

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***OWENS WINS SOLICITOR'S AWARD FOR CHEROKEE COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT EXCELLENCE***

When the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office has a tough case to solve, they often turn to Detective Harvey Owens.

The veteran deputy's success and his dedication to his profession earned him the 2010 Solicitor's Award for Cherokee County Law Enforcement Excellence. Owens accepted the award tonight during a law enforcement appreciation dinner at the Cherokee Shrine Club.

Owens was the lead detective on a triple homicide that occurred April 17, 2010 in the Oakdale community of Cherokee County. Owens developed Cass Smith as a suspect early in the investigation but the probe was complicated by the fact that Smith denied any involvement and he proclaimed his innocence to local media members. Owens stayed focused throughout the investigation and he strategically worked with fellow officers to secure the evidence needed to charge Smith with three counts of murder. Smith is detained in the Cherokee County Detention Center awaiting a capital trial.

"This case is a good example of the focus and professionalism that Detective Owens brings to work every day," Solicitor Trey Gowdy said. "He is a valuable public servant."

Owens joined the Sheriff's Office in 2000 as a patrol deputy. He has also worked as a school resource officer and as a member of the organization's traffic unit. His current caseload also includes burglary, forgery, assault and other special investigations.

Owens' prize package includes a nice plaque, two tickets to a University of South Carolina football game and a free BMW for a weekend. He will also have his name added to a plaque that hangs in the Cherokee County Solicitor's Office.

A committee of police from city, county and state agencies nominated and named the winner. The finalists for the award – Highway Lance Cpl. Jamie Greene and Sgt. Ronnie Anderson of the Gaffney Police Department were also recognized. Retiring Sheriff Bill Blanton also received a plaque to commemorate his 20 years of service as the county's top law enforcement officer.

Generous donations by dozens of community leaders help make the night a success.

"I appreciate the community's willingness to support such a worthy cause," Gowdy said. "Police officers and their families richly deserve a night of rest and relaxation for the many sacrifices they make to keep us safe."

For more information, contact Murray Glenn at 809-4892.

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