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Officers, families gather for annual SPD awards banquet

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Body

Aug. 23--Members of the Stillwater Police Department and their families gathered Wednesday at the Community Center for its annual dinner and awards banquet as it recognized officers for their work the previous year in the community.

Those recognized included the members of Stillwater's Multi-Jurisdictional Special Operations Team for its state championship in a May SWAT competition; several officers for making decisions in the field that ultimately helped saved the life of someone in need; and the two officers who were cleared by the Payne County District Attorney's Office in a fatal shooting after they responded to an armed suicidal man in March.

The "Police Star" medal was given to Micheal Casteel and Trevor Meridith, two SPD veterans who made contact the night of March 28 with **William John Dominguez** near Stillwater High School after Dominguez told an SPD dispatcher he was feeling suicidal and considering jumping into oncoming traffic. Audio from one of the officers tied to a cruiser dash cam depicted the officers making contact with Dominguez before the man pulled a pistol and knife from his pants and the officers shot him.

"This award is to members who distinguish themselves by acts of bravery or service that result in the apprehension of a serious felony offender or public safety and the safety of the citizens of Stillwater is assured by the successful apprehension of such offenders," Lt. Dale Higgins said. Higgins said nominations can come from anyone within the department and a committee weighs each nomination before awarding respective members of the department.

The SOT team, made up of law enforcement and first responders from Payne County, came forward for recognition at the end of the banquet and honored Dr. Charles Olson, who has been a reserve officer for SPD since 2007, as the SOT's member of the year. Higgins has been with the SOT team for 12 years but stepped away from the team after its win in the state competition May 2. Higgins said Stillwater's victory in the competition will bring it here in 2019.

The SOT began in 1986 and had less than 10 members; there has been as many as 25 members on a team during the course of the year, and several of the members will participate in November's national competition in Florida.

Members of the award-winning SOT were Lt. Dale Higgins; Sgt. Cody Manuel, who know leads the team; Deputy Bill Myers of Payne County Sheriff's Department; Detective David Adney; Detective Brett Moore; Sgt. Kyle McCool of OSUPD; Officer Trevor Meridith; Officer Daryl Gee; Lt. Jason Stromsky of Stillwater Fire Department; Sgt. Elliott Blakey; Officer Jeremiah Johnson; Officer Newly McSpadden; Lt. A.J. Westermier of SFD; Sgt. Jeremy Rager; Officer Shawn Millermon; Officer Chance Whiteley; Officer Justin Sappington of Cushing Police Department; Officer Josh Carson; Deputy Dan Nack of PCSO; Officer Charles Rivas; Officer Marc Walling of OSUPD; Lt. Mike Wilda of

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SFD; Paramedic Daniel Myers of Cushing Fire Department; Doctor Charles Olson of Stillwater Medical Center and Officer Rico Alvarado.

Whiteley, Millermon and William Cluck were all recipients of the "Life-Saving" medal, which Higgins said is awarded to those "whose decisive non-combatant actions saved the life of a citizen or another." City Manager Norman McNickle and Detective Thomas Comstock received "Command Commendation" award for "through a single act of consistent outstanding service have significantly impacted and improved the ability of the department to fulfill its mission;" Lt. Kerry Bell also received the award.

Detective J.P. Johnson was given the "Distinguished Service" medal for exhibiting outstanding achievement in humanitarianism in the handling of leadership during a special assignment or special leadership. Rachael Nassar was given an award as the member of the year in Stillwater's Community Outreach Program.

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