

South Carolina Trooper of the Year Ceremony 2008

Troop: One

Nominee: Lance Corporal G.A. Griggs

The Troop One selection for Trooper of the year is Lance Corporal Greg A. Griggs.

L/Cpl. Griggs is a trooper held in high regard by both his supervisors and peers for his enthusiasm, work ethic and dedication to saving lives. Lance Corporal Griggs excels in his enforcement activities but also has great passion for educating the community on traffic safety as well.

Lance Corporal Griggs is innovative in seeking ways to help reduce fatalities in his Troop. He makes an average of (50) fifty Driving Under the Influence arrests each year. On a Troop level, he is a (4) four time Mark Coates award winner for excellence in Criminal Enforcement. He also focuses on community outreach, presenting safety talks throughout the schools of Post B. He volunteers many hours recruiting, guiding and mentoring young adults as they explore the possibility of a future career with the Highway Patrol.

In 2007, he was asked to serve on the Department of Public Safety/ Department of Transportation crash reduction work group, he accepted the challenge with enthusiasm. The group is aimed at reducing fatal crashes through enforcement, education and engineering.

In 2003 Lance Corporal Griggs was selected by his peers to receive the Post B Trooper of The Year award. In addition to his normal duties, he is a Certified Marijuana Analyst, Child Safety Seat Technician and is a model Field Training Officer.

Lance Corporal Griggs is a native of Chesterfield County and has been assigned to Troop One, Post B (Kershaw/Lee Counties) since joining the Highway Patrol in March of 2002. He has served with the Hartsville Police Department and the Richland County Sheriff's Department. He is a 1996 graduate from McBee High School and has earned an Associate's Degree from Florence-Darlington Technical College.

Lance Corporal Griggs is married to Mica, a native of Sumter County. Mica serves as the Victim Advocate and on Patrol for the Hartsville Police Department. They have a 2 year old daughter, Morgan. They attend Union United Methodist Church in McBee.

Troop Two

Nominee: Lance Corporal John T. Galloway

The Troop Two selection for Trooper of the Year is Lance Corporal John T. Galloway.

L/Cpl. Galloway has established an excellent working relationship with fellow law enforcement agencies. He is a life-long resident of McCormick County and has devoted his career to professionally and consistently performing his duties within Edgefield, McCormick and Saluda Counties (Post C). L/Cpl. Galloway proudly represents the Highway Patrol as a member of the Honor Guard.

He has been a valuable member of the South Carolina Highway Patrol for the past eight years. Prior to joining the Patrol, Galloway was on active duty with the United States Army for nine years.

L/Cpl. Galloway spends his free time heavily involved in community activities. He volunteers at the Mims Community Center, which is a local organization, designed to assist at-risk youths. He is a member of Big Brothers and Big Sisters in the McCormick area where he has mentored and made a positive impact on a number of young people. L/Cpl. Galloway also works with area youth as a baseball coach. He is a Master Mason in Lodge 131 in McCormick and active in the Springfield AME Church where he serves as a deacon.

He comes from a large family of three sisters and seven brothers. He spends much of his time assisting and caring for his mother who suffered a stroke while he was attending Highway Patrol Basic Training. John enjoys spending time with his daughter, Johnna Galloway.

Troop Three

Nominee: Trooper First Class D.A. Rieser

The Troop Three selection for Trooper of the Year is Trooper First Class Douglas A. Rieser.

Trooper First Class Rieser is driven to make the roads safer because he understands first-hand the devastating consequences of impaired driving crashes. In 1999, TFC Rieser was struck by a 19-year-old who was Driving Under the Influence. Rieser has turned this devastating experience into a positive by devoting his career to law enforcement and trying to prevent others from such a tragedy. TFC Rieser is closely involved in his community, visiting local schools to share his life-changing story with young people.

Even though he is still a relatively young Trooper in terms of experience, he gives his all during every daily task and assignment.

Trooper First Class Rieser was born in Buffalo, NY. He attended State University of New York at Buffalo where he majored in psychology.

TFC Rieser was employed by the Erie County Sheriffs Office from 1987-1989. In 1995, TFC Rieser won the Niagara Regional Tough Man contest and continued on to win the title of Mr. America in 1996. For two years in a row, TFC Rieser won the title of Mr. World.

The following year, TFC Rieser was involved in a serious collision in Greenville County that would change his life. Rieser received 27 broken bones, lost part of his lung, suffered three (3) broken vertebrae in his neck and was partially paralyzed. Doctors told TFC Rieser he could never exercise again. Within about six months, he overcame his injuries and fully regained his strength and function.

To further his career in law enforcement, he moved to Georgia where he was employed by the Department of Corrections (maximum security) in Alto, GA, from 2001-2004. While training to become a police officer in South Carolina at the Criminal Justice Academy, TFC Rieser won the J. P. Strom Award. During 2004-2005 he worked for the Pendleton Police Department.

In July of 2005, TFC Rieser became a member of the South Carolina Highway Patrol; winning a special award during that phase of training at the Academy. He was the recipient of the 2007 Randall L. Hester Award, an award that is voted on by all Troopers within Post A (Anderson) and given to the Trooper who displays the utmost dedication and selfless service to his job duties and to the motoring public.

TFC Rieser is married to Donna, his wife of 24 years. They have four children, and reside in Anderson County.

Troop Four

Nominee: L/Cpl. Roland Scott Bennett

The Troop Four selection for Trooper of the Year is Lance Corporal Roland Scott Bennett.

Lance Corporal Bennett has made it his mission to do his part to make the highways of South Carolina the safest in the nation. He believes one person can make a big difference. L/Cpl Bennett believes strongly in the CREP concept and Fatality Reduction Plan. Shortly after joining the Patrol, L/Cpl Bennett realized the alarming number of impaired drivers on our highways and the dangers they posed to the citizens. He made it his personal goal to arrest as many impaired violators as possible to make South Carolina highways safer for the motoring public. During 2007, L/Cpl Bennett made 72 arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

In addition to strong, proactive enforcement, he also believes that safety education is a vital companion to enforcement in reducing crashes and fatalities within our communities.

L/Cpl. Bennett has developed a strong partnership with the local school resource officer and the administration of Fort Mill High School. He works to push out the DPS educational message among students and faculty alike regarding the dangers of driving without wearing seatbelts, speeding, and driving under the influence. He consistently provides safety presentations because he has a true love for people.

He joined the S.C. Highway Patrol on January 17, 2003, and graduated from Patrol school on June 6, 2003. After serving his first year in Troop One, Richland County, he transferred to Troop Four, York County in July, 2004.

L/Cpl. Bennett is well respected by the community, his peers. He received the 2007 Trooper of the Year Award in York County from the Optimists Club for his outstanding commitment to public safety. L/Cpl Bennett has also received many commendations from members of the public regarding his courteous manner.

Scott is a member of Sisk Memorial Baptist Church, and serves as a Deacon and Sunday school teacher. Scott also serves on the Youth Council mentoring young people and spending quality time with his wife, Amy Jo, and two daughters, Emma and Lexi. He completed a visited to Turkey last year as part of a missionary team to assist the people of that country and distribute Bibles.

Troop Five

Nominee: L/Cpl. Charles H. Lowder

The Troop Five selection for Trooper of the Year is Lance Corporal Charles H. Lowder.

L/Cpl. Lowder demonstrates a work ethic that is beyond reproach. He has earned the respect of his peers, supervisors, other law enforcement agency personnel and the citizens within the community he serves. He continually assists his colleagues with their duties. He demonstrates what can be done by serving the community through one's chosen profession.

L/Cpl. Lowder is not only an exceptional trooper but an active leader in the community. He is a member of the Highway Patrol PEER Team. His peers consistently turn to him for guidance and direction. He receives frequent commendation letters from the motoring public as well for going out of his way to assist them.

He coaches a youth baseball team at the Pamplico Recreational Department ensuring the youth have an opportunity to bond and grow through sports by developing teamwork and life skills through sports' activities.

L/Cpl. Lowder organizes the Adopt-a-Family program for Post B. Lowder personally helps deliver the gifts and food on Christmas Eve to families, spending time with each family and ensuring they have what they need.

For the past 10 years, Lowder has organized the Troop Five Make-a-Wish Foundation Golf Event. He coordinates details throughout the process to ensure children's wishes are granted. He has been instrumental in seeing 10 wishes granted over the years and raising more than \$100,000 for this wonderful cause.

L/Cpl. Lowder and his wife, Debbie, have two sons and live in Pamplico.

Troop Six

Nominee: L/Cpl. J.A. Cardona

The Troop Six selection for Trooper of the Year is Lance Corporal Jaime A. Cardona.

L/Cpl J. A. Cardona carries out his duties as a state trooper in an exemplary manner. He has a true passion and love for enforcement but also believes very strongly in community outreach and education. Because he is bilingual, Cardona has been able to help bridge gaps in communication between law enforcement and the Spanish-speaking communities. He has

used these skills to help in both enforcement and safety education for the growing Hispanic population in the Lowcountry and other areas of the state.

He was recently instrumental in solving a hit-and-run collision in which a young girl received severe injuries. He went door to door in a predominately Hispanic neighborhood, speaking to residents. Several tips came in the next day resulting in an arrest of the suspect.

Cardona is a five year veteran of the Patrol. He has repeatedly demonstrated excellent work standards and ethics and a positive attitude. He is well respected by his supervisors, as well as his peers. He was voted by his fellow troopers as the 2007 Post A Trooper of the Year.

L/Cpl. Cardona has excellent people skills allowing the Highway Patrol to gain entry into Spanish-speaking venues to share lifesaving safety skills and messages. This has been vitally important in communicating important safety messages such as child restraint and drunken driving prevention.

On numerous occasions, he has traveled to various locations in the state outside of Troop Six to participate in Hispanic festivals and community gatherings. He readily donates his time to participate in these. Cardona fosters a positive image of law enforcement with his outstanding communication and people skills.

He also is devoted to working in the community. He donates his personal time to help at a homeless shelter and participates in the literacy program in schools. He also has taken it upon himself to tutor his fellow troopers on speaking and interpreting basic Spanish. He has served as an interpreter on many occasions, not only to the Patrol, but to other agencies as well. He has readily furnished his personal cell phone number to numerous departments and individuals, offering his assistance.

L/Cpl. Cardona is married with three children. Prior to his employment with the Patrol, he was in the United States Navy, where he served as a Corpsman.

Troop Seven

Nominee: L/Cpl. Stephen J. Pearrow

The Troop Seven selection for Trooper of the Year is Lance Corporal Stephen J. Pearrow.

L/Cpl. Pearrow has distinguished himself as a trooper who is dedicated to learning everything he can to excel in his job as a trooper. He has an excellent grasp of traffic laws and is devoted to conducting thorough collision investigations. He has become known as a trooper that can be relied upon to conduct his duties in a notable and exceptional manner. He is a certified firearms instructor and often assists with firearms training for Patrol classes and annual in-service.

Lance Corporal Pearrow not only serves the State of South Carolina as a Trooper but also volunteers his spare time to public service driven by a desire to help others. In 2002, he developed the S.T.A.R.R. (Search Tactics and Rescue/Recovery) team which is a non-profit agency. STARR consists of volunteers who spend their free time assisting law enforcement agencies in missing person searches.

He is certified in training dogs and handlers in narcotics, tracking, explosives, arson, and human remains detection. He has been on many missions throughout the United States, including assisting authorities with the recovery of bodies in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and most recently the Sugar Plant explosion and fire in Savannah.

Lance Corporal Pearrow was born in St. Augustine, Florida. After moving to South Carolina, he attended Irmo High School where he graduated in 1990. He continued his education at Midlands Technical College and received an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice in 1992. In November of 1993, Lance Corporal Pearrow applied for the Highway Patrol and was denied due to poor vision. Determined to become a trooper, he took extensive steps having his vision corrected surgically. After recovering from the surgery, he reapplied to the Highway Patrol in 1995 and was accepted. Upon completing Patrol school in November 1996, he was assigned to Orangeburg County.

He has the respect and admiration of his peers, supervisors and the community he serves.

Troop Eight – Omitted due to safety concerns

Troop Nine – MAIT

Nominee: Cpl. J.C. Rikard Jr.

The Troop Nine selection for Trooper of the Year is Corporal J.C. Rikard.

Cpl. Rikard has distinguished himself within the MAIT unit by developing an atmosphere of teamwork among his colleagues. He has developed excellent working relationships with fellow troopers, other law enforcement agencies, coroners and solicitors. This skill has proved invaluable in solving difficult cases.

One such case occurred in June 2007. Rikard responded to a hit-and-run fatality in York County where a teenager was struck near midnight and not found until daybreak. Rikard processed the scene and recovered small vehicle parts. He worked all day on a Saturday in the Rock Hill area until he developed a possible suspect vehicle range. He developed a flier and worked with the CRO to get this released to the media. Within three days, the hits made from the flier led to the identification of a suspect.

The suspect was found and charged with Felony DUI and Leaving the Scene of a Collision Involving Death. The suspect pleaded guilty within two weeks.

This is one example of how thorough investigative techniques and good working relationships paid off.

Rikard began his career in 1999 after serving with the Saluda County Sheriff's Office. He was originally stationed in Troop 2. During this time, he received the Mark Coates ACE Award for Troop 2.

In September 2004, he was transferred to the MAIT Unit assigned to the Midlands, then later the Foothills Team. In two years, he has become a mentor for younger troopers, serving as a field training officer for new MAIT personnel. In 2007, he received the Traffic Safety Officer Award from the Criminal Justice Academy.

Cpl. Rikard and his wife, Belinda, have two children, Natalie and Kelby. They reside in Saluda. He volunteers in his community with the Saluda County Fire Service. He attends St. Paul Methodist Church where he has been the Youth Fellowship Leader since 2004.

Troop Eleven – Headquarters

Nominee: L/Cpl. Robert Beres

The Troop Eleven selection for Trooper of the Year is Lance Corporal Robert Beres.

Lance Corporal Beres is a 13-year veteran of the South Carolina Highway Patrol and is assigned to the Community Relations' Unit where he serves in Troop Seven. He has been assigned to Troop Six for most of his career where he is well-known in the Lowcountry for his generosity and love for his job as a trooper.

He has only been assigned to the Highway Patrol's Community Relations' Unit for a year, but has made a tremendous difference already by reaching out in the community and taking refreshing and innovative approaches to educating teen drivers and others about safety issues.

He has been instrumental in establishing partnerships within Troop 7 for safety talks in the schools, businesses, civic organizations and the Law Enforcement Networks. Not only has he shined in the area of community relations but he has taken on extra responsibilities assisting with large community-outreach efforts in neighboring Troop 6.

His early life shaped his approach to difficult situations and instilled in him a love for people. Beres was born in a refugee camp in Baden, Austria. His parents escaped Hungary, which was overrun with poverty and hunger. At the age of 2, his family had saved enough money to travel to America in hopes of a better life.

He and his sister learned early in life what it was like to endure incredible hardship. The struggles from their childhood coupled with hard work and discipline, created compassion in them and a drive to succeed. Both later became law enforcement officers determined to help others.

On numerous occasions throughout his career, Lance Corporal Beres has unselfishly put the needs of others ahead of his own. One such example is when he sold his boat and donated the proceeds of that sale to a neighbor who lost everything she owned in a house fire. He also coordinated efforts that led to food, appliances and other items being donated to the family in need.

He is active in the schools and works especially hard to create positive interaction between children and teens and law enforcement. He often visits schools on his own time to interact with the children ... eating lunch with them and reading to them during school hours.

On many occasions, he directs traffic in front of area schools so buses and cars can get onto the roadway safely. L/Cpl. Beres assists other Troopers with church functions and festivals. He does these good deeds in a quiet way, not expecting recognition or credit. He is well-respected and well-known, which has opened many doors to allow the Patrol to visit diverse venues and share lifesaving messages.

He resides in Summerville with his wife, Kimberly, and son, Colt.

**The 2007 Trooper of the Year is
Robert Beres, Troop 11, Headquarters**