

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **HILL WINS SOLICITOR'S AWARD FOR SPARTANBURG COUNTY OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

Investigator Tiffany Hill of the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office received the Solicitor Barry J. Barnette Officer of the Year Award for Spartanburg County at the annual Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner on Tuesday. The event is hosted by the Seventh Circuit Solicitor's Office in appreciation of local law enforcement's contributions to the community and to recognize outstanding service.

The event was held at the Cleveland Park Pavilion and was well attended by elected officials, law enforcement members and their families. Spartanburg County Coroner Rusty Clevenger led the blessing of the meal shared by all before awards were presented.

Solicitor Barry J. Barnette presented the Officer of the Year Award to Investigator Tiffany Hill who has served the community as a member of the Spartanburg Sheriff's Office since 2017. Inv. Hill began her career in the Sheriff's Office as a road deputy and then transitioned a year later to the Criminal Investigative Division to work Special Victims cases. Hill's intuitive thinking, outstanding work-ethic, and phenomenal rapport in working with everyone from victims to suspects to local agencies was highlighted. Solicitor Barnette remarked, "I can't say enough about the work she does. Kids at the Children's Advocacy Center describe certain things - paintings or furniture - and she will go and find those things at the scene." Inv. Hill received a BMW package for the weekend as well as a SIG Sauer handgun donated by Travis Moore of the South Carolina House of Representatives District 33.

Austin Aldridge who served with the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office received the Trey Gowdy Achievement Award for his contributions to law enforcement. Deputy Aldridge served with the Sheriff's Office from 2019 until he passed away in the line of duty on June 21, 2022. Aldridge was a beloved member of the local community and the law enforcement community. In a profession that sees the gamut of humanity, Aldridge remained a kindhearted and patient steward. In presenting the award to Aldridge's family, Solicitor Barnette remarked, "I know this is an award you never wanted to receive, but he deserves." Solicitor Barnette added, "Austin stood up for people."

The Bill Barnet Citizen Award, named for the former mayor of Spartanburg, was awarded to Latoya Lee who intervened at a July 8<sup>th</sup> robbery in the parking lot of the Fresh Market on East Main Street in Spartanburg. Lee was commended for her quick thinking and chutzpah not only for her efforts to impede the suspect but also for her caring assistance offered to the victim of the crime. The award was presented by local attorney and former SC House of Representatives member and Speaker Pro Tempore, Doug Smith, who was also at the Fresh Market scene during the robbery. In a touching surprise, Doug Smith additionally received an award recognizing his efforts to attempt to stop the suspect from leaving the scene of the crime.

Spartanburg Police Department Investigator Chindar Ryant and South Carolina Highway Patrol Lance Corporal Kevin Rennecker were recognized for their impact in the community. After ten years with the Spartanburg Police Department, Lance Corporal Rennecker transitioned to the South Carolina Highway Patrol three years ago with the determination to broaden his outreach and service. He is proactive and passionate about reducing the number of impaired drivers on South Carolina's highways. Investigator Ryant has served with the Spartanburg Police Department for the past ten years. Early in her career, she volunteered to assist with domestic violence cases and worked with the Homefront Initiative for follow-up on cases. For the past four years Inv. Ryant has worked as a member of the Criminal Investigative Bureau and has continued to demonstrate an astute attention to detail. Her work as a witness in trial was emphasized.

Joseph Hawes, Pacolet's Police Chief, was also recognized for his work in the local community. Hawes was appointed as Chief of Police for Pacolet last December and tasked with rebuilding the department following the resignation of all members of its active police force last fall. Chief Hawes has served in law enforcement in South Carolina for over twenty years and additionally served as an officer with the Department of Defense prior. Chief Hawes worked to staff and restore the department within his first seven months as Pacolet's Chief. He also created first-ever community outreach events in Pacolet to strengthen the relationship between the town and law enforcement.

Generous donations by over forty community leaders and local businesses helped make the Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner a success. Sponsors were recognized both by Solicitor Barnette and in a successive presentation at Cleveland Park. "I appreciate the community's support of this worthwhile cause and the ability to shine a light on the good work of our local law enforcement," Solicitor Barnette said. "Supporting those who support us is important," and he advocated for attendees to support local business sponsors.

From the Office of Seventh Circuit Solicitor Barry J. Barnette; for more information, contact Amy Goulding at 864-596-2575 or [agoulding@spartanburgcounty.org](mailto:agoulding@spartanburgcounty.org).

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