Unit;  
**Officers Timothy F. Balasz and Brian K. Stelling**, Calumet (5<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officers Whitney A. Russo and John P. Granat**, Englewood (7<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officers Verlisher H. Syas and Timothy J. Gaskin**, Targeted Response Unit;  
**Officers James R. Curry and Andrew J. Hurman**, Grand Central (25<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Officer Tony B. Smith**, Ogden (10<sup>th</sup>) District;  
**Sgt. Francis A. Valadez and Officers David Adams and Danielle N. Philp**, Targeted Response Unit;  
**Det. Frank G. Vukonich and Officer James P. Butler II**, Detective Division;  
**Sgt. Richard J. Plotke Jr.**, Education & Training Division;  
**Officers Rick R. Caballero and Thomas D. Davey**, Targeted Response Unit;  
**Officer Johnny R. Christian**, Narcotics Section;  
**Dets. Brian P. Forberg and Kevin R. Eberle**, Area 2 Detective Division, and **Officers David R. Fietko, Lawrence W. Kerr and Javier Alonso**, Morgan Park (22<sup>nd</sup>) District;  
**Officers Martin J. Teresi and Louis J. Garcia**, Area 2 Saturation Unit;  
**Officer Greg Durr**, Graphic Arts Section;  
**Officer Marr C. Ventura**, Albany Park (17<sup>th</sup>) District.

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## AWARDS – Add 3

On June 27, 2003, **Officers Collier and Chatman** conducted surveillance of a parked car being used by gang members to store drugs and guns. An offender noticed the officers, approached the undercover police van and pulled out a handgun. When Collier and Chatman identified themselves as police, the offender raised his weapon and pointed it inside the van. Fearing for the life of his partner, Chatman fired two shots. The offender exchanged gunfire with the officers before running inside a house. The gunman was later found lying wounded on the basement floor and taken into custody.

On June 15, 2004, **Officer Cortesi**, while conducting narcotics surveillance, confronted an armed offender. When the gunman fled, the officer gave chase and ordered him to halt. The gunman turned and fired at the officer. Cortesi returned fire, wounded the gunman, made the arrest and confiscated the semi-automatic weapon.

On June 30, 2004, **Officer Barsch** was off-duty and driving to work when he saw a woman standing in the middle of the street with an offender pointing a gun at her as he grabbed her purse. Barsch drew his service weapon, exited his vehicle, announced that he was a police officer and ordered the offender to drop his weapon. When the offender turned his gun toward the officer, Barsch fired, wounded the gunman and secured the arrest.

On July 18, 2004, **Officer Lee** was off-duty and visiting his parents in the backyard of their home when an armed offender approached his father and demanded his money. Lee stepped forward and announced that he was a police officer. When the gunman refused repeated orders to drop the weapon, the officer fired, striking the offender in the arm. After a struggle, Lee apprehended the gunman and confiscated the handgun.

On April 6, 2005, **Officers Olson, Loaiza and Rendon** observed two offenders firing semi-automatic weapons. Upon seeing the approaching officers, one gunman fled, but the other continued firing. When the officers confronted him and ordered him to drop his weapon, the offender turned his gunfire toward the officers and then fled. An extended chase and gun battle through vacant lots and alleys ensued before the officers apprehended the gunman and confiscated his deadly weapon.

On Aug. 20, 2004, **Officers Dahl and Alesia** noticed a suspicious man sitting in a parked car in an alley. When the officers questioned the man, he abruptly pulled out a handgun and pointed it at Alesia. Dahl yelled a warning just as the offender fired, with the bullet narrowly missing Alesia. Both officers drew their service weapons and fired, striking the gunman. The officers called for immediate medical aid for the offender, but he died soon after.

On Aug. 31, 2004, **Officers Watkins and Tibbs** followed a suspicious vehicle that had avoided a roadside safety check being conducted by Chicago Police officers. The offenders noticed the officers and, attempting to escape, lost control and crashed into

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another car. One offender fled, but the other, armed with a handgun, took a position near an alley to ambush the approaching officers. When the squad pulled up, the gunman opened fire, striking the windshield and injuring Tibbs in the eye with a glass fragment. Watkins rolled out of the squad car and exchanged gunfire with the offender. Tibbs positioned himself between the offender and a group of children on the street. During the ensuing chase, Watkins and the offender engaged in two more gun battles before the officer wounded the gunman in the leg and apprehended him.

On Sept. 1, 2004, **Officers Pedraza and Awadallah** confronted an offender who was armed with a machine pistol and firing at a group of people. Seeing the approaching officers, the gunman fled with Pedraza taking pursuit on foot while Awadallah drove around to cut off the escape. The offender refused orders to drop his weapon and exchanged gunfire with Pedraza. The officers sent flash messages describing the dangerous gunman, who was soon apprehended by responding police.

On Sept. 14, 2004, **Officers Chudzik and Schuler** conducted a traffic stop of a vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed. With the car stopped near an alley, the offender suddenly put his car in reverse and smashed into the squad car. The driver emerged with a semi-automatic machine pistol and fired a burst of gunfire at the officers. The officers exchanged fire and issued a description of the offender's vehicle and direction of flight to other officers. The offender fired a semi-automatic machine pistol at the officers, setting off an exchange of gunfire. The offender, with a gunshot wound to his thigh, was apprehended and his dangerous weapon was taken off the streets.

On Sept. 26, 2004, **Officers Balasz and Stelling**, responding to a call of "a man with a gun," approached a suspicious man in an alley. Refusing an order to halt, the offender fled with Stelling giving chase on foot and Balasz taking pursuit in the squad car. The offender suddenly stopped running and pointed his gun at Stelling, who dove for cover and fired. The offender ran through a courtyard where Balasz confronted him and ordered him to drop his weapon. The offender continued running, twice turning and pointing his gun at the pursuing officer. Balasz fired and chased the offender into an alley, where he was later found with a gunshot wound to his shoulder and apprehended.

On Oct. 31, 2004, **Officers Russo and Granat** responded to a call of "a man with a gun" and ordered the offender to halt. The offender fled around the corner of a building, with the officers taking pursuit into an area containing many parked cars. Suddenly, the offender emerged from between two cars and pointed his weapon directly at Russo. The officer reacted immediately and fired one shot, wounding the gunman. Granat jumped on the offender before he could retrieve the semi-automatic handgun he had dropped.

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## AWARDS – Add 5

On Nov. 6, 2004, **Officers Syas and Gaskin**, following up on a call of “shots fired,” conducted a search of the area and blocked a suspicious vehicle leaving a gas station. Inside the car was a gunman threatening two citizens. The driver jumped out of the vehicle and ran toward the officers. The offender, armed with a Glock semi-automatic handgun, opened fire. Moments later, a woman exited the car, running frantically toward the officers. Syas and Gaskin directed the two victims and nearby bystanders to safety and then engaged in a lengthy gun battle with the offender. The gunman drove away in the hijacked vehicle, firing at the officers as he fled. The officers issued a flash message. Within minutes, the offender crashed the vehicle and was apprehended by responding officers.

On Nov. 8, 2004, an officer was engaged in a fierce battle with a brutal offender who had beaten a citizen, robbed him of his cash and hijacked his car. **Officers Curry and Hurman**, hearing the officer’s cries for help, rushed to the scene. They found the offender in possession of the officer’s weapon, hovering over her with the gun raised. Curry and Hurman opened fire, fatally wounding the assailant and saving their fellow officer’s life.

On Dec. 3, 2004, off-duty **Officer Smith** was talking to two friends in a currency exchange parking lot when an armed robber approached them. Smith announced that he was a Chicago Police officer. The gunman repeated his demand for money. Fearing for the life of his friends as well as his own, Smith drew his service weapon and fired, wounding the gunman in the leg. The offender ran away, while firing at the pursuing officer, and entered a car. After crashing into a fence, the offender was apprehended by the officer.

On Dec. 3, 2004, **Sgt. Valadez** observed a stolen vehicle and followed the car onto the Dan Ryan Expressway. In attempting to escape, the offender spun out of control, striking a concrete barrier near an exit ramp. Valadez cautiously approached and watched the offender emerge from the car, drop a handgun and stagger toward the street. Ignoring an order to halt, the offender turned and fired a semi-automatic machine pistol five times at the sergeant. Valadez returned fire and when he continued his pursuit, the offender turned and fired another burst of gunshots. Meanwhile, **Officers Adams and Philp** had come to Valadez’s rescue and fired at the offender from a different direction. The gun battle continued, despite repeated orders to the offender to surrender, until the offender was fatally wounded. It was learned that the offender was a fugitive wanted for murder.

**Det. Vukonich and Officer Butler** contacted a friend of a fugitive who had escaped United States Marshals and convinced the man to arrange a meeting. On Jan. 14, 2005, when the fugitive drove into a parking garage to meet his friend as arranged, the officers blocked his path with their police vehicle. At first, the offender complied when the officers ordered him to surrender. Suddenly, the offender attacked Vukonich,

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gained control of the detective's weapon and placed the gun barrel to the detective's stomach. Butler reacted immediately and fired, striking the offender. The wounded offender attempted to run from the building, but was tackled and apprehended by Butler.

On Jan. 21, 2005, **Sgt. Plotke** volunteered to assist two Morgan Park police detectives serve the arrest warrant of two violent offenders wanted for home invasion and beating a woman. After announcing his office and gaining entry to the apartment, the sergeant, in full uniform, found an offender pointing a semi-automatic handgun at him. Plotke grabbed the gunman's arm and an intense struggle ensued. When the gunman pointed his weapon at the sergeant's chest, Plotke fired, fatally wounding his assailant. Suddenly, from the kitchen, a second gunman fired several shots at the three officers. One detective was struck in the chest, but was saved by his safety vest. The other detective returned fire, but discovered that his service weapon had malfunctioned. Fearing for the safety of his suburban police officers, the sergeant fired, fatally wounding the second gunman.

On April 18, 2005, **Officers Caballero and Davey** attempted to curb a traffic violator, but the offender refused to stop. During the ensuing car chase, the officers conducted a computer check and learned that the offender was wanted for murder. When the offender crashed into a parked car, the officers exited their squad and cautiously approached. The offender suddenly put his car into reverse and attempted to run over Davey, who barely got out of the way before the vehicle crashed into the squad. The offender pulled out a gun, pointed it at Caballero and refused to surrender. The officer fired, wounding the offender, who sped away and crashed his vehicle a second time. The officers quickly obtained transportation to the hospital for the unconscious offender, but he was pronounced dead upon arrival.

On June 14, 2005, **Officer Christian**, conducting an undercover narcotics transaction, met an armed offender in a dark alley. The gunman took the officer's money but, before he gave him the illegal drugs, began to search through Christian's pockets. Fearing that his service weapon and police star would be discovered, Christian drew his gun and announced that he was an officer. When the offender raised his weapon, Christian fired, fatally striking the gunman.

On Aug. 8, 2005, **Officers Fietko and Alonso** searched for an armed offender and found him on the street. When confronted, the offender pulled out his weapon and fled, with the officers in pursuit. Fietko and Alonso lost sight of the gunman, but sent a flash message to fellow officers that he was armed and provided his direction of flight. **Dets. Forberg and Eberle**, and **Officer Kerr**, spotted the offender and engaged in a lengthy chase through backyards and over fences. Whenever the gunman pointed his weapon at them, the detectives fired. The offender was eventually wounded and taken into custody.

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## AWARDS – Add 7

On Aug. 19, 2005, **Officers Teresi and Garcia** pulled over a driver who had committed several traffic violations. The driver, armed with two handguns, jumped out of his van and ran down the street, pointing his weapons at the officers. The officers took pursuit, shouting commands to drop the guns. The offender ignored the orders and continued to point his guns at the officers, who subsequently fired, wounded and apprehended him.

On Aug. 23, 2005, an armed robber approached off-duty **Officer Durr** getting a haircut in a barbershop. The officer remained cool and when the gunman turned to rob another patron, Durr took the opportunity to draw his service weapon and announce that he was the police. The gunman turned and pointed his weapon, and Durr fired one shot. The offender attempted to escape out the back door, but found it blocked by burglar bars. After repeatedly ordering the robber to drop his weapon, Durr fired again, wounding the gunman in the arm. The offender dropped to his knees and surrendered.

On Aug. 25, 2005, off-duty **Officer Ventura** was driving home from work when he observed several men brutally beating a citizen with baseball bats and a steel club. The officer, in full uniform, rushed to the scene with his police star in one hand and his service weapon in the other, and ordered the men to stop. The offenders ignored the officer and continued to beat the citizen. When Ventura repeated the command, the offender armed with the steel club charged the officer, striking him on the side of the head. Ventura fired a shot, fatally wounding his assailant, as the other offenders fled.

The **Blue Star Award** was also presented to **Officers Patrick McGreal and Hugh Fogle**, Public Transportation Section, for separate incidents.

On July 30, 2003, **Officer McGreel**, while working a special CTA detail, arrested an offender on an "L" platform near Wrigley Field. A friend of the arrestee, who had slipped away, suddenly ran forward and struck the officer with his fist. The officer suffered a fractured cheekbone, broken nose and severe orbital fracture.

On May 1, 2004, **Officer Fogle** arrested a sex offender for indecent exposure on an "L" platform, when the offender savagely attacked the officer by kicking him in the right knee with a steel-toed boot. The officer's knee had to be totally reconstructed, requiring permanent pins being drilled into the damaged area.

The **Police Blue Shield Award** was presented to **Officers Harold W. Jenkins Jr., Tonita Jones and Thomas J. Krob**, Englewood (7<sup>th</sup>) District, for separate incidents. The award is presented to officers who, as a result of accidental cause, have been seriously, critically or fatally wounded or injured in the performance of duty.

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## AWARDS – Add 8

On Aug. 25, 2002, **Officers Jenkins and Jones** were driving to assist fellow officers having trouble arresting an offender, when their squad car spun out of control, crashed into a tree and burst into flames. Heroic citizens pulled the officers from the burning vehicle. Jenkins suffered a crushed left ankle and severe concussion. Jones sustained a broken leg, arm, and pelvis and severe head injuries.

On Sept. 7, 2004, **Officer Krob** pulled over a traffic violator. As the officer walked toward the offender's vehicle, a mini-van swerved around the squad car and struck the officer from behind. The violent impact lifted the officer into the air and onto the pavement. Krob suffered a fractured wrist, separated shoulder and torn rotator cuff. The offender was apprehended and discovered to be driving under the influence of liquor.

The **Superintendent's Award of Merit** is presented to Chicago Police Department members for outstanding contributions resulting in improved conditions or for outstanding police work that has brought credit to the Department. This year, the **Award of Merit** was presented to:

**Deputy Supt. James Molloy**, Bureau of Crime Strategy and Accountability; **Deputy Chief Michael Chasen** and retired **Deputy Chief Richard Kobel**, Detective Division Administration; **Captain Martin Ryczek** and **Officer Christopher Grabowski**, Administrative Services; **Executive Assistant Thomas Epach Jr.**, Office of the Superintendent; and **Projects Manager Catherine Kolb**, Data Systems Division. They designed and implemented the complex video and audio equipment throughout the city that met the Illinois Legislature's mandate that every police department in the state electronically record all interrogations of subjects in custody charged with homicide or manslaughter. Representatives from law enforcement agencies across the nation, as well as foreign countries, have visited Chicago to learn its operation.

**First Deputy Supt. Dana V. Starks**; **Chief Frank Limon**, Organized Crime Division Administration; **Asst. Deputy Supts. Lee Epplen and Patrick McNulty** and **Lt. Frances Camacho**, Operational Services Administration; and retired **Deputy Supts. Kathryn Kajari and John "Barney" Flanagan**, developed a training program designed especially for Chicago police commanders and assistant deputy superintendents. The program covers all the diverse duties and situations a police commander must face, including issues involving personnel. A major part of the program is an invaluable manual for handling street situations.

**Sgt. Michael Murphy**, Education and Training Division, devoted countless hours organizing fundraisers and benefits to raise the millions of dollars needed to build the Chicago Police Memorial near the lakefront that honors all Chicago Police officers who have died in the line or performance of duty.

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**Officer Michael Tomasiello, Special Projects Manager Laura Bak and Chief Systems Programmer Quingwei Li**, Data Systems Division, designed the Clear Automated Arrest Application that allows electronic entry of arrests in real-time, eliminating time-consuming handwritten fax reports. The virtually paperless arrest report system saves countless manpower hours, as well as thousands of dollars in printing costs.

The **William Powers Command Leadership Award**, an award presented to police supervisors who exhibit the integrity and outstanding leadership qualities of retired Commander Powers, was introduced this year. Its first recipient was appropriately **William Powers**, who devoted his career to protecting the Department's greatest asset, its members. Powers developed countless programs that safeguard the physical, mental and emotional well being of police personnel and their family members, including those addressing depression, substance abuse and suicide. His work has had an immeasurable positive impact on Chicago, and the officers who serve and protect it, by bringing awareness to the unique stresses law enforcement personnel face on a daily basis.

The **Richard J. Daley Police Medal of Honor** is presented annually to a citizen for outstanding dedication to the citizens of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department. This year, the Daley Medal was presented to **Scott Arney**, who serves as president of the Chicago Police Memorial Foundation, providing support and assistance to the families of officers who have sacrificed their lives in the service and protection of others. As foundation president, Arney is also instrumental in the creation of the memorial being erected near the lakefront, which honors all Chicago Police officers who have been killed in the line or performance of duty.

NOTE: The units listed for award recipients may not necessarily be their current assignment, but rather their unit at the time of the incident.

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