

# MEMORANDUM

**From:** Sheriff Terry Wagner  
**To:** All Employees  
**Date:** January 9, 2019  
**Re:** 2019 Employee Recognition Awards

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The Employee Awards Committee has selected the following employees for their outstanding service in 2018. These awards will be presented before the County Board on Tuesday February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at 0900 hrs.

**Citizen's Certificate of Merit: Michael Bolinger and Joe Brauneis**

On December 7, 2018, at 12:08P.M., a man fell off of the dock and through the ice at Branched Oak Lake while he was ice fishing. Michael Bolinger, an employee of the Marina and Joe Brauneis, a customer heard an odd noise. They looked toward the dock area and saw a hand protruding above the water. When they reached the area, they found Benjamin Milliken unable to move and barely hanging onto the dock. Michael and Joe pulled Milliken from the water, summoned help and were able to get Milliken inside and began treating him for hypothermia. It was estimated Milliken had been in the water for 20 minutes before he was found. Milliken said he was so thankful he was found, as he was about to give up hope and didn't have the strength to keep holding onto the dock. Milliken was treated for hypothermia at Bryan West Hospital and released. There is no question, the actions of Michael and Joe saved Benjamin's life.

**Civilian Employee of the Year: Court Officer Joann Jensen:**

Court Officer Jensen has been with the Sheriff's Office for 38 years. She was nominated for the high level of service she provides to the citizens of Lancaster County. For the past 23 years, Joann has worked at the Motor Vehicle Inspection Station at N. 46th and R streets. Joann and her partner inspect almost 21,000 vehicles per year. That's approximately 83 per day, or 11 per hour. While not the most glamorous job and customers' tempers often flare for one reason or another, complaints about the service at the Title Inspection Station are few and far between because of her temperament and knowledge of the Inspection process. In fact, there are few people in the state who have as much knowledge about the title inspection process as Joann. In addition to her title inspection duties, she also coordinates our 'Abandoned Vehicles' sales process. This is a complicated process and must be followed precisely or subject the Sheriff's Office to significant civil liability. In the two years she has been involved in this task, she has streamlined the process and made it more efficient. Her thoroughness ensures these sales are done legally and correctly.

**Honorable Discharge: Sgt. Michael Novacek**

Mike retired in February, 2018 after having served the citizens of Lancaster County for 38 years. Mike was hired in 1980 as a dispatcher, became a Court Officer later that year, and was commissioned as a deputy sheriff in August, 1981. He was promoted to Sergeant in May, 2000. Mike served as a Field Training Officer, as an Investigator, was a hostage negotiator for the Tactical Response Unit, was a member of the Honor Guard and served as Vice President of the Lancaster County Deputy Sheriffs' Association. Immediately after his retirement, he agreed to remain employed in a temporary civilian capacity for 9 months until we could get someone promoted into his position. We appreciate his service and wish him well in his retirement.

**Honorable Discharge: Deputy Sheriff Steven Phillip**

Deputy Phillip retired in November, 2018 after serving Lancaster County for 32 ½ years. During his tenure with Lancaster County, Steve served in the Patrol and Court Services Divisions. He has received a multitude of commendations from citizens, co-workers, superiors and other agencies. The common theme throughout these notes and letters was about what a great job Deputy Phillip did, or that he went above

and beyond on this case, or “even though he wrote me a traffic citation, he did so in a professional manner that made me appreciate the enforcement action”. In addition to his time at LSO, Steve was a Captain at the State Penitentiary for 12 years and was a Mitchell and Scottsbluff, Nebraska Police Officer. We appreciate his service to the citizens of Lancaster County and wish him well in his retirement.

**Honorable Discharge: Patricia Pool Garcia** retired December 6, 2017, after serving for 28 years. Pat was a Records System Specialist which are our 24/7 employees who staff our public counter, transcribe reports, handle sex offender registrations and firearms purchase permits. They also maintain contact with the deputies via a separate radio channel; calling for tow trucks, handling all teletype messages and queries for stolen vehicles, missing/wanted persons, stolen firearms, NCIC responses. They also process Protection from Domestic Abuse orders, civil papers that are issued by the court, not to mention the many telephone calls that are received by our office daily. Pat was chosen by her peers as the Civilian Employee of the Year in 2000. Congratulations to Pat on her retirement and thanks for 28 years of service.

**Honorable Discharge: David Mooberry** retired after 13 ½ years of service. Like Pat, Dave was a Records System Specialist which are our 24/7 employees who staff our public counter, answering the many telephone calls that are received by our office daily, transcribing reports, process sex offender registrations and firearms purchase permits. They also maintain contact with the deputies via a separate radio channel; calling for tow trucks, handling all teletype messages and queries for stolen vehicles, missing/wanted persons, stolen firearms, NCIC responses. They also process Protection from Domestic Abuse orders and civil papers that are issued by the court. Dave also processed in-coming arrest warrants that have been issued by the court with instructions for the Sheriff to serve said warrant. Dave was known for wearing a sport jacket and tie every day he worked. No casual days for Dave.

**Life Saving Award: Deputy Sheriff Julie Hoffman;** On March 8, 2018, Deputy Hoffman was conducting follow up on a fugitive investigation when she heard LPD and medical units detailed to the 2700 block of S. 36<sup>th</sup> for a 38 year old who had fallen and was not breathing. Being close to that address, Deputy Hoffman responded to the address and began CPR. Once Lincoln Fire arrived, they took over treatment and transported the woman to the hospital where she was admitted and was stable. Deputy Hoffman’s quick thinking and situational awareness helped save the 38 year old’s life. Great Work!

**Life Saving Award: Deputy Sheriff Rhonda Wicht;** On October 4, 2018, Deputies were detailed to the 400 block of S. 112<sup>th</sup> street on a medical call where a 48 year old was neither conscious or breathing due to a drug overdose. Deputy Wicht arrived on scene, where she found the victim with no pulse and an obstructed airway. She cleared the airway and began chest compressions, establishing a pulse before medical units arrived. The victim was eventually transported to the hospital where he was admitted and 3 days later was expected to make a full recovery. Deputy Wicht’s training, experience and willingness to get involved saved the victims life.

**Life Saving Award: Deputy Sheriff John McGahan;** On November 4, 2018, at approx. 0100 hrs Deputy McGahan had pulled up to his residence at the end of his tour of duty. When he got out of his vehicle, he heard music coming from the 1<sup>st</sup> Street area. He searched for the source of the music and located a vehicle that had crashed into a ravine. He summoned medical units and additional help to the scene after finding 2 victims. The driver was killed in the crash, but through John’s actions, the 15 year old passenger survived her injuries.

## **Exceptional Duty Award: Investigator Curtis Reha**

*Awarded for highly creditable accomplishments, showing continued initiative through bringing public acclaim to the department and the law enforcement community as a result of professionalism, devotion to duty or service to the public.*

In April 2017, Investigator Reha became involved with Homeland Security Investigations in an International Sex Trafficking case named "Operation Extended Stay". This case involved six different federal, state, city and county law enforcement agencies in conjunction with Creighton University's Human Trafficking Initiative. For over a year, members of this task force conducted physical and electronic surveillance, use of undercover officers, preparing subpoenas, search warrants, interviews and data analysis. Although Inv. Reha wore different hats during this investigation, his expertise is the retrieval and analysis of electronic evidence. The information he gained gave him a strong understanding of the complexities of this criminal enterprise. In April 2018, search warrants were served simultaneously in Omaha, Bakersfield and Los Angeles CA, Salt Lake City, Orlando, Lafayette, LA, St. Louis and Kansas City, MO. Because of his knowledge of the interworking of the operation, he was chosen to travel to Orlando, Florida to conduct interviews with the main owners of the operation and analyze the information gained from cell phones used in the operation. Beside the arrest of fifteen Asian females, two Asian males and one Asian female 'owners' of the operation were also arrested. In addition, \$2.3 million in assets from this criminal enterprise were seized. In September 2018, Investigator Reha presented his role in Operation Extended Stay to an Asian Summit hosted by HSI which consisted of high ranking law enforcement officials from Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia. In addition to this case, Investigator Reha provided electronic extraction and analysis to a number of Nebraska law enforcement agencies; and several states have requested a search warrant template Reha designed for social media websites. Investigator Reha has had a substantial impact on criminal activity in Lancaster County, in Nebraska and across the nation. For these reasons, he was selected to receive the Exceptional Duty Award. Curtis is a 12 year veteran of the Sheriff's Office; he has worked in Patrol, was our Crimes against Children investigator and has been assigned to the Electronic Evidence Unit for the past 3 years. Curtis' wife Lacey is an investigator with the Lincoln Police Department.

**Deputy Sheriff of the Year; Deputy Sheriff Allen Ullman** was selected as the Deputy Sheriff of the Year for his key role in the security of the Justice and Law Enforcement Center, the County/City Building and the 605 Building. Deputy Ullman's primary job duties are courtroom security on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. In addition to those duties he plays a key role in making sure the panic alarm system in these 3 buildings function properly and assigning alarm codes that correspond to the security camera in a particular area. He identified the need to have computers on each floor of the Justice and Law Enforcement Center so deputies working court security could be more efficient and safe in their job performance. He did the research and presented a proposal to purchase the computers using forfeited assets. He has been intricately involved in developing job descriptions and a hiring panel for the Security Tech position and serves as a back-up for that position as needed. He is involved in the access control of these buildings and is a liaison with building maintenance and was actively involved in the keying of doors during the construction of the 605 building. He has also been involved in developing plans for the future remodel of the front entrance to the Justice and Law Enforcement Center. Allen has been chosen as the trainer for the Court Services division on the new radio system. His attention to detail is legendary and he works diligently to ensure the safety of visitors and employees alike who enter this building. The nomination letter said "He is the 'go to' man for building security."

Allen began his career with Lancaster County in 1990 with Corrections, coming to the Sheriff's Office in March 1993. He has served in Patrol, Criminal Investigations and Court Services. During his 26 years with the Sheriff's Office, he has received 44 commendations from administrators, supervisors, peers, and citizens for his performance and always willing to go above and beyond that which is required. Allen is a Norris High School graduate and received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska in 1989. He served as a student intern at the Sheriff's Office during his senior year. Allen and his wife Kristin have been married almost 29 years.