

Town of Bethlehem



Police Department

Awards Ceremony

Gina F. Cocchiara

Chief of Police

June 26, 2024

12:00 pm

Elm Ave Park Large Pavilion



WELCOME.....Chief Gina F. Cocchiara

INTRODUCTIONS.....Chief Gina F. Cocchiara
Supervisor David VanLuven

*PRESENTATION OF
AWARDS*.....Chief Gina F. Cocchiara

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Exceptional Duty Award

Sergeant Daniel Callahan

Chief's Achievement Award

Commander Robert Baldwin

IT Specialist Frank Heuer

Chief's Achievement Award

Deputy Chief James Rexford

Commander Robert Baldwin

Master Sergeant Michael Whiteley (Ret)

Chief's Achievement Award

Detective Caitlyn Krage

Department / Unit Citation Award

First Sergeant Roy Swann

Sergeant Kristen Spinnato

Officer Brady Hughes

Officer Alex Griffin

Officer Stephen Celestino

Telecommunicator Sharon Huether

Telecommunicator Joanna Nunziato

Department / Unit Citation Award 2calls

Deputy Chief James Rexford

Commander Michael Cozy

Commander Robert Baldwin

Master Sergeant Michael Whiteley (Ret)

Sergeant Chad Ferraro

Detective Sergeant James Cross

Detective Chad Rice

Detective Adam Cobb

Detective Caitlyn Krage

Officer Rico Fiore

Officer Jeffrey Gallagher (Ret)

Officer Isaiah Burton

Officer Cameron Apple

Officer Luke Mara

Telecommunicator Brent Dragon
Telecommunicator Christopher Kowalski
Telecommunicator Michael Mittler

Department Unit Citation Award

Deputy Chief James Rexford
Master Sergeant James Corrigan
Detective Sergeant James Cross
Detective Chad Rice
Detective Adam Cobb
Detective Michael Berben
Detective Caitlyn Krage
Officer Rico Fiore
Officer Jeffrey Gallagher (Ret)
Officer Cameron Apple
Officer Alexander Hazelton
Officer Luke Mara

Department Unit Citation Award

Police Records Clerk Brianna Tice
Police Records Clerk Ciara Hodges

Life Saving Award

Sergeant Daniel Callahan
Officer Andrew Hynes

Life Saving Award

Officer Alexander Hazelton

Career Recognition Award

First Sergeant Brian Hughes (Ret)
Master Sergeant Christopher Shunk (Ret)
Master Sergeant Michal Whiteley (Ret)
Officer Jeffrey Gallagher (Ret)

- **Announcement of 2023 Officer of the Year and Telecommunicator of the Year recipients, to be awarded at the National Night Event - August 6, 2024, Elm Ave Town Park**



Exceptional Duty Award

Awarded for a highly credible accomplishment to duty or service to the public.

Sergeant Daniel Callahan

On May 01, 2024 Sergeant Daniel Callahan received the Recognition of Excellence Award from the Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Stop DWI of New York State and the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee. Sergeant Callahan led the Department removing 20 impaired drivers from the Bethlehem roadways in 2023 and assisting his fellow Officers with numerous other departmental impaired operator arrests.



Chief's Achievement Award

Awarded for an act of achievement by a member bringing public acclaim to the Department and the police profession through programs to further Police efficiency or contributions to the welfare and advancement of the profession.

***Commander Robert Baldwin
IT Specialist Frank Heuer***

During the fall of 2023 plans were set and a large project ensued to rebuild the Communications Center from the floor up. At the onset of the project, the dispatch center first needed to be set up in an adjacent admin office for the duration of the renovation. This was a large-scale project and one that took many long hours, including nights and weekends to get the job accomplished with as little disturbance to daily operations as possible. There were miles of wires to sort through, rerun, dead end, add, remove, and keep track of. Consoles to keep running smoothly and without disruption. Over the course of a month Commander Baldwin and Frank Heuer worked to get all the consoles, phones and monitors working properly in the new office while maintaining operations in the temporary admin office.

We now have a long overdue state-of-the-art communications center made possible in large part because of the efforts of Commander Baldwin and IT Specialist Frank Heuer.



Chief's Achievement Award

Awarded for an act of achievement by a member bringing public acclaim to the Department and the police profession through programs to further Police efficiency or contributions to the welfare and advancement of the profession.

***Deputy Chief James Rexford
Commander Robert Baldwin
Master Sergeant Michael Whiteley (Ret)***

Starting in the fall of 2022, the department received approval to purchase the LEXIPOL program to rebuild our departments antiquated policy and procedure manual from the ground up. The team comprised of Deputy Chief Rexford, Commander Baldwin, Master Sergeant Whiteley and myself worked alongside LEXIPOL policy writers to create policies that reflect up-to-date industry standards and best practices along with content specific to the laws and practices of New York State. Team members worked daily on policy assignments to create the best policy to fit the needs and demands of this agency. During weekly group meetings with our LEXIPOL project managers, we reviewed and approved final draft policies. The policies were completed and implemented a year later in November of 2023.

Going forward LEXIPOL will send timely updates in response to new legislation and case law, assist us with meeting accreditation standards, and offer an online platform to manage and update our policies and procedures. We will also be releasing various scenario-based trainings that reinforce our agency's policies. The diligent work completed by all team members has made a foundation for the future success of this Department.



Chief's Achievement Award

Awarded for an act of achievement by a member bringing public acclaim to the Department and the police profession through programs to further Police efficiency or contributions to the welfare and advancement of the profession.

Detective Caitlyn Krage

Detective Krage has been a constant source of Community spirit, coordinating and representing our department on many large-scale community events. She is often assisted by Officers Mueller and Hazelton, and her partner Detective Berben on many community-based projects. She works tirelessly with many area businesses, school personnel, community members, and town workforces all with one goal in mind, making our department shine and bringing community and the Police together.

Some of the major projects she takes the lead on are:

Walk and Roll Fest

Coffee with a Cop

National Night Out

Lights in the Park

Each Year Detective Krage tries to outdo the prior year working together with others to make each year's events even more special. One example of this hard work is in 2023 the Town received a national recognition award for our 2023 National Night Out Against Crime event.



Department / Unit Citation Award

Awarded for participation of the members of an operating unit staff in a cited action.

First Sergeant Roy Swann

Sergeant Kristen Spinnato

Officer Brady Hughes

Officer Alex Griffin

Officer Stephen Celestino

Telecommunicator Sharon Huether

Telecommunicator Joanna Nunziato

On October 25, 2023 dispatch received a 911 call regarding a larceny in progress at the CVS in Delmar. The call quickly escalated to a carjacking, with the female caller stating she was pushed out of her vehicle. Responding officers attempted to stop the suspects in the CVS parking lot but the suspects made it out onto the roadway where a vehicle pursuit ensued. This vehicle pursuit lasted approximately 52 minutes through multiple townships, until the suspect vehicle was observed entering the NYS Thruway at exit 22 heading north in the southbound lane. Officers immediately discontinued the pursuit but observed from the northbound lanes of the NYS Thruway. The suspect vehicle exited the Thruway on the entry ramp at exit 24, the operator ditched the vehicle and both the operator and passenger fled into the woods on foot. A search of the area lead to the capture of the vehicle operator. The vehicle passenger was also identified and a warrant issued. During this time Telecommunicators Huether and Nunziato displayed professional composure, in their radio communications, took the initiative to make necessary notifications to surrounding agencies without prompt, all while remaining attentive to incoming radio communications. This call is the epitome of team work and professionalism by all involved. Job well done!



Department / Unit Citation Award

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Deputy Chief James Rexford

Commander Michael Cozzy

Commander Robert Baldwin

Master Sergeant Michael Whiteley (Ret)

Sergeant Chad Ferraro

Detective Sergeant James Cross

Detective Chad Rice

Detective Adam Cobb

Detective Caitlyn Krage

Officer Rico Fiore

Officer Jeffrey Gallagher (Ret)

Officer Isaiah Burton

Officer Cameron Apple

Officer Luke Mara

Telecommunicator Brent Dragon

Telecommunicator Christopher Kowalski

Telecommunicator Michael Mittler

On May 11, 2023 a 2:08 pm, multiple 911 calls were received by Telecommunicators Brent Dragon and Christopher Kowalski reporting a serious physical injury crash on Rte. 85 between Blessing Road and the Thruway overpass. Sergeant Whiteley, Officer Gallagher, Officer Burton, Officer Apple, Detective Sergeant Cross, Detective Rice and Detective Cobb responded and navigated a very chaotic scene. Sadly, the victim of the crash did pass away two days later. Due to the Officers and Detectives quick response, and subsequent investigative steps securing witness statements and maintaining

and securing evidence, this evidence would later be instrumental in bringing a successful grand jury indictment on May 24, 2024 against the operator Thomas McGrath. Charges include Aggravated Vehicular Homicide, Manslaughter, Assault 2nd, DWI, Reckless Driving and other lesser Vehicle and Traffic Law violations.

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While this investigation was underway and our staff stretched thin, dispatch received a 911 call for an airplane crash at the South Albany Airport, with three occupants injured. Deputy Chief Rexford, Commander Cozy, Sergeant Ferraro, Officer Fiore, Officer Burton, Officer Mara, Detective Sergeant Cross and Detective Krage responded. First responding units arrived within 5 minutes to quickly assess the crash, its victims and render aid. The plane was in high cat tails with gasoline flowing from the plane. All occupants were removed from the plane safely. The teamwork exhibited by all members working these two simultaneous chaotic and life-threatening calls handled them with swift action, professionalism and care.



Department / Unit Citation Award

Awarded for participation of the members of an operating unit staff in a cited action.

Deputy Chief James Rexford
Master Sergeant James Corrigan
Detective Sergeant James Cross
Detective Chad Rice
Detective Adam Cobb
Detective Michael Berben
Detective Caitlyn Krage
Officer Rico Fiore
Officer Jeffrey Gallagher (Ret)
Officer Cameron Apple
Officer Alexander Hazelton
Officer Luke Mara

On September 16, 2022 Bethlehem Dispatch received a 911 call for an active assault at 1049 River Rd, Selkirk. The caller reported a male broke into the apartment armed with a knife and was stabbing a male occupant of the residence. The male victim was bleeding badly from multiple stab wounds to his back and arm. The suspect quickly fled the scene, and was believed to be on foot. A female victim at the residence identified the suspect as Adam Matteson and gave a full description to Bethlehem dispatch. Responding Officers secured the scene and rendered aid to the victims, as a manhunt ensued for Matteson. Through excellent police work, attention to detail, and abundance of team work, Matteson was arrested just a few hours later. The victim who was rushed to the hospital, did survive his wounds.

On September 11, 2023 the case was set for trial. Due to the strength of the case, built by the members of this agency, Matteson agreed to take a plea that included a 14-year sentence in state prison. This outcome is only one example of the fine work every member of this agency puts forth each day, from the initial call to trial ready discovery certification.



Department / Unit Citation Award

Awarded for participation of the members of an operating unit staff in a cited action.

Police Record Clerk Briana Tice
Police Record Clerk Ciara Hodges

The dedicated police records clerk staff are recognized for their outstanding service and exceptional contribution to the Department. Their meticulous attention to detail, unwavering commitment to accuracy, and tireless effort in managing and maintaining critical records have been instrumental in ensuring the smooth and efficient operation of our police force. Their ability to handle sensitive information with the utmost confidentiality and professionalism has greatly enhanced our department's capabilities in law enforcement and public safety. The exemplary performance and dedication demonstrated by the records clerks have set a high standard of excellence, deserving of this distinguished unit citation. Their work is a vital part of our mission to serve and protect the community, and their contributions are deeply appreciated and valued.



Life Saving Award

Awarded for an act performed in the line of duty, which through disregard of personal safety or prompt and alert action, results in saving a life.

Sergeant Daniel Callahan
Officer Andrew Hynes

On January 17, 2023 at 2:13 pm, Sergeant Callahan and Officer Hynes were dispatched to 10 Hartwood Rd to assist EMS with a 40-year-old male that was unresponsive and not breathing. The Officers responded swiftly, assessed the patient's medical condition, determined there was no pulse and began CPR. Both Officers rendered first aid until the patient regained a pulse and it was deemed safe by responding EMS to transport the patient to the hospital.



Life Saving Award

Awarded for an act performed in the line of duty, which through disregard of personal safety or prompt and alert action, results in saving a life.

Officer Alexander Hazelton

On July 22, 2023, at 11:49 am, a 911 call was received by Telecommunicator Powell reporting an 82-year-old female with a screwdriver into her neck from a fall. Telecommunicators Powell and Arnold worked together to get immediate Police and EMS personnel to the scene.

First to arrive on scene, Officer Hazelton quickly assessed the dire situation. He applied constant pressure to the wound to control the bleeding. Utilizing a go bag of his personal EMS equipment Officer Hazelton used 6 rolls of gauze, one unit of quick clot, 2 self-adhesive gauze rolls and stabilized the patient before EMS arrived. He did all this while stabilizing the screwdriver positioned in the patient's neck, and talking with her to keep her calm. Officer Hazelton showed great skill and compassion providing immediate emergency care which led to a successful outcome for the patient.



Career Recognition Award

First Sergeant Brian Hughes (Ret)

February 12, 1994 – March 29, 2024, First Sergeant Brian Hughes has served with distinction in the Bethlehem Police Department for over 30 years, demonstrating exemplary professionalism, integrity, and valor in the line of duty.

First Sergeant Brian Hughes demonstrated exceptional leadership and ensured the safety and security of the community.

He displayed unparalleled courage in the face of danger and set a high standard for current and future police officers.

Through his selfless service and unwavering commitment to upholding the highest standards of law enforcement, First Sergeant Brian Hughes has made a profound impact on the safety and well-being of the community. His actions serve as an inspiration to fellow officers and exemplify the noble ideals of the Bethlehem Police Department.



Career Recognition Award

Master Sergeant Christopher Shunk (Ret)

March 30, 2003 – July 27, 2023, Master Sergeant Shunk was a consistent presence and leader in the Patrol Division. His law enforcement career spanned 34 years serving 20 years with our department. Master Sergeant Shunk was the go-to Sergeant for many of our daily issues and was a solid decision maker and leader. He was always there with a smile and a joke making the shift and the department a better place to work. He was a dependable and respected member of our department whose mentorship has made an indelible impression on those of us who still work and serve each day.

Sergeant Shunk displayed a positive attitude with a great demeanor all of which complimented his professionalism. He was truly a valued member of our department and will continue to be missed.



Career Recognition Award

Master Sergeant Michael Whiteley (Ret)

January 12, 2002 – November 21, 2023, Sergeant Whiteley was a valued senior member of the department. Sergeant Whiteley's years of diverse experience and expertise made him an invaluable resource for all in the department. As he traversed through his career from patrol officer, D.A.R.E Officer, Youth Bureau Detective, Patrol Sergeant and Master Sergeant, as well as our primary in service trainer with an expansive resume and a reputation that stood out within the Law Enforcement community. He was a true team player, always there to assist any member of the department that needed help or guidance.



Career Recognition Award

Officer Jeffrey Gallagher (Ret)

July 30, 2006 to July 28, 2023, Officer Gallagher worked the patrol division for the duration of his 17-year career. As one of our range Officers, Officer Gallagher was instrumental in training our members on firearms proficiency and safety. Officer Gallagher was a senior patrol officer who was looked to by his peers, always displaying professionalism with a calm demeanor and an Officer you always wanted to have on a call with you.

Prayer for Police Officers
Anonymous

*As I put on my uniform. I always look to you
I know that you commission me to do the work I do.*

*I ask for your protection for all those that I lead.
I ask for your daily guidance as we respond
to those in need.*

*I know that you see our every move and how we
interweave, to be our watchman, guard and
shepherd, all so dutifully.*

*I know you are forgiving Lord and your love can
cover sin. So I desire to be a great example
of how your grace can win.*

*So help me Lord when the pressures on and we are
stretched to meet the need. Give me divine
judgment to be wise and take the lead.*

*Oh help me Lord to serve and care for all those
on my team. To nurture every aspect of their
fears and hopes and dreams.*

*I thank you loving Father for walking the beat
with me. I thank you that as I get dressed
you're right here next to me.*

Amen