

Meritorious Inductee into the Class of 2015

Sgt. Matthew A. Stash

Nomination Letter written by Mrs. Barbara Cragle:

Matthew Stash is a 1986 graduate of Lake-Lehman High School. Matthew's family originally hails from Dallas and as a Dallas graduate, I had the privilege and honor of knowing his parents, grandparents, aunts & uncles and even his great grandparents."

Matthew's uncle joined the U.S. Air Force after college and became a Lt. Colonel, serving as Chaplain. Matthew, a young man of impeccable character, followed in his uncle's footsteps and upon graduation from high school decided that he wanted to serve his country by joining the United States Marines. After his tour of duty, Matthew joined the Wilkes-Barre Police Department. This is when "our Matthew from Lake-Lehman" became a hero.

Matthew was credited for creating the VIPER Unit for the Wilkes-Barre Police Department. This is a Unit that specializes in violent crimes and drug trafficking and includes undercover work. Matthew became Sergeant of this Unit. He is point man when going into a situation involving the apprehension of a criminal or gang and is credited with the breaking up of two violent gangs in the city of Wilkes-Barre. These gangs are no longer in existence. Matthew has also worked with U.S. Marshals and was involved in apprehending a fugitive from Philadelphia.

The following is an excerpt from a newspaper article published in the September 11, 2014 edition of the Citizen's Voice:

On the morning of October 5, 2012, authorities closed in on an attempted homicide suspect at the Sherman Hills Apartment Complex. Robert Montgomery III, sought by Philadelphia police for a shooting that critically wounded another man, was taking refuge at his father's fifth-floor apartment in the complex's high rise building. When the suspect's father cracked open the door of the apartment, Sgt. Matthew Stash spotted the fugitive lying on a makeshift bed on the living room floor. Stash pulled the elderly Montgomery into the hallway and demanded the fugitive show his hands. The fugitive pulled a handgun from under the blanket and fired, wounding Stash in the right leg with another bullet narrowly missing his torso, leaving behind two holes in his shirt. "After that it was just instinct," said Stash, who along with others, returned fire, killing the fugitive from Philadelphia. Fellow officers carried Stash from the building after he was shot. Both Stash and the elder Montgomery, who was hit with a bullet from his son's gun, were taken to a local medical center for treatment. "If I were by myself, I probably wouldn't have made it.," Stash said. "I credit my friends with getting me out of there."

For his courage and bravery, Sgt. Stash received a U.S. Marshals Service Purple Heart Award; the first awarded in the Middle District of Pennsylvania. At a recognition ceremony held for members of the U.S. Marshals Service Fugitive Task Force at the federal courthouse in Wilkes-Barre, more than 50 people who filled a hallway at the courthouse, mostly law enforcement members and media, erupted with applause as Martin Payne, the U.S. Marshal for the Middle District of Pennsylvania presented Stash with the award. Those serving by Stash's side that day were also honored with a U.S. Marshals Service Medal of Valor.

Payne praised the work of his deputies and city police that day. Since the Task Force was created more than two decades ago, it has executed more than 20,000 warrants, many of which were for violent criminals. "What these men and women did on the morning of October 5, 2012 is the definition of courage and bravery." "In harm's way, these Marshals Service Fugitive Task Force members demonstrated solemn judgment in the face of lethal adversity."

Detective Matthew A. Stash Awards and Certificates

2001 – Letter of Commendation

Arrest of a man with a firearm. The person was later found to have murdered 3 people in the Philadelphia area with that firearm.

2004 – Detective Endowment Award - New York Police Department

Certificate of Appreciation for the capture of a wanted fugitive.

2004 – Letter of Commendation

College student carjacked on Wilkes campus. After months of investigation with little evidence, subject was arrested/prosecuted.

2005 – Outstanding Police Performance Award (PA Narcotics Officers Association)

Meritorious Service Award

Extraordinary action in response to a multiple victim shooting with 2 gunmen (3 victims) Pursued the suspects and brought them into custody for attempted murder.

2006 – Letter of Commendation

Responded to a barricaded man with swords (suicidal)
Taken into custody without incident.

2007 - Letter of Commendation

Arrest of a man in Philadelphia (10 most wanted list) for attempted murder.

2008 – Operation Heavyweight

Two rival gangs in Wilkes-Barre were dismantled

“Through hard work and dedication, numerous violent drug dealers/criminals have been removed from the streets of Wilkes-Barre. Sgt. Stash’s distinctive accomplishments are in keeping with the finest traditions of police service and reflect great credit upon himself and the Wilkes-Barre City Police Department.”

-Detective Malloy, Wilkes-Barre Police Dept.

2009 – Attorney General’s Award for Excellence

2011 – Combat Cross

Responded to a man with a gun near a daycare center. Upon ordering to drop weapon, fired at officers. Officers returned fire and perpetrator was taken down.

2012 – U.S. Marshal Service Certificate of Appreciation

Outstanding assistance on the Rasshammach Robert and Clifton Sikes fugitive investigations – *America’s Most Wanted*

2012- **Purple Shield** awarded by City of Wilkes-Barre
Gunshot wound apprehending wanted felon.

2012- **Purple Heart** awarded by U.S. Marshals
Gunshot wound apprehending wanted felon.

Completed Basis SWAT school – Columbus Ohio (NASTA)

Bobby Hart Long Range Hunting School Achievement - Shooting beyond 500 yards.

Member Pennsylvania Narcotics Association

Numerous other Accomplishments

Letter from Chief John Comparetto, retired, Passaic NJ, also served 26 yrs with NYPD

With the aid of a fellow officer, Sgt. Stash assisted retired Police Chief John Comparetto of Passaic County’s Sheriff’s Dept., who was robbed at gunpoint in Harrisburg PA, after presenting a lecture at a conference the two officers were attending. The suspect tried to flee the scene, but Sgt. Stash and the other officer secured him on the ground and recovered a loaded .40 calibre hi-point automatic as well as proceeds stolen. Chief Comparetto sent a letter to Chief Dessoie of the Wilkes-Barre City Police Department personally thanking the two officers. “They acted bravely without fear of their own personal safety.” Chief Comparetto said. “I am really pleased that you chose to send them to this conference.”

