

Treasure Coast Fire Chiefs' Association News Release

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Treasure Coast Fire Chiefs' Association Honors Local Heroes

St. Lucie County, FL – The Treasure Coast Fire Chiefs' Association (TCFCA) honored local firefighters during their Annual Banquet on Friday, January 29 at Gator Trace Golf and Country Club in Ft. Pierce.

Dan Wouters receives Emergency Service Provider of the Year.

Division Chief of Operations Dan Wouters received the Emergency Service Provider of the Year for his work at Martin County Fire Rescue and his charity work in the community.

“Chief Wouters is dedicated to the community he serves and is a shining example of the Fire service,” said Martin County Fire Chief Joseph Ferrara.

Wouters used his experience starting the Martin County Hazardous Materials Response Team, to assist in creating the statewide Regional HazMat Response Team Program. He was instrumental in developing statewide policies and securing the funding for teams throughout Florida.

He is heavily involved in both the United Way of Martin County and in the Treasure Coast Big Heart Brigade (TCBHB). The TCBHB serves Thanksgiving meals to the less fortunate in three counties of the Treasure Coast. Wouters is involved in all of the coordination of supplies, preparation and delivery of the meals for Martin County. He is also involved in the United Way of Martin County, giving up vacation time to cook at fundraisers for the charity.

Six from Indian River Shores Department of Public Safety receive Brian Nolan Award.

Six officers from Indian River Shores were honored for saving a drowning victim last fall at a beach in Marbrisa. The victim, a 19-year-old male, was caught in heavy surf about 150 yards offshore. Public Safety Officers (PSOs) Dustin Crouch and Tedd Mooney entered the water in an attempt to save the victim, about 50 yards offshore the two were separated by a rip current. Three other officers, PSOs Chris Beaumont, Geoff Hawkes, and Officer Ken Barrett, arrived and entered the water. Sgt. Tim Dempsey arrived and supervised the rescue from the shore, guiding rescuers to the victim, as the swells made it almost impossible to see him from the water. When Officer Crouch reached the victim, the swimmer panicked, wrapping his legs around the officer and pulling him under. Officer Crouch was able to control the victim, but once the other rescuers arrived, the young man wrapped his legs around Officer Beaumont. Finally they were able to drape the victim over a backboard and proceed to shore. As they got closer to shore, a 10 foot tall wave hit them. The board was lifted and came down on Officer Barrett's head, forcing him under water. Officer Crouch was able to pull Officer Barrett back up onto the board. Shortly after that, another large wave caught the group, and Officer Crouch was lifted out of the water and slammed to the sandy bottom. He briefly blacked out, but was pulled to safety by the other rescuers.

Once ashore, the victim was in and out of consciousness, but survived. Officer Crouch, Mooney and Barrett were taken to a local hospital, treated and released. Officer Beaumont was treated at a later date.

“All of these officers recognized that the victim was in serious trouble and acted decisively in a true life or death situation,” explained Indian River Shores Town Manager Robert Strabe. “The victim is alive because of their efforts.”

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Photos:

(Group of three)

Division Chief Dan Wouters (center) is presented the Emergency Service Provider Award by Martin County Fire Chief Joe Ferrara and Bureau Chief Dan Harshburger. The award recognizes those who have served their agency with distinction and is awarded by the Treasure Coast Fire Chief Association.

(Group of seven)

The TCFCA honored six public service officers from Indian River Shores Department of Public Safety for their life saving efforts on a young man caught in rough seas at a beach in Marbrisa. Pictured, from left to right, TCFCA President Brian Blizzard, Indian River Shores Town Manager Robert Stabe, with recipients Sgt. Tim Dempsey, Officer Ken Barrett, PSO Chris Beaumont, PSO Tedd Mooney, and PSO Dustin Crouch. Not pictured, PSO Geoff Hawkes.