



Department of Justice



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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS NORTH CAROLINA CHIEF DEPUTY WITH FIRST RESPONDERS AWARD

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department’s Office for Victims of Crime, a component of the Office of Justice Programs, awarded the First Responders Award to Chief Deputy John Guard of the Pitt County, North Carolina, Sheriff’s Office for his expertise on investigating domestic violence cases. The Award for First Responders category recognizes individuals from law enforcement, emergency services, firefighters and rescue professions for extraordinary acts of valor on behalf of crime victims or contributions to the crime victims’ field beyond the call of duty.

“Chief Deputy Guard has changed the way law enforcement officers in his jurisdiction and throughout his state respond to domestic violence, putting the safety and welfare of victims ahead of all other concerns,” said OJP Acting Assistant Attorney General Maureen A. Henneberg. “We commend him for his advocacy and compassion and for standing by victims of abuse in their time of need.”

Chief Deputy John Guard is responsible for assigning and supervising criminal intimate partner investigations. Legislators and victim advocates have consulted him on state legislation for domestic violence response, including bills that granted powers of arrest for violation of pretrial release and that provide stronger firearm removal provisions for offenders subject to domestic violence protection orders. After the 2004 *Crawford v. Washington* Supreme Court decision, which reformulated the standard for determining when hearsay statements can be admitted in criminal cases, Chief Deputy Guard changed the investigative practices of the Pitt County Domestic Violence Unit to include the use of electronic monitoring for domestic violence offenders, increased focus on witness intimidation in intimate partner violence and utilization of the Lethality Assessment Program at all domestic violence calls. Chief Deputy Guard also provides training to law enforcement officers and other allied professionals throughout the state on the dynamics of domestic violence from a law enforcement and social justice perspective.

“Chief Deputy Guard has made a pivotal impact on the way police respond to domestic violence, working tirelessly for stronger legal protections, educating his fellow officers on the provisions of the law and going the extra mile on behalf of victims,” said OVC Acting Director Katherine Darke Schmitt. “He has dramatically improved how law enforcement responds to these cases and he has helped to change the way victims of domestic violence are treated by the criminal justice system.”

The selection committee for the NCVRW awards this year chose two individuals to receive the Award for First Responders. In addition to Chief Deputy Guard, Robin Taylor, a Violence Against Women Act Deputy, received the award for her dedication to investigating violent crimes perpetrated

against women.

Every April, OVC leads communities across the country in observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week. President Ronald W. Reagan proclaimed the first Victims' Rights Week in 1981, calling for greater sensitivity to the rights and needs of victims. The 40th anniversary of NCVRW took place this year, April 18-24, and featured the theme, "Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities," which emphasizes the importance of leveraging community support to victims.

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, advance racial equity in the administration of justice, assist victims and enhance the rule of law. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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