



NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES 2012 AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Alexandria, VA – The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) is pleased to announce that the Richland County Sheriff's Office, SC; Lynchburg Police Department, VA; Anderson Township Community Outreach Network, OH; and West Scranton Hyde Park Neighborhood Watch, PA have been selected as the recipients of the 2012 Neighborhood Watch Awards of Excellence. The Awards of Excellence will be presented at the Second General Session on Monday, June 18th at NSA's Annual Conference in Nashville, TN. The award is sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

The Neighborhood Watch Awards of Excellence Program was established by the NSA in 2004 to recognize and honor those law enforcement agencies, watch groups, organizations, and programs that make exceptional contributions to promote neighborhood watch and public safety in their communities.

This year's recipients have shown dedication to the core elements of the watch program while building those efforts to make positive impacts in their community. While the efforts of each recipient are different, their commitment and activities strengthen public safety for all.

The Richland County Sheriff's Office has over 384,000 residents and is responsible for more than 750 square miles. In 1998, the Sheriff created the Community Action Team (C.A.T.) with the mission to create partnerships with citizens who previously did not trust law enforcement. In the time since, they have organized over 275 Neighborhood and Business Watch organizations and constantly work to empower citizens. The C.A.T. attends community meetings, gathers information about special needs in neighborhoods, and serves as an important community liaison for the agency. Through this innovative approach the community and agency have developed multiple long term solutions to specific crime problems. Recently, the agency is working to stay connected through mobile technology. The agency's mobile app partnership is helping to encourage citizens to report emergency information via their Smartphone. Further, by providing Citizen Police Academies, building partnerships in the community, and working with watch groups, the Sheriff's Office is building a united partnership for public safety.

The Lynchburg Police Department's mission is to preserve the peace and maintain order in the city. To facilitate this, the Department's Crime Prevention Unit manages and promotes the strong

connections created between citizens and law enforcement through the Neighborhood Watch Program. More than 40 active watch groups are throughout the city. The Unit also handles creating Business Watch groups and working with schools. Two main events that watch groups come together for in Lynchburg each year are the Lynchburg Night Out in September and an Annual Partnership Meeting held every March. Not to mention, multiple other smaller events throughout the year are organized by individual groups and community groups to help foster the important relationship between Police and citizens. Throughout the year, the agency offers educational presentations on topics such as Wild Animal Safety, Security Assessments, Target Hardening, Halloween and Holiday Safety. Quarterly the agency distributes a newsletter on seasonal tips to all watch group members. As a public service the agency partners with their local ABC station to feature bi-weekly safety information.

The Anderson Township Community Outreach Network is a group of community and county officials that work to build positive community relations via Neighborhood Watch Groups. Anderson Township has a population of 43,446 residents and a total area of 31.2 square miles. As a result of working with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office to have a "full-time" Crime Prevention Officer, the township went from having about 10 watch groups to now having 80 active groups. Those 80 groups relate to about one watch for every 543 residents in the community. The Network communicates daily via e-mail/phone with around 337 established community contacts (including 90 neighborhood watch contacts) on a variety of important topics such as tips on burglar prevention. Through the continued work of the watch groups, vandalism and car break-ins have stopped. The continuous support, promotion and belief in the watch program by community leaders have helped create a vital partnership with citizens to redevelop the township.

West Scranton Hyde Park Neighborhood Watch is composed of citizens committed to making a difference in their neighborhood. In 3 years the group has gone from beginnings to making a major community impact. Members help to design educational programs on lessening chances of victimization to topics such as substance abuse. They have organized community clean-up projects and built valuable partnerships with not only local law enforcement but multiple other government agencies. The group has worked on issues of trash pickup, street lighting, traffic control, community shredding, and blight issues. Recently, Chief Duffy presented the group with the City of Scranton "Part of the Solution" Award for their amazing efforts at single handedly transforming a City Park from a troubled area into a safe haven for local youth. Their efforts have benefited the residents in the area of West Scranton and serve as a reminder of how important it is to empower the people and the change that can happen. Further, the watch group helps to organize skateboard contests, basket ball games, outdoor movie events, and took an old non-functional playground and transformed it into a community garden. Chief Duffy said "without hesitation that this group is filled with positive energy and has motivated a community and an entire police agency."

The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) is one of the largest associations of law enforcement professionals in the United States, representing more than 3,000 elected sheriffs across the nation, and a total membership of more than 20,000. NSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising the level of professionalism among sheriffs, their deputies, and others in the field of criminal justice and public safety. Throughout its seventy-two year history, NSA has served as

an information clearinghouse for sheriffs, deputies, chiefs of police, other law enforcement professionals, state governments and the federal government. Since 1972, NSA has worked to unite law enforcement agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens through Neighborhood Watch. More than 25,000 watch groups are currently registered with NSA. For more information on the NSA and the Neighborhood Watch Program, please visit www.sheriffs.org.

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