




DESCHUTES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Policy Title: Awards and Commendations	Effective Date: March 13, 2025	Policy Number: 3.04
Accreditation Reference: 1.5.10	Review Date: March 13, 2028	Supersedes: February 18, 2022
Attachments: Award Nominations	 Kent van der Kamp, Sheriff	

I. PURPOSE

This awards and commendations program is intended to acknowledge and reward superior efforts and accomplishments by members and community members that demonstrate excellence and further the mission and values of the Sheriff's Office.

II. POLICY

The Sheriff's Office expects a high level of professional conduct from all members of the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office recognizes there are members who frequently perform their duties in a manner exceeding the highest standards of the agency. The objective of the Sheriff's Office awards policy is to provide tangible recognition for acts of valor, heroism, meritorious service or achievement, exceptional service or achievement, special skills or qualifications.

III. DECORATIONS (MEDALS)

A. Medal of Valor

The Medal of Valor is the most distinguished award presented to a sworn Sheriff's Office member for an act of outstanding valor. The nominee must have demonstrated, to a great degree, the qualities of selflessness, personal courage and devotion to duty. The Medal of Valor award will include a medal worn on a neck ribbon, a burgundy ribbon bar with a "V" insignia in the middle, a miniature ribbon bar of the same design and a framed certificate. Factors for consideration of the nominee for this award are:

- The act involved the preservation of human life.
- The situation was extremely hazardous; the nominee was able to evaluate the situation, was aware of the hazards and took action.
- A strong possibility of death or serious physical injury existed when the nominee acted.
- The nominee's actions were consistent with good judgment and Sheriff's Office training and policy.
- The nominee would not be subjected to reasonable criticism had he/she not taken action.
- The objective was of sufficient importance to justify the risk.

B. Sheriff's Medal

The Sheriff's Medal is awarded to any sworn or non-sworn Sheriff's Office member or community member for an act of exceptional courage that distinguishes their action from normal service. The Sheriff's Medal award will include a pin ribbon medal, a blue ribbon bar with a burgundy section in the middle one third, a miniature ribbon bar and a framed certificate. Factors for consideration of the nominee for this award are:

- a. During the course of an extended investigation, the nominee was exposed continuously and singly to personal danger.
- b. Deadly force was used against the nominee and a serious risk to their life occurred.
- c. There was a serious threat to their life and the nominee had to use deadly force to address the threat.
- d. The nominee acted with personal courage in a single act, but it did not necessarily include the preservation of human life.
- e. The nominee's actions were consistent with good judgment and Sheriff's Office training and policy.
- f. The nominee was shot at or seriously menaced but still completed the required task.
- g. The nominee acted properly to protect people or property with less regard for their own well-being than for the well-being of the person or property they were protecting.

C. Sheriff Star

The Sheriff Star is awarded to any sworn Sheriff's Office member who sustains a serious physical injury or dies while taking proper law enforcement action; or to a non-sworn Bureau member or community member who sustains a serious physical injury or dies while properly protecting the life or property of another. The Sheriff Star award will include a pin ribbon medal, a black ribbon bar, a miniature ribbon bar and a framed certificate. Factors for consideration of the nominee for this award are:

- a. The nominee required protracted medical care because of the injury.
- b. The nominee will suffer protracted pain or disfigurement because of the injury.
- c. The nominee's actions would not tend to discredit such recognition.

D. Lifesaving Award

The Life Saving Medal is awarded to any sworn or non-sworn Sheriff's Office member or community member who saved the life of another person. The Life Saving Medal award will include a pin ribbon medal, a green ribbon bar, a miniature ribbon bar and a framed certificate. Factors for consideration of the nominee for this award are:

- a. The nominee was aware of the seriousness of the situation.
- b. The nominee acted purposely.
- c. The nominee did not carelessly create the situation causing the need for them to act.
- d. If the nominee had not acted, it was more likely than not the person would have died.
- e. The nominee rescued a person from what would have otherwise become a life-threatening situation.

E. Distinguished Service Medal

The Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to any sworn or non-sworn Sheriff's Office member or community member for exceptional accomplishments, which went above and beyond their assigned work duties or responsibilities and furthered the goals of the Sheriff's Office and/or enhanced the livability of the community. The Distinguished Service Medal award will include a pin ribbon medal, a blue ribbon bar, a miniature ribbon bar and a framed certificate. Factors for consideration of the nominee for this award are:

- a. The nominee made a significant and major contribution to the development of programs, policies or procedures, which had a substantial and positive impact on the goals of the Sheriff's Office.
- b. The nominee conducted a long-term investigation or solved a neighborhood problem that had a tremendous impact on the community.
- c. The nominee took exceptional action while assisting the community.
- d. During the course of one's career, the nominee performed in an exceptional manner (of greater significance than those acts noted for the Achievement Medal).

F. Civilian Medal – Heroism

The Civilian Medal – Heroism is the most distinguished award presented to a non-sworn Sheriff's Office member or a community member for an outstanding act of heroism. This act must be consistent with the factors described in the Medal of Valor section of this policy. The Civilian Medal – Heroism will include a medal worn on a neck ribbon, a purple miniature ribbon bar, and a framed certificate. Factors for consideration of the nominee for this award are:

- a. The act involved the preservation of human life.
- b. The situation was extremely hazardous; the nominee was able to evaluate the situation, was aware of the hazards and took action.
- c. A strong possibility of death or serious physical injury existed when the nominee acted.
- d. The nominee's actions were consistent with good judgment.
- e. The nominee would not be subjected to reasonable criticism had he/she not taken action.
- f. The objective was of sufficient importance to justify the risk.

G. Lieutenant Ernie Brown Distinguished Service Medal

The Lieutenant Ernie Brown Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to any sworn Sheriff's Office member who consistently delivers public service in a manner that embodies the values of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office. The sworn members are to be recognized for their compassion towards others, their excellence in service and their high moral and ethical standards in which they deliver service on a day-to-day basis. The Lieutenant Ernie Brown Distinguished Service Medal award will include an orange pin ribbon medal with an orange emblazed in the center of the medal, an orange Ribbon Bar with A22 emblazed in the center of the medal, a miniature ribbon bar and a framed certificate. The award will be issued once a year, at the September award ceremony, the month that Lieutenant Ernie Brown was killed in a tragic accident. Factors for consideration of the nominee for this award are:

- a. The nominee has delivered public service on a day-to-day basis with compassion and has made a marked impact on the community.
- b. The nominee has a high moral and ethical standard that has earned them a large degree of respect and praise among their peers.
- c. The nominee is tactically sound.
- d. The nominee delivers service with a high degree of dedication to duty and consistently strives to improve the organization and community.
- e. The nominee mentors others in delivering superior law enforcement service.

IV. CERTIFICATES, LETTERS, RETIREMENT AND SERVICE AWARDS

Certificates of Commendation, Achievement, and Letters of Commendation or Appreciation are appropriate means of recognizing acts or achievements which are significant but do not meet the standards required for decorations (medals), and for recognizing departing members and periods of faithful service.

A. Certificate of Commendation

The Certificate of Commendation is awarded to a Sheriff's Office member who distinguishes themselves through heroism, meritorious achievement, or meritorious service.

B. Certificate of Achievement

The Certificate of Achievement is awarded to a Sheriff's Office member who distinguishes themselves through meritorious service or achievement to a lesser degree than required for a Certificate of Commendation. The Certificate of Achievement may also be presented to civilians who significantly contribute to the accomplishment of the Sheriff's Office mission, or public safety.

C. Letters

Letters of Recognition or Appreciation may be awarded to members who perform their assigned duties in a manner which reflects credit upon themselves and or the Sheriff's Office. These letters will be printed on Sheriff's Office letterhead. Letters may also be presented to civilians who contribute to the accomplishment of the Sheriff's Office mission, or public safety.

D. Retirement and Service Awards

1. Retirement.

- a. Sworn members in good standing who retire from the Sheriff's Office after ten (10) or more years of service shall receive a wall plaque, with a choice of having their badge mounted on the plaque.
- b. Non-sworn members in good standing who retire from the Sheriff's Office after ten (10) or more years of service shall have a wall plaque presented.

2. Service Awards.

- a. Employees in good standing who leave the employ of the Sheriff's Office shall be eligible for a Certificate or Letter as noted above, as appropriate for their service contribution.
- b. Sworn personnel in good standing with five (5) or more years of service may also retain their wallet badge.

V. APPROVAL COMMITTEE AUTHORITIES

1. Division Captains are the approving authority for Certificates of Commendation, Retirement and Service Awards.
2. Lieutenants are the approval authority for Certificates of Achievement and Letters.
3. The Award and Recognition Committee (ARC) shall make recommendations for all medals to the Sheriff. The Sheriff may, at their sole discretion, make an award determination or utilize an Award Review Committee. The Committee will be comprised of eighteen members (seventeen voting members and the facilitator voting only in order to break a tie) as follows:
 - a. Patrol Division: Three members -- two deputies and one sergeant appointed by the patrol captain.
 - b. Corrections: Three members -- two deputies and one sergeant appointed by the corrections captain.
 - c. Detective Division: Two detectives appointed by the detective captain.
 - d. Command: One member appointed by the Sheriff.
 - e. Non-Sworn: Two members -- one a non-sworn supervisor, appointed by the Sheriff.
 - f. Community: Two members selected by the Sheriff and may be drawn from members of Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Sheriff's Office Posse and/or volunteers.

Committee meetings will be held each calendar quarter. Members will be asked to serve a two-year commitment on the committee. At the 18-month mark, new community members would attend two meetings along with the outgoing members to provide an orientation to the process.

Members must attend at least three committee meetings per calendar year to maintain their standing. Sworn members must submit a notice of court unavailability for the dates of the meetings. If a member is unable to attend a committee meeting, he/she is responsible for finding a replacement to attend the meeting.

A quorum will consist of eight voting members and the facilitator. A quorum is required for the Committee to consider recommendations.

VI. NOMINATION PROCEDURES

The community and Sheriff's Office members are encouraged to report acts of exemplary service to the community or Sheriff's Office that are deserving of recognition. Sheriff's Office members and community members may report such acts through any Sheriff's Office Supervisor. The receiving supervisor shall forward any nominations to the Sheriff's Office HR department who will forward all award nominations to the Division Captain or Undersheriff for their review. The Undersheriff will forward all award nominations to the Sheriff. The Sheriff may, their sole discretion, make an award determination or utilize an Award Review Committee.

Nominators may submit copies of Sheriff's Office reports, news articles or other written materials as supportive documentation. The Award Review Committee may initiate award nominations. The Sheriff's Office may issue an award outside of the established awards process for those acts that are obvious, and time is of the essence in the presentation of the award.

The Committee will meet to review and investigate the circumstances of each nomination submitted. If the Committee recommends against an award or recommends a lesser award, they will notify the nominator before submitting the nomination and their recommendation to the Sheriff. If the nominator is not satisfied with the Committee's recommendation, the nominator may contact the facilitator and schedule an oral presentation before the Committee. The facilitator will excuse the nominator from the voting portion of the Committee meeting. The Committee will forward all award nominations to the Sheriff with their recommendations.

No award will be presented until the Division Captain and the Sheriff's Office Professional Standards Unit has determined that the member's actions were within Sheriff's Office policy.

The final decision to approve, disapprove or modify the type of award the nominee should or should not receive will be made by the Sheriff. The Sheriff will forward a list of approved awards to the facilitator. The facilitator will notify the nominator and nominee of the outcome of the approved awards.

The ARC facilitator will complete an award memorandum, signed by the Sheriff, and the Personnel Commendation will be addressed to each award recipient. It will contain a summary of the action or service performed by the recipient. The HR staff will distribute the order for agency-wide recognition and place a copy in the recipient's personnel file. The facilitator will schedule an awards ceremony once a year, during which the Sheriff will present the awards.

VII. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

The Medal of Valor, Sheriff's Medal, Sheriff's Star, Lifesaving Award, Civilian Medal – Heroism, and the Lieutenant Ernie Brown Distinguished Service Medal will be presented to the recipient by the Sheriff at an appropriate awards ceremony. The ceremony should involve family if available and the media if appropriate. The Sheriff may at their discretion request the award be presented in a different setting, such as during a County Commissioners session. All other recognition will be presented by the approving authority in an appropriate setting to maximize visibility to the award and recipient.

VIII. AWARD PRODUCTION AND RECORD KEEPING

A. Production.

The Sheriff's Executive Assistant will be the central point of contact for decorations and certificates that have been approved.

- a. Ordering medal sets through the approved vendor for should be made six (6) weeks prior to the desired presentation date.

- b. A stock of blank Medal certificates, Certificates of Commendation and Achievement as well as DCSO letterhead will be maintained on hand. Upon Approval Authority authorization, the Executive Assistant will produce the appropriate certificate or letter and return the completed document to the approving authority.
- c. Retirement and Service awards (plaques) will be coordinated for and ordered by DCSO Human Resources at the direction of the appropriate Division Captain.

B. Record Keeping.

A copy of the completed award certificate along with the original nomination will be given to Human Resources for insertion into the member's personnel file.