

TEAMWORK TECHNOLOGY TENACITY

**WINNING PLAYBOOK
PAYING OFF IN 2025 FOR
BCI COLD CASE UNIT,
LAW ENFORCEMENT
PARTNERS**

Since its inception in 2020, the Cold Case Unit at the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation has compiled a track record of success built on a simple formula.

“Our playbook remains the same — the three T’s: teamwork, technology, and tenacity,” said Attorney General Dave Yost, who directed BCI to create the unit soon after he took office.

Underscoring Yost’s point is the unit’s progress this year in six high-profile, long-standing investigations. In four of the cases — all homicides — suspects have been identified, taken into custody, and are awaiting trial. In the remaining two, skeletal remains that were a mystery for decades have finally been identified.

Every cold case that BCI takes on is a partnership with the law enforcement agency that originates the case — one involving a collaboration of BCI investigators, criminal intelligence analysts, and forensic scientists who offer fresh detective work and advanced technology.

“Cold cases rarely get solved in isolation,” said Special Agent-In-Charge Roger Davis, who has led the Cold Case Unit since its inception.

“It takes a united team committed to finding answers.”



Law enforcement officers, public officials, Lorain community members, and family and friends gathered at Rocket Arena in Cleveland on July 30 to pay tribute to slain Police Officer Phillip Wagner.

On Sept. 30 at the Law Enforcement Training Symposium in Sandusky, I'll have the honor of recognizing a select few men and women who have made notable contributions to the profession. (You can read about them beginning on Page 6.)

I look forward to the ceremony every year because it's an opportunity to reward outstanding work and celebrate extraordinary people.

At the same time, it's a chance to shine a light on aspects of law enforcement that most people likely never hear about — acts of bravery, to be sure, but also the many ways officers assist their communities, both on the job and off.

It's no secret that the public generally takes law enforcement for granted. Call 911 and a cop or deputy comes running — that much they know and depend on. Beyond that, though, I suspect the life of a peace officer is largely a mystery for most people, defined more by TV and movies than by reality.

One thing that is rarely talked about is the ever-

present danger that officers endure simply because they wear a badge. The point was tragically brought home in July when Lorain Police Officer Phillip Wagner was ambushed as he and a fellow officer were sharing a pizza in their cruisers.

The fact is, there is a certain amount of day-to-day risk in law enforcement that simply cannot be mitigated, and with that comes an emotional and psychological burden that the average person couldn't begin to comprehend let alone manage.

Cops know this going into the job.

They know they'll be exposed to misery and conflict and witness the worst of humanity.

They know they'll be asked to take on issues that, strictly speaking, are outside the scope of law enforcement, things like homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health crises.

They know their actions will be scrutinized by their supervisors, the media, the public, and the courts to a degree that no other worker in any other profession has to deal with.

And they know that in spite of the scrutiny, they will do their work largely in obscurity unless, God forbid, something goes wrong.

And yet every day, men and women commit

themselves to a life in law enforcement. Some are new to the field; others are longtime veterans who renew their pledge with each day they pin on the badge.

On the whole, they do this to make a difference, to protect the vulnerable, to serve their communities. On the whole, they stand for fairness, honesty, respect, loyalty and hard work. On the whole, they recognize a fundamental obligation of a civil society to care for their fellow human beings, and in doing this they put the common good above their own interests and even above their own safety.

That's why for me law enforcement officers represent a special breed of public servant.

And so on Sept. 30 — with profound humility, pride and ever-lasting gratitude — I will salute our honorees, the agencies they represent, and the profession that is the very cornerstone of our society.

Yours,

Dave Yost
Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General

'Senseless attack' claims life of Lorain Police Officer Wagner

The law enforcement community and the residents of Northeast Ohio are mourning the death of Lorain Police Officer Phillip Wagner, who was shot on July 23 in an ambush that also left two of his colleagues wounded.

Wagner had served with the Lorain Police Department for three years and, previously, with the Sheffield Village Police Department for four years. The 35-year-old Marine Corps veteran was the third Ohio law enforcement officer killed in the line of duty this year. He is survived by his wife and three children.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said he was "devastated by this senseless attack" and shared "the community's grief at the loss of a hero."

Wagner and Officer Peter Gale had just picked up pizza for lunch and were parked side by side along a dead-end road in a Lorain industrial park when, according to police, a 28-year-old man who was lying in wait opened fire. When the officers called for help, another officer, Brent Payne, was ambushed as he pulled up in his patrol car.

The shooter was killed in an exchange of gunfire with responding officers. Investigators searched



OFFICER PHILLIP WAGNER

Monetary donations to assist the officers and their families can be made directly to:
Lorain Police Officers' Charitable Foundation
c/o Lorain Police Department
100 W. Erie Ave.
Lorain, Ohio 44052

his car and found high-powered rifles, handguns, and explosives. No motive has been established.

Wagner and Payne were flown to MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland, where Wagner died the next day. Payne underwent surgery for gunshot wounds in an arm and a leg and was eventually released from the hospital, although he will need additional surgeries. Gale was treated for a hand wound.

Lorain residents rallied behind their police department.

Mourners gathered for vigils in the days after the shootings and filled the police memorial outside City Hall with flowers, wreaths and candles. News reports said residents installed blue bulbs in their porch lights and displayed handmade signs in their yards. Tributes were posted on digital billboards in the area, and small businesses taped messages of condolence to their storefront windows.

Wagner was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Medal of Honor by Lorain Police Chief Michael Failing at a memorial service at Rocket Arena in downtown Cleveland. Law enforcement officers from throughout Ohio and beyond — as well as local and state political leaders, including AG Yost — were among the mourners.

Ohio makes it easier for former officers to return to service

Ohio peace officers who have taken a break in service and wish to return to duty will soon have an easier path back.

Revised requirements included in the new state budget bill are designed to ensure that experienced, certified officers can get back in the field without having to repeat 740 hours of training at a basic academy.

The revisions, signed into law on July 1, will take effect on Oct. 1:

- Officers who were previously certified by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission and took a break in service — no matter how brief — will no longer be required to attend a basic academy again to return to law enforcement. Under the change in law, officers who completed basic training and received certification will not lose that certification (unless officially revoked). However, the certificate, which becomes inactive during a break in service, must be renewed before a peace officer can resume duties.
- Officers who have been out of service longer than one year must complete refresher training before resuming peace officer functions. The previous one-year grace period to complete training after reappointment is effectively repealed.

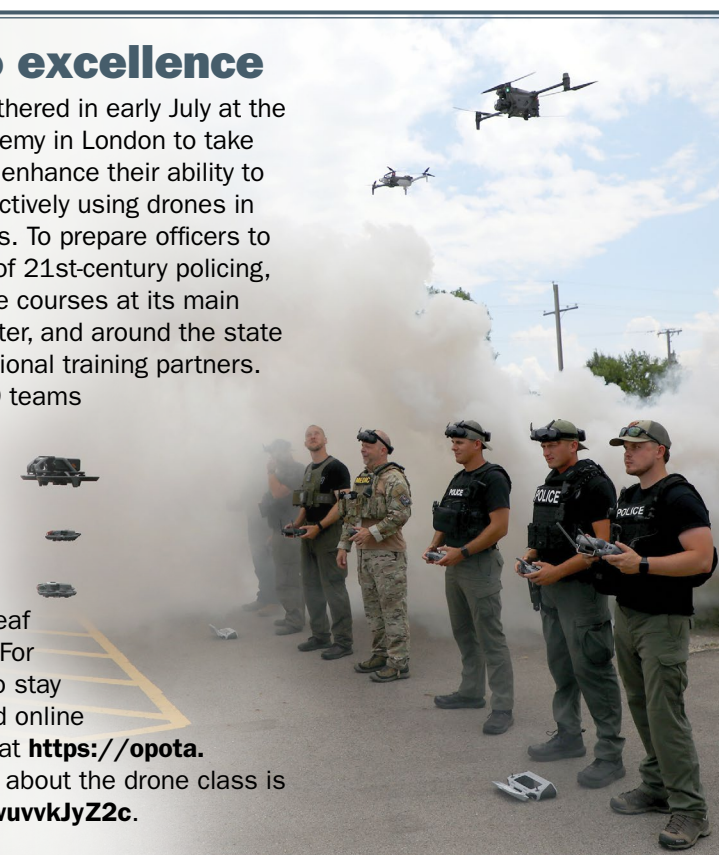
- Officers who have been out of service at least one year but less than four years must take 40 hours of refresher training.
- Officers out of service four or more years must take 80 hours of refresher training.
- Officers out of service less than one year may be appointed at an agency's discretion, subject to continuing professional training (CPT) compliance.

OPOTA is actively developing the refresher curriculum. To get officers back on the street quickly, they will be assessed within the refresher course itself; no separate refresher testing at independent facilities will be required.

Officers must still meet all statutorily mandated trainings and the firearm requalification. Agencies remain responsible for ensuring compliance with these requirements. These obligations are separate from the refresher training.

A commitment to excellence

Officers from around the state gathered in early July at the Ohio Peace Officers Training Academy in London to take part in a new course designed to enhance their ability to deploy, operate, and respond effectively using drones in both patrol and tactical operations. To prepare officers to meet the ever-evolving demands of 21st-century policing, OPOTA regularly introduces unique courses at its main academy, its Tactical Training Center, and around the state through its six Close to Home regional training partners. Examples include a course for K9 teams on supporting victims of crises and natural disasters; a course on interacting with autistic adults and other special-needs populations; and a course that provides a working knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL), deaf culture, and the deaf community. For more about these courses, and to stay informed about new in-person and online offerings, go to the OPOTA Portal at <https://opota.ohioattorneygeneral.gov>. A video about the drone class is available at <https://youtu.be/owuvkYz2c>.



ON THE JOB
CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE

On the Job is typically published four times a year by the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

Senior Editor: Tom Rinderle
Graphic Designer: Diana Holbrook

To offer story ideas, contact Editor Tom Rinderle at 614-644-5397 or Thomas.Rinderle@OhioAGO.gov.

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FALL 2025 | Volume 17, Issue 4

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30 E. Broad St., 17th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

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In addition to Davis, the Cold Case Unit includes Criminal Intelligence Director Dana Forney, DNA Lab Supervisor Hallie Dreyer, four special agents, and a research assistant. When needed, agents from BCI's Special Investigations Unit might also be asked to help with cold cases.

The six cases described below share a common theme.

"Each one had its share of dead ends and unexpected turns," Forney said, "but the investigative team persisted, revisited the evidence, applied new technology, and used every tool available to keep the cases moving forward."

Divorce attorney arrested 12 years after client's grisly death

Aliza Sherman, unsolved homicide in Cleveland, 2013

On Sunday, March 24, 2013, at about 5 p.m., Aliza Sherman was killed outside the Stafford Law Co. in downtown Cleveland where her attorney, Gregory Moore, worked.

A security video recorded a person approaching the 53-year-old nurse from behind and stabbing her 11 times. Sherman, a mother of four whose divorce trial was to begin the next day, had received a text from Moore to meet her at his office late that afternoon.



Eight years later, in June 2021, with no suspect in hand and few leads, Cleveland Police asked BCI's Cold Case Unit to lead the investigation.

On May 2 of this year — after a grand jury indicted him on murder, conspiracy and kidnapping charges — Moore was arrested in Austin, Texas, and returned to Cuyahoga County.

In the indictment, prosecutors allege that Moore and "at least one other unnamed individual" conspired to kidnap Sherman because Moore was unprepared for the trial and was unlikely to be granted another delay. The indictment noted that Moore had a history of calling in bomb threats to delay court appearances — "a pattern that members of Stafford Law Co. were aware of."

The Cold Case Unit's investigation ultimately zeroed in on Moore's cellphone use. The indictment details how the crime allegedly unfolded: Moore texted Sherman to meet him at his law office, then disconnected his phone from the Verizon network to prevent it from leaving cell-tower location evidence. In texts to Sherman later that afternoon — texts designed to keep her waiting outside his office — Moore used his law firm's mobile WiFi hotspot, which masked his location.

After Sherman was attacked, Moore sent four texts to her phone via the hotspot to create the impression that he was unaware that anything had happened to her. Later, he went inside his law office, reconnected his phone to the Verizon network, and called Sherman's phone three times, again to create false evidence.

The next day, according to the indictment, an unidentified Stafford Law employee tried to cancel the mobile hot spot and deleted a voice-mail message that Sherman had left from a call box outside the building.

To unravel the case, the Cold Case Unit spent thousands of hours analyzing and aggregating all the available, disparate digital evidence, which helped investigators and analysts to piece everything together and prompted prosecutors to pursue an indictment.

Moore has pleaded not guilty. A trial date is set for March 2026.

Man arrested nearly 24 years after wife's disappearance

Regina Rowe Hicks, unsolved homicide in Willard, 2001

On Oct. 18, 2001, at about 8 p.m., Regina Rowe Hicks, 25, left her boyfriend's residence in her white Chevrolet Camaro to pick up her son. But she never arrived.

Her family searched for her for four days, until her submerged car was discovered in a pond along Townline Road 12 in her hometown of Willard. Hicks' body was in the passenger seat.



Suspecting foul play, the Huron County Sheriff's Office opened a homicide investigation. Despite their work — and despite the efforts of Hicks' mother, who for 10 years offered reward money and spent thousands of dollars on billboards and newspaper ads to keep the case in the public eye — the investigation ground to a standstill. The sheriff's office turned to BCI for help in 2017, three years before the Cold Case Unit was officially created.

On April 22, 2025, a Huron County grand jury indicted 50-year-old Paul Hicks of Sandusky on three counts of murder and one count of kidnapping in the death of his estranged wife, and agents from BCI and the U.S. Marshals Service took him into custody.

According to the indictment, Hicks and her husband met on Townline Road 12 on the night of her disappearance. Paul Hicks allegedly knocked her out, put her in the passenger seat of her car, put the car in gear, and guided it into the pond.

On Oct. 19, a day after his wife went missing, Paul Hicks filed for a divorce.

The case is being prosecuted by the Huron County Prosecutor's Office with help from Yost's Special Prosecutions Section. Hicks is scheduled to stand trial on Dec. 9.

DNA provides break in 1989 slaying of elderly woman

Helen Stuart, unsolved homicide in Newark, 1989



On April 21, 1989, the body of 71-year-old Helen Stuart was discovered in the back seat of her car on State Route 16 east of Newark. Investigators with the Newark Police Department determined that she had been raped and strangled to death at her east side Newark home before being driven 5 miles to the site where her body and car would later be found.

Detectives considered a neighbor, Delbert Saunders Jr., to be a person of interest but had too little evidence to arrest him. That remained the case for decades despite the efforts of the Newark police, a Licking County Crime Stoppers reward of \$20,000, and a Facebook page created to generate leads.

In March 2021, Newark detectives met with BCI's Cold Case Unit to review the case. Using pieces of evidence later submitted by the detectives, BCI's lab employed the latest advances in DNA analysis to develop a genetic profile that connected Saunders to the crime. Additional evidence, submitted in 2024, provided further proof. On June 4, 2025, a Licking County grand jury indicted Saunders on charges of murder, rape, kidnapping, and burglary.

He is currently serving 18 years to life in the Noble Correctional Institution for kidnapping, rape, and possessing a weapon under disability in an unrelated case from 2003. He will be returned to Licking County to stand trial in the Stuart case. No date has been set.

BCI develops lead in 1992 slaying; suspect brought to Ohio

Amy Hooper, unsolved homicide in Columbus, 1992

After 20-year-old Amy Hooper failed to report for work at Westland Mall on March 9, 1992, her family went to her apartment to check on her. To their horror, they found her bludgeoned and stabbed to death.

Authorities believed that she knew her attacker. DNA from a male was found on Hooper's naked body, but a profile could not be developed. Stymied, the Franklin County Sheriff's Office sought BCI's help in 2019, and the FBI started the initial genealogy work. BCI eventually stepped in to assist to make sure the case moved forward.

Their hopes paid off.

In late 2024, through forensic genetic genealogy, BCI's Cold Case Unit and the sheriff's office identified Bruce Daniels, 58, of Tumwater, Washington, as a person of interest. The investigative team traveled to Washington to interview Daniels and obtain his DNA, which was submitted to the BCI lab and proved to be a match to the DNA recovered from Hooper's body.

An arrest warrant filed for Daniels on Dec. 4, 2024, in Franklin County Municipal Court led to his arrest the next day in Washington. He was extradited in March to Ohio, where he faces charges of rape and murder. No trial date has been set.



Investigators restore man's identity after 45-year mystery

Danny Mitchell, unidentified remains case in Cleveland, 1980



Danny Mitchell was 20 when last seen on April 2, 1980, at a house on Euclid Avenue in Cleveland. The next month, remains were discovered about a quarter-mile away in a derelict building set to be torn down. Unidentified and unclaimed, the John Doe was buried in Potter's Field.

It took 45 years to confirm the connection, but the remains would turn out to be those of Danny Mitchell.

The first bit of progress came in 2017, when the Mitchell family saw a BCI press conference featuring a clay facial reconstruction of a man whose remains had been found in 1982 in nearby Summit County.

The DNA submitted by Mitchell's siblings didn't match DNA from the remains, but BCI added Danny Mitchell's information into NamUs, a national database of missing and unidentified persons. That decision proved crucial because three years later, in 2020, the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office added the Cleveland John Doe to NamUs as part of an internal initiative to add cold cases to the database.

That entry prompted a possible match: Could Cleveland John Doe be Danny Mitchell? To answer that, investigators turned to the one item of DNA preserved from John Doe's autopsy — a cluster of scalp hair.

Extracting DNA from rootless hair is difficult, and BCI's DNA lab was unable to obtain a DNA profile in 2020 and 2021, prompting the forensic scientists to pursue additional testing methods, including mitochondrial DNA analysis. Meanwhile, investigators sought to exhume Cleveland John Doe to obtain additional DNA samples but couldn't locate his burial site in Potter's Field.

In 2022, BCI and the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office requested help from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The center agreed to fund additional advanced DNA testing and, later, secured federal funding for another round of testing.

In February 2025, Astrea Forensics, a California lab known for difficult cases, developed a full DNA profile from the hair samples. BCI and experts from NCMEC then collaborated with genealogists from Innovative Forensic Investigations to compare the profile to DNA from Danny Mitchell's siblings.

Forty-five years later, they had their match — the Cleveland John Doe found in 1980 was in fact Danny Mitchell.

Remains found nearly 24 years ago ID'd as Michigan man

Anthony Gulley, unidentified remains case in Canton, 2001

On Dec. 22, 2001, two men discovered a bleached skeleton near a county road just south of Canton. No clothing, jewelry, or identification were found.

An initial assessment suggested that the remains belonged to a 5-foot-7 African American woman between 22 and 31 years old, but a subsequent DNA analysis would show that the unknown person was actually a male.

Investigators worked for years to identify the remains, but without advanced DNA technology, the man's identity remained a mystery.

In September 2023, BCI and the Stark County Sheriff's Office unveiled a clay facial reconstruction of the John Doe. Investigators also partnered with a research center at Ohio State University to create digital images of what the man might have looked like.

Meanwhile, BCI forensic scientists worked to develop a DNA profile from the remains. Unfortunately, it didn't match any identities in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).

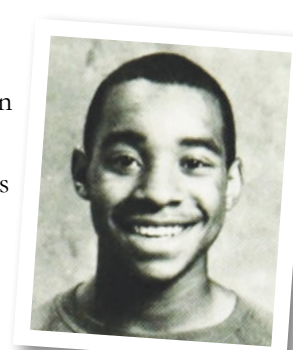
At an impasse, investigators solicited the help of the DNA Doe Project, a nonprofit that identifies remains using forensic genetic genealogy. The process involves uploading the unknown person's DNA profile to databases for comparison to the profiles of ordinary citizens who have agreed to allow matching and analysis of their shared DNA. Investigators then rely on traditional genealogy records to build a family tree, hoping to find the branch that includes the John Doe.

After 24 hours of genetic genealogy research, Anthony Gulley, 24, was identified as a possible match. Family members provided DNA samples that confirmed the identification.

Gulley had been reported missing in Pontiac, Michigan, on Sept. 11, 1994, and his burned-out rental car was found in Akron shortly after. That same month, Akron Police had been looking for George Frederick Washington, a Michigan resident who had childhood ties to Akron. Washington was a suspect in two rapes and an armed robbery, and investigators also suspected him in Gulley's disappearance.

Detectives surmised that Washington might have returned to Akron to dispose of Gulley's body. They would never find out. On Sept. 30, 1994, Washington killed himself as law enforcement officers tried to arrest him. The search for Gulley's body continued but was unsuccessful.

It would take seven more years for Gulley's body to be found and nearly 24 years to identify it.



LETS LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING SYMPOSIUM

Celebrating the best in law enforcement

Each year, the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission shines a spotlight on the outstanding accomplishments of a select few men and women who have made notable contributions to the law enforcement profession. As in previous years, the honorees will be recognized at the Law Enforcement Training Symposium, set for Sept. 28-30 at Kalahari Resorts & Conventions in Sandusky. The awards banquet will take place at lunchtime on the final day.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Honors a retired law enforcement officer with a career-long history of extraordinary contributions to the profession

SHERIFF RUSSELL L. MARTIN, ret. | Delaware County Sheriff's Office



Russell Martin served his community for 42 years, first as an officer with the Delaware Police Department, where he rose through the ranks to become chief for the final eight years of his 31-year tenure there, then as Delaware County Sheriff for three terms. He is a past president of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, and a member of both the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Police Executive Research Forum. Praised as a teacher, mentor, and advocate and known for his integrity, compassion, and deep faith, Martin is frequently asked to speak at state and national conferences and trainings on the topics of leadership, ethics, and values. He is currently the volunteer board chair and an instructor at the Pointman Leadership Institute in Alton, Iowa.

Community Service Award (2)

Honors a law enforcement officer whose involvement in civic organizations helps to build bonds between police and the community

OFFICER JOEL ALTMAN | Sharonville Police Department



Officer Altman has made it his mission to help military veterans who fall through the cracks after returning from service. His efforts inspired colleagues on the Sharonville Police Department with military experience to band together in reaching out to fellow vets in crisis. Altman, a veteran of the Coast Guard and former federal police officer, initiated the veteran response program in his department with the help of the Ohio Attorney General's Office, which encourages such initiatives at agencies statewide. Altman has helped veterans secure their military records and medals, find help with home repairs and ramp installations, and obtain services through the Cincinnati Veterans Affairs office. He also uncovered a home-health-care aide who was fleecing a veteran out of thousands of dollars and has helped arrange Honor Flights to Washington, D.C.

OFFICER SCOTT BROWN | Dublin Police Department



As the resource officer at Dublin Scioto High School, Officer Brown proves that school safety and school spirit go hand in hand. Students and parents love his kind, thoughtful nature, an attribute exemplified by the nonprofit organization he established, Dublin Food for Thought, which supports students and families dealing with food insecurity. They also love the fun, engaging way he approaches the job, now immortalized on social media in dance videos with students. But his contributions go beyond the school. As a police department community liaison, he has built bonds not only with students but also with residents and business leaders. In 2024, he led training and outreach for the Safe Space Dublin initiative, which works with city agencies and businesses to designate havens for people facing hate crimes, discrimination, or personal crises.

Blue Line Award

Honors a law enforcement officer who is an innovator and has a knack for devising ways to improve day-to-day police work

SGT. NICHOLAS MYRDA | Mount Vernon Police Department



As supervisor of the Community Division, Sgt. Myrda has been instrumental in implementing programs that bridge the gap between the police department and community. His manner and enthusiasm make him a favorite among residents, colleagues, and especially children and teens. Among his achievements, he was a driving force behind Police and Kids (PAK) United, secured a grant to distribute several hundred bicycle helmets to children, collaborated with educators to launch Safety Town, organized fishing and archery events with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Knox Anglers, and launched the department's first Citizen Police Academy. He conducts presentations at churches and schools on public safety, and serves as the liaison to the Mount Vernon Association of Police Chaplains, supporting both officer wellness and community spiritual needs.

Victoria Allen Civilian Leadership Award

Honors a "servant leader" who, in the spirit of the award's namesake, works to unite neighbors and local law enforcement for the betterment of the community as a whole

DENA HESS | Managing Director, Woodward Opera House, Mount Vernon



As the managing director of The Woodward Opera House, Dena Hess has been pivotal in increasing its role as a community hub. Most significantly, she has leveraged her position to plan and present events that bring law enforcement and community members together — efforts that have significantly enhanced public trust and fostered positive relationships. One such event was a fundraiser in partnership with the nonprofit Arms of an Angel, a local drug-awareness outreach organization. The event featured the Knox Community Jazz Orchestra and raised money for the police department's canine program. Along with the Mount Vernon Police Department, Hess co-founded the Police and Kids (PAK) United program. She spearheads the annual Heroes Softball Tournament for first responders and organizes the police department's annual banquet.

Training Award

Honors an individual whose instructional expertise has significantly influenced prospective and current peace officers

CHIEF PAUL W. HARTINGER, ret. | Blue Ash Police Department



Paul Hartinger was a police officer for 33 years in the city of Blue Ash and retired as chief. He became the Public Safety

Services supervisor at Great Oaks Career Campuses where he helped them become one of the OPOTA Regional Training sites. He currently instructs basic and advanced law enforcement topics at Great Oaks. For decades, he has worked to bring modern, meaningful training programs to all levels of law enforcement throughout southwestern Ohio. In doing that, he works with local, regional, state, and national leaders. Since 2024, Hartinger has taught for OPOTA, including both basic academy and advanced courses, including the instructional skills course, field training officer program, virtual reality scenarios, several annual CPT courses, the new chiefs training program, and certification courses at the Law Enforcement Training Symposium. He is a certified instructor and coordinator in the regional Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs and in the Police Executive Research Forum's ICAT Training Program.

Group Achievement Award (2)

Honors an outstanding accomplishment by a group of individuals resulting in a significant, positive and lasting impact on law enforcement and/or the public



Muskingum County Sheriff's Office: Detective Sgt. Brady Hittle, Detective Sgt. Matt Wilhite, Detective Ryan Paisley, Deputy Cody Kelly, Deputy Dustin Prouty and Auxiliary Deputy Drake Prouty



Zanesville Police Department: Detective Sgt. Phil Michel, Detective Michael Patrick, Cmdr. Derek Schilling

In the summer of 2024, the Muskingum County Sheriff's Office and the Zanesville Police Department tracked and captured three jewelry thieves who had stolen \$3 million in merchandise in smash-and-grab burglaries at stores in seven states. The thieves' crime spree began in May 2023 in Illinois, then spanned the next 14 months and six additional states before ending in Zanesville. Tipped off by an FBI task force member that Zanesville was a potential target, Detective Sgt. Hittle organized the Muskingum County team, which used Flock cameras to locate the suspects' car when it entered the area and watched its movements using a GPS tracker. Eleven days after officers began surveillance, the thieves struck a Kay Jewelers store, where they were arrested with \$170,000 worth of jewelry. The men were convicted to prison terms ranging from 14 to 16½ years.



Leadership and training staff, Ohio Tactical Officers Association

The Ohio Tactical Officers Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the performance of first responders, launched the Tactical Patrol Officer Certification Program in partnership with the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy to strengthen active-threat response and preparedness statewide. The program stemmed from the recommendations in February 2024 of the Attorney General's Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Future of Police Training in Ohio. Building on the successful statewide rollout of standardized training on active-threat response, the OTOA team developed and implemented consistent curricula, regional delivery models, and instructor development protocols in all 88 counties. More than 5,000 officers from local, county, and state agencies have been trained through this initiative. The result is a scalable and operationally relevant program that transforms how tactical readiness — especially active-shooter response — is delivered statewide. The collaboration between OTOA and OPOTA stands as a benchmark in modernizing law enforcement training in Ohio.

Exemplary Response Award

Honors a law enforcement officer who saves or attempts to save someone's life, or performs other exceptional actions, in response to a call for assistance

DEPUTY CHRISTOPHER CULLER | Champaign County Sheriff's Office

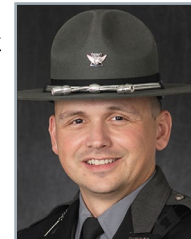


While on patrol on May 30, 2024, Deputy Culler broadsided a BMW that had run a stop sign at an intersection north of Mechanicsburg, sending the car careening into a pond in a nearby yard. Though injured and dazed from the violent collision, Deputy Culler radioed for help, pulled himself from his disabled cruiser, tossed off his duty belt, and dived into the pond as the BMW began slipping below the surface. After several attempts to rescue the driver from the submerged car, he was joined by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Paul Dangelo, an area resident who jumped in to help. After diving down to the car several times, the two were able to free the driver. Deputy Culler and the driver were treated for minor injuries.

Valor Award (2)

Honors a police officer who, despite risk to his or her own safety, demonstrates extraordinary courage in protecting other people from harm

TROOPER COLIN ACCIAVATTI | Ohio State Highway Patrol, Special Response Team

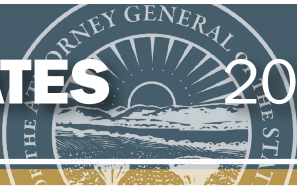


On Nov. 11, 2024, Trooper Acciavatti, a sharpshooter with the Highway Patrol's Special Response Team, was at home when he received a message from his command about a hostage situation outside Medina near I-71. En route to the scene, he was briefed on the situation and gathered information to determine the best position to set up in a sniper position. Earlier that day near Steubenville, Charles Alexander had abducted his 7-year-old non-custodial daughter and drove to northeastern Ohio, where he ditched his pickup, stole a U-Haul truck, and led police on a chase. He eventually pulled into an Arby's parking lot after stop sticks deflated his tires. When Acciavatti arrived, he parked his Dodge Durango about 70 yards away, on the exit ramp from I-71. Though in Alexander's line of sight, and despite the fact that Alexander had fired at police multiple times, Acciavatti climbed atop his SUV and took position. The girl was sitting on the man's lap as he held a gun to her head. Acciavatti fired a round through the small opening between the side-view mirror and the frame of the driver side window, killing Alexander and saving the child's life.

SGT. KENNETH WOHLHETER | Carroll County Sheriff's Office



On June 24, 2024, the Carroll County Sheriff's Office fielded a 911 call from a woman in Minerva who said her husband was suicidal and had pointed a gun at her and ordered her out of the house. She said her husband had sought mental-health treatment but was turned away. Deputies Ken Wohlheter and Andrew Flowers responded, later joined by other deputies. When the man refused to come out, Deputy Wohlheter prepared for a barricade situation and radioed for help from area departments. He tried to keep the man talking, but a shot rang out and struck the deputy's car only inches from his head. Maintaining his discipline and composure under fire, he directed his colleagues to take cover and, as they did so, attempted to distract the gunman. More shots rang out, pinning the deputies behind their cruisers. Sheriff Calvin Graham soon arrived with the department's armored vehicle. After coordinating the recovery of his fellow deputies using the armored vehicle to shield them, Wohlheter eventually scrambled to the cover of the armored vehicle as well. During this time, a single muffled gunshot could be heard inside the home, where the gunman was later found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.



Mark Your Calendar

Apply for jail grant by Dec. 1



Attorney General Dave Yost is offering \$60 million over the next several years to help Ohio sheriff's offices monitor and treat jail inmates with substance-abuse disorders. As of mid-September, 31 county jails had been awarded grants in 2025. This year's application window runs through Dec. 1, and AG Yost is urging the remaining sheriffs to apply. All sheriffs will be eligible for an additional round of funding in 2026.

To apply, email JailGrants@OhioAGO.gov or download an application at: <https://tinyurl.com/25ksuevh>

ON THE JOB

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BCI Cold Case Unit team

members, back row from left: Jen Dillion, Roger Davis, Dana Forney; front row from left, Lisa Savage, Hallie Dreyer