



Press Release: February 4, 2016

## Four Named Law Enforcement Officers of the Year

On February 3, the local Masonic Lodge, Blue Mountain Lodge #13, paid tribute to four local law enforcement officers who were selected by their respective agencies as the 2015 Law Enforcement Officers of the Year. The selections are based, in part, on the officers' work ethic, productivity, and compassion.

Deputy Ryan L. Allen received the Sergeant Thomas E. Bowman Deputy of the Year Award for consistently displaying the positive qualities associated with Sergeant Bowman's twenty years of service to the citizens of Walla Walla County. Sergeant Bowman was the epitome of the professional law enforcement officer and embodied that persona during his entire career. The legacy of Sergeant Bowman lives on in this award and is given annually to the Deputy of the Year.

Deputy Ryan has been a member of the Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office for over six and a half years – two and a half as corrections officer and four as deputy sheriff. He has distinguished himself as a selfless and dedicated public servant. He sets the standard for everyone around him with his work ethic, appearance, resourcefulness and leadership. He is a thorough and effective investigator and a team player among his peers. He has an innate ability to problem solve and quietly lead in a positive direction.

Deputy Ryan sought additional responsibilities and volunteered and qualified to become a firearms and tactics instructor for the Sheriff's Office. His instruction is professional and well received. His extra effort and study in tactics and officer safety are recognized and appreciated by many of his law enforcement colleagues.

Deputy Ryan is also a valued member of the Walla Walla Regional SWAT Team. He has assisted with the WWCSO's Marine Patrol Unit and helped to improve the Marine Patrol program. In 2013, he was awarded the WWCSO's Life Saving Award for saving the lives of a father, son and their dog. He also received the VFW's Local Hero Recognition Award for his ethics, professionalism and service to the community.

Detective Sergeant Matt Wood of the Walla Walla Police Department has over 35 years of service to the community. During this time he served in several capacities. Starting his career as a uniformed patrol officer, he acquired a reputation as a solid officer due to his initiative, work ethic, and interest in criminal investigation. This led him to investigative assignments in the Drug Unit, Target Offender Team and Detectives.

Sergeant Wood earned the respect of his peers. His natural leadership abilities were evident and recognized throughout the department. In December 2000, Wood was promoted to Sergeant and assigned to supervise the Detectives Unit, where he continues to serve today.

As Sergeant of Detectives, Wood is responsible for the oversight and supervision of felony investigations. He has a passion for the work and strives to provide the best possible investigation services. He doesn't seek recognition for himself, but through his steadfast work ethic, guidance and supervision contributes to the successful resolution of the most serious crimes committed in the Walla Walla community.

Robert Benfield, College Place Police Department (CPPD), became a police officer after spending 25 years in electrical construction and teaching at Walla Walla Community College. He has been with the department since 2006. In 2007, he became a taser instructor for the department and in 2008 became a field training officer. Officer Benfield has also instructed new recruits in the police reserve academy. He is well known for his participation in community events, such as Cops and Kids and the Every 15 Minute Program sponsored by the Walla Walla Traffic Safety Communication.

Trooper Wes Cook has been with the Washington State Patrol for four and a half years. He is assigned to the Walla Walla Detachment, which covers the area between Burbank and Clarkston, including Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield and Asotin Counties. In 2015, Trooper Cook stopped 1,700 traffic violators and arrested 12 people for driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. He investigated 43 collisions. Trooper Cook is scheduled to attend the Washington State Patrol Academy in March to become a Firearms/Control Tactics Instructor.

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