

# Trooper/TCO of the Year for 2016

## **Troop One:**

**Senior Trooper Thomas R. Christofaro**

**Post B (Kershaw/Lee)**

S/Tpr. Christofaro is recognized for his overall devotion to duty demonstrated in the day-to-day performance of his job and his interaction within the community. S/Tpr. Christofaro comes to work every day with a great attitude and strives to make a difference in Kershaw and Lee Counties. He displays exceptional leadership, professional competence and an unusual devotion to his duties.

He is passionate about the Target Zero mission, especially in relation to taking impaired drivers off the roads. S/Tpr. Christofaro made 42 DUI arrests in 2016. In 2016, S/Tpr. Christofaro issued 1,250 citations, 532 warnings and 279 seat belt/restraint violations.

S/Tpr. Christofaro is also involved in helping his community. He sets an example by reading to local elementary school children, assisting with the Special Olympics and conducting safety talks.

## **Troop Two, \*\*Also presented Director's Medal of Valor Award**

**TFC William Butler Sprouse III**

**Post A (Laurens and Newberry)**

TFC Sprouse is recognized for his standard of professionalism and dedication to public service – both on and off the clock. This was especially evident on his day off on July 9, 2016.

TFC Sprouse, and his wife, Kara, were riding on their boat on Lake Greenwood when they noticed a woman on a pontoon boat waving in an attempt to get their attention. As they traveled toward the pontoon, they noticed a man in the water near the pontoon boat who appeared to be in distress. The man went under the water and did not come back to the surface.

TFC Sprouse dove into the water and was able to locate the man and bring him back to the surface. Kara threw a flotation device into the water and began to pull the man toward their boat. After getting the victim onto the boat, the Sprouses went to the closest dock and called EMS.

Mr. Southerland has since made a full recovery and has repeatedly expressed his gratitude to TFC Sprouse for saving his life. TFC Sprouse even served as best man at Mr. Southerland's wedding. This life-saving incident is consistent with TFC Sprouse's day-to-day care and concern for others.

In addition to his nomination as Troop Two Trooper of the Year, TFC Sprouse was also recognized with the Director's Medal of Valor Award for his tremendous bravery and determination to save a life.

**Troop Three:**  
**Trooper Richard A. Finch**  
**Post A (Anderson)**

Trooper R.A. Finch is recognized for his attention to detail that led to the arrest of a hit-and-run suspect. On July 3, 2016, Trooper Finch was dispatched to the scene of a double fatal motorcycle collision involving a man and his wife in Anderson County. The couple was struck from behind, causing them to be thrown from the motorcycle. Both died on scene from injuries received in the collision and the suspect fled the scene.

After Trooper Finch completed several interviews of the available witnesses, he began to survey the scene and noticed the suspect's vehicle had left a trail of leaking fluid. Trooper Finch followed the trail and located the vehicle involved in the collision. Trooper Finch arrested the suspect and charged him with two counts of Felony DUI with Death and two counts of Leaving the Scene with Death.

Trooper Finch has led the Post for two years in DUI and seatbelt enforcement. Trooper Finch volunteers to work collisions that are not in his assigned area and is well-liked by his peers and respected in the community.

**Troop Four, \*\*Also presented Director's Medal of Valor Award**  
**L/Cpl. Cedric D. Morgan**  
**Post C (Chester)**

L/Cpl. Cedric Morgan is recognized today for his heroic actions and leadership in an attempt to save motorists from their burning vehicles following a crash. A suspect, who was fleeing from troopers, ran a stop light and struck another vehicle, causing both vehicles to catch fire. L/Cpl. Morgan directed another trooper to apprehend the suspect who caused the collision while he went to check on the other motorist whose vehicle was becoming engulfed in flames. L/Cpl. Morgan ran back to his patrol car to retrieve his fire extinguisher, while telling other responding units to get their fire extinguishers as well.

During this event, L/Cpl. Morgan remained calm trying to help the victims and ensure a coordinated effort among first responders on scene.

L/Cpl. Morgan's commitment and enthusiasm show in his activity. During 2016, he made 950 cases. In addition to his nomination for Troop Four Trooper of the Year, L/Cpl. Morgan was also presented the Director's Medal of Valor Award, along with Sergeant Kirk B. Winburn and Trooper Morgan E. Benson, also of Troop Four. These troopers were presented the Medal of Valor award for their heroic actions in the incident (above) on November 12, 2016.

**Troop Five, \*\*Also presented Director's Medal of Valor Award**  
**L/Cpl. Kenneth F. Small**  
**Post C (Georgetown, Williamsburg)**

L/Cpl. Kenneth F. Small is recognized for his quick-thinking and reaction during an off-duty incident. On June 2, 2016, L/Cpl. Small was enjoying time with friends at a beach house in Garden City. A former trooper, his wife and their 2-year-old son were also visiting when the child accidentally slipped into the swimming pool and immediately sank to the bottom.

Witnesses standing alongside the pool froze in shock. L/Cpl. Small came from inside the house and dove into the pool to save the boy. L/Cpl. Small was calm and was able to rescue the child who was uninjured. L/Cpl. Small is truly a hero to the family and to all of his fellow troopers in Post C.

L/Cpl. Small plays a critical role in efforts to educate the public and maintain visibility in high-crash areas in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. L/Cpl. Small serves as a field training officer and is always willing to assist his fellow troopers and other law enforcement agencies within Post C.

In addition to L/Cpl. Small's recognition as Troop Five Trooper of the Year nominee, he was also recognized for a Director's Medal of Valor Award for his act of bravery and prompt response in the situation in the above incident.

**Troop Six, \*\*Also presented Director's Award for Exceptional Public Service  
Cpl. Stephen Daniel Southerland  
Post A (Berkeley/Charleston)**

Cpl. Daniel Southerland is recognized for exceptional performance in his daily duties but also his care and concern for helping others off the clock. Corporal Southerland is known as the "Go-To" guy by his peers when it comes to knowledge about reports, forms, collisions, procedures, and policy.

Corporal Southerland went above and beyond the call of duty multiple times last year. In January of 2016, he responded to a BOLO of an occupant firing shots out of his vehicle. Corporal Southerland located the vehicle and he safely and efficiently conducted a felony traffic stop with other officers. Both driver and passenger were arrested without incident for illegal narcotics. Weapons were seized during the stop and both occupants were wanted on felony charges.

Cpl. Southerland is also active in his community. A citizen called the Troop Six office to commend Cpl. Southerland for his assistance to a mother who had four kids with her when she was involved in a collision. After investigating her collision, she expressed to him that she was experiencing financial troubles. He purchased brake fluid with his own money, helped get her vehicle running and followed the family to their home to ensure they made it safely. He also worked to help a fellow trooper's father by holding a fundraiser to help offset medical bills following an accident.

Cpl. Stephen D. Southerland was also recognized for the Director's Award for Exceptional Public Service for his actions in going the extra mile to assist a motorist following a collision and his assistance to a fellow trooper when his father became ill.

**Troop 7:**  
**Trooper Lewis M. Metts**  
**Post B (Calhoun/Orangeburg)**

Trooper Metts is recognized for responding to a BOLO and apprehending dangerous felons without incident during a traffic stop.

On October 10, 2016, an Orangeburg gas station was robbed. A fellow trooper broadcast the vehicle description, tag and last known direction of travel. Trooper Metts spotted the vehicle traveling west on I-26 and followed it. After traveling on several different roads in Lexington County, the car stopped in Gaston. Lexington deputies arrived at the scene and assisted Trooper Metts in conducting a felony traffic stop on the vehicle. Everyone in the car complied and was arrested without incident. It was found that the rear seat passenger had been shot in the incident at the gas station. He was transported to Palmetto Richland Hospital by EMS. The other two suspects in the car were transported to the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office.

Troopers later learned that the occupant had been shot as he tried to rob someone after a meeting through Craigslist to buy an I-Phone. During the transaction, a physical altercation ensued and the seller pulled a gun and shot the armed robber in the abdomen. The brother of the wounded man then exited the car and shot the seller in the head, killing him instantly. The handgun used in the murder was recovered from the car at the time of arrest. All of the suspects are being charged with 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder, kidnapping, armed robbery, and use of a firearm during a violent crime.

**OVERALL TROOPER OF THE YEAR**  
**Troop Eight \*\* Also, presented Director's Medal of Valor Award**  
**L/Cpl. Kenneth M. Small**  
**Safety Improvement Team**

L/Cpl. Kenneth Small is recognized for his efforts in saving a child who had a seizure and stopped breathing. The incident occurred on November 10, 2016, when L/Cpl. Small was conducting a traffic stop on US-501 in Marion County. During the traffic stop, a vehicle pulled behind his patrol car and a woman exited her vehicle and began frantically yelling that her daughter, who was in the backseat, was not responding.

L/Cpl. Small went to the vehicle and noticed that the child was unresponsive in the backseat. He notified dispatch of the situation and then began CPR. The little girl was still not breathing and did not have a pulse. After doing chest compressions and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, the child began to breathe lightly but soon after, she stopped breathing again. L/Cpl. Small performed CPR again and the child began to breathe but she then had a seizure. L/Cpl. Small continued to work with the child until EMS arrived. The child was transported and was okay following the incident.

L/Cpl. Small later visited with the family in their home and had a chance to meet the little girl he saved. Those involved in the situation said the child likely would not have survived the episode without L/Cpl. Smalls' intervention.

L/Cpl. Small is on his second career with the Highway Patrol. He retired in February 2009 after serving 25 years with the Highway Patrol. In November 2009, he returned to the Safety Improvement Team where he is currently assigned to SIT Region III. Before returning to the Highway Patrol, he inspired his son, who currently serves in Troop Five, to join the Highway Patrol in 2007.

L/Cpl. Kenneth M. Small is also recognized today for a Director's Medal of Valor Award for his persistence and calm that – no doubt—saved this child's life.

**Troop Nine, Also presented Director's Medal of Valor Award**  
**Sergeant Jeremy T. Leach**  
**Pee Dee MAIT**

Sgt. Jeremy Leach is recognized today for his efforts to save a man who had run off the roadway and into a swamp.

On March 24th, Sergeant Leach spent much of his day in the Pee Dee MAIT office reviewing investigations.

While on his way home, in a rural section of Florence County near the Little Swamp River, Sergeant Leach observed a vehicle on the side of the roadway. However, Sergeant Leach noticed something seemed wrong when he observed a male subject run to the vehicle, then immediately back from where he had come. Sergeant Leach pulled over observed a man exiting the swampy water yelling, "He can't swim!"

At that point, Sergeant Leach spotted another man in the swamp struggling to keep his head above the water. Sergeant Leach jumped into the freezing, dark swamp. Sergeant Leach struggled through the waters in the swamp to reach the area where he last observed the man in distress. Unfortunately, when he reached the man, he was already submerged and despite Sgt. Leach's brave efforts to rescue him, the man in the incident drowned. However, this act of bravery was emblematic of the day-to-day commitment Sgt. Leach shows on the job.

Sgt. Leach manages the daily operations for the Pee Dee region of MAIT, one of the busiest regions in the state. In 2016, the Pee Dee region was involved in 189 investigations including 17 hit and run cases. Due to Sergeant Leach's attention to detail, professionalism and leadership, 88%, of those hit-and-run collisions have been solved.

In addition to being the Troop Nine nominee, Sgt. Jeremy T. Leach was also recognized for a Director's Medal of Valor Award for his courage and valiant efforts to save the life of a drowning man.

**Troop 10:**

**Lance Cpl. Joseph Stanley Sr.**  
**Insurance Enforcement Unit**  
**Jasper/Colleton counties**

Lance Corporal Joseph Stanley, Sr. is recognized today for his consistent dedication to duty and going the extra mile during Hurricane Matthew duty.

L/Cpl. Stanley always gives a 100 percent in everything he is asked to do. He has served in the Insurance Enforcement Unit in an outstanding manner. Last year, he made 2,235 contacts and confiscated 421 suspended vehicle tags in an effort to remove uninsured drivers from the road.

Those who know Joe are aware that he is quiet, hardworking, and compassionate. During Hurricane Matthew, Lance Corporal Stanley was assigned to hurricane duty.

He worked in Beaufort and Jasper Counties for as much as 12-14 hours daily to secure the area during the storm. He continued with his assignment even though his own property had sustained damage. This was almost a repeat of his performance from the year before as he served during the state's historic flood in 2015.

He also shows considerable compassion and care for others. In late December, the Insurance Enforcement Unit lost a beloved member of its team. L/Cpl. Stanley stood alongside the family of the trooper during his brief illness, and he was the first to respond to the family following his fellow trooper's death.

**Troop 11, Also presented Director's Award for Exceptional Service**  
**L/Cpl. David Jones**  
**Community Relations Unit**

L/Cpl. David Jones is recognized for his efforts to help Louisiana Highway Patrol families affected by devastating floods there.

In August of 2016, the southern parts of the state of Louisiana experienced catastrophic flooding as a result of prolonged rainfall. L/Cpl. Jones watched the news, remembering the outpouring of compassion the state of South Carolina received during the floods of 2015. He wanted to re-pay that in some way.

While watching news footage, he noticed one home that was completely flooded. L/Cpl. Jones observed the campaign hat of a Louisiana State Trooper floating across the water inside this home.

L/Cpl. Jones contacted the Louisiana Trooper's Association and was informed that over 80 troopers and employees had lost their homes, or their homes were severely damaged as a result of this flood. He wanted to help in some way.

L/Cpl. Jones builds fishing equipment including full T-Tops for center console boats. He decided to post on social media that he would build a complete T-top for someone at a cost of

\$4,500. Within a short period of time, a man contacted him and offered to help with the donation by paying \$5,000 because he wanted to help also. Also, L/Cpl. Jones purchased a 2007 Jeep Liberty with his own money and filled the Jeep with construction equipment.

On August 27, 2016, L/Cpl. Jones and his family traveled to Baton Rouge La. to deliver the money and supplies. The Trooper who received the Jeep had a 3-month-old child. He had lost his home and all his vehicles. L/Cpl. Jones' act of kindness and brotherhood were deeply appreciated in Louisiana.

In addition to his nomination as Troop 11 Trooper of the Year, L/Cpl. Jones was recognized with the Director's Award of Exceptional Public Service for his efforts to serve his fellow troopers and for his heartfelt compassion in the above scenario.

### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

#### **Blythewood TCC Nominee: TCO Ashley F. Glover**

TCO Ashley Glover began her TCO career in Greenville in August 2010. She transferred to the Blythewood TCC where she has made the center and Columbia her home. TCO Glover is a very knowledgeable dispatcher and strives to be an example for newer TCOs to follow. TCO Glover shows and receives a great amount of respect to and from her co-workers, officers, and the general public.

TCO Glover is always willing to assist her fellow co-workers and often volunteers to assist the center, whether it is with training new TCOs or assisting the supervisors by reviewing and completing vital paperwork. TCO Glover is a model operator and is a leader within the Telecommunications Unit.

#### **Charleston TCC TCO Stephanie Shepherd**

TCO Stephanie Shepherd is recognized for her dedication and her ability to stay calm and have a great attitude in the most stressful situations.

TCO Shepherd began working with the Charleston TCC in August 2015. TCO Shepherd caught on very quickly to the training and was always willing to take advice or ask questions, if needed. In a very short time she was working independently and assisting others in the radio room.

TCO Shepherd is always willing to come in to assist in coverage if another TCO is out. She does an excellent job of packing her CAD calls with information.

In the short time she has been with the Highway Patrol, TCO Shepherd has worked several natural disasters, including the historical flood in October 2015 as well as Hurricane Matthew. TCO Shepherd lives in Ladson with her 7-year-old son, Li-am, and her husband Ryan.

**Florence TCC**  
**TCO Bradford D. Lee**

TCO Bradford D. Lee is recognized for his work ethic and his assistance in helping a trooper apprehend a drunk driver.

TCO Lee has shown dedication and a genuine enthusiasm for his job and often agrees to schedule changes and/or adjustments necessary to ensure proper shift coverage.

TCO Lee has a passion for computers, which is demonstrated in his promptly notifying supervisors about problems related to CAD updates and/or NCIC messages that need the attention of the Terminal Agency Coordinator. When his radio is busy with traffic, he makes extra effort to multi-task answering telephones and entering calls for service in CAD.

On July 1, 2016, TCO Lee was working the Horry radio. He was serving as a call taker/dispatcher for a call where he stayed continuously on the telephone with a complainant reporting an intoxicated driver until a trooper could make the traffic stop on the vehicle.

TCO Lee also serves as an officer with the Civil Air Patrol and he serves his local community as a firefighter with the Floydale Fire Department in Dillon when he is not on duty. TCO Lee is a Florence native, currently residing in Dillon with his wife, Lisa, and their two daughters ages one and five.

**Greenville TCC:**  
**TCO Hope Nichols**

Telecommunications Operator IV Hope Nichols is recognized for her calm demeanor and positive attitude. She is always calm whether she is handling a pursuit on the radio, an angry caller, or a distraught motorist who has just been in a collision.

TCO Nichols is always willing to help out in the office -- by listening to other TCOs' radios if they need to step away, helping them complete NCIC paperwork when they are busy on the radio, and helping answer their phones.

Nichols has an excellent working relationship with the other employees in the office and is often making jokes to help relieve the tension in the office. Nichols is always willing to take on additional job duties in the office and has helped with training new TCOs since being certified as a trainer in 2011.

**\*\* SPECIAL AWARDS \*\***

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**Director's Medal of Valor:**

Trooper Rebecca L. Winstead: Troop Three, Post C, is recognized for her efforts on December 14, 2016, when she stopped a vehicle on White Horse Road in Greenville County for a seatbelt

violation. The driver gave Trooper Winstead false information and the vehicle was reported stolen. Trooper Winstead called for backup. As she approached the suspect's vehicle and opened the door, the suspect accelerated, dragging Trooper Winstead a short distance, causing her to fall and strike the roadway.

Trooper Winstead was injured but managed to return to her patrol vehicle and pursue the suspect's vehicle for a short distance. She was given permission by her supervisor to perform a PIT maneuver on the vehicle, which disabled the suspect's vehicle.

The suspect fled on foot but Trooper Winstead was able to take the suspect into custody with the assistance of a State Transport Police unit. Trooper Winstead was transported to the hospital by EMS and was treated and released that night.

**Director's Medal of Valor:**

Sergeant Kirk B. Winburn (**Troop Four**)

Trooper Morgan E. Benson (**Troop Four**)

L/Cpl. Cedric Morgan is recognized today for his heroic actions and leadership in an attempt to save motorists from their burning vehicles following a crash. A suspect, who was fleeing from troopers, ran a stop light and struck another vehicle, causing both vehicles to catch fire. L/Cpl. Morgan directed another trooper to apprehend the suspect who caused the collision while he went to check on the other motorist whose vehicle was becoming engulfed in flames. L/Cpl. Morgan ran back to his patrol car to retrieve his fire extinguisher, while telling other responding units to get their fire extinguishers as well.

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**Director's Award for Exceptional Public Service**

Sgt. Rupert B. Pope

Troop 11

Sgt. Rupert B. Pope of the Special Operations Unit receives the Director's Award of Exceptional Public Service. Sgt. Pope was assigned to protecting the residents of Socastee during the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew.

He became familiar with several families who had been affected by the Hurricane. On his last day working there, he gave his business card with his personal cell phone number on it to a family along with a \$100 bill and told them to contact him if they needed anything. They told Sgt. Pope they were financially okay, but he encouraged them to pass the money along if they

did not need it. That evening, they were able to give the money to two elderly ladies who were displaced from their homes and suffering financial hardship from the storm.

**\*\* Other special award winners listed above. Some troopers were both the Trooper of the Year nominee and a recipient of a special award. \*\*\***