

# Area Police Officers, citizens lauded for valor

BY CHRISTINE BYERS

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*Robert Cohen November 10, 2010 - Twenty-two area police officers were awarded Medals of Valor Wednesday at the downtown Hilton, sponsored by the Crusade Against Crime of America and the St. Louis Area Police Chiefs Association. St. Louis County police officer Robert Keithley, at right, was awarded the medal based on his efforts to rescue residents from a burning apartment building. St. Louis City police officer Joseph Haman, center, was awarded the medal for his work stopping a suspicious vehicle containing a gunman who shot Haman six times. Robert Cohen rcohen@post-dispatch.com*

**ST. LOUIS** • Moments after Police Chief Dan Isom placed the Medal of Valor around St. Louis Police Officer Joe Haman's neck, Haman said that others were more deserving.

"I was put in a situation where I had no choice but to act, it was either let the guy kill me or fight back," Haman said Wednesday from his wheelchair at the 41st annual Medal of Valor ceremony at the Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark. Haman was shot eight times on May 27, when a man opened fire on him in a traffic stop near Natural Bridge Avenue and Grand Boulevard, officials said. Arvon L. Brown, 24, faces charges.

Haman, who expects to make a full recovery, was among 24 Medal of Valor recipients to appear before a ballroom of their friends and family members, police and other supporters at the ceremony, sponsored by the St. Louis Area Police Chiefs Association and the Crusade Against Crime.

Isom also presented the award to 13 other city officers.

"It's kind of bittersweet, because it's encouraging that these officers are working so hard every day, but by the same token, it's a little distressing that there is so much violence towards Officers," Isom said.

The other recipients were:

• **Rock Hill Police Officer Matt Crosby and Lt. Jorden Lewis**, who responded to a domestic violence call on April 8 and came under fire. One of the rounds paralyzed Crosby from the chest down. Crosby and Lewis returned fire, striking the assailant twice.

- **Detective Cpl. Gerald Williams and Arnold Police Sgt. Darren Rodgers**, who came under fire on Jan. 29 from a burglary suspect. One of the bullets struck Williams in the wrist. Rodgers returned fire, striking the suspect.
- **St. Louis County Officer Robert Keithley**, who on March 28 responded to a building fire. He suffered smoke inhalation but rescued two residents.
- **St. Louis County Police Officers Anthony Amaro, Stephanie Percich and Nicholas Nazzoli** discovered a house fire Aug. 9. All were overcome by smoke inside the home but did not leave until they had rescued the occupants.
- **St. Louis Police Detective Mark Wasem**, who was off-duty when he saw four men acting suspiciously on March 30. All four fled after he announced he was an officer. He chased the suspects and called dispatchers as one of the suspects opened fire on him. Wasem returned fire and eventually subdued the suspect.
- **St. Louis Police Officers Chris Lovelady-Armstrong and Ronald Vaughan**, who pulled over a driver for a traffic violation Jan. 23 when the person began firing at them. During a foot chase, the person continued to fire at the officers, who returned fire and eventually subdued the shooter.
- **St. Louis Police Sgt. David Bonenberger**, who ordered a man to drop his gun Feb. 22. Instead the man ran and opened fire on Bonenberger, who then returned fire, striking the man.
- **St. Louis Police Detective Joshua Becherer**, who with two other detectives saw a suspicious man on Oct. 29 near an alley. The man tried to fire his weapon at the officers. Becherer then fired at the man as he attempted to shoot at the officers.
- **St. Louis Police Detectives Jason Collins, Ryan Linhorst, Jeremy Cotton and Joseph McCloskey**, who apprehended a man July 1 who was suspected of robbing a woman at gunpoint and moments later carjacking a couple. The suspect opened fire and McCloskey returned fire, striking the suspect. Collins is the first three-time recipient of the award.
- **St. Louis Detective Sgt. John Applegate and Detective Robert Simons**, who came under fire Jan. 16 from a suspect wanted for multiple felonies. The officers returned fire, striking the suspect.
- **St. Louis Police Officer Isabella Lovadina**, who was off-duty on Oct. 5 and visiting a friend when two gunmen approached her at a home and announced a robbery. The gunmen tried to order Lovadina, her friend and the home's occupants, including several children, into the basement. Though unarmed, Lovadina tried to disarm the gunman. She was shot several times, and her friend was fatally shot.

• **Brian King, Ronald Conner and Todd Gilliam** were given the Citizen-Aid-to-Police award and St. Louis Officer Brian King the Medal of Valor for jumping into the River Des Peres to rescue a man from his car May 19. The man and his 3-year-old daughter later died.