

Sheriff recognizes deputies for their work in 2019

February 21, 2020



Sheriff's deputies took a rare break from the action to attend the 2020 Del Norte County Sheriff's Office Award Ceremony. Deputies in full uniform trickled into the Elks Valley Rancheria, accompanied by proud family members, and awaited announcements from Sheriff Erik Apperson.

Sheriff Apperson conducted the ceremony, which was held on Wednesday, Feb. 12, to recognize deputies for noble deeds and diligent work. He also took time to acknowledge the past year's law enforcement deaths and suicides in the state.

Throughout the evening, he delivered nearly 30 awards and certificates, honored community partners and highlighted those behind the scenes of the department.

“I couldn’t be more proud or humbled by the men and women of the DNSO. I’d put this staff up against any department, and I believe that the communities we serve make up the best county in our state,” he said in his opening speech.

Among the most notable awards was the medal of honor bestowed upon Deputy Alex Pearson and Cmdr. Bill Steven for saving the life of retired California Highway Patrol Officer Jose Martinez after his life-threatening car crash.

“I think most officers would do the same thing,” Pearson said. “It’s just a matter of seeing something wrong, and you’ve got to decide whether you are going to run towards the fire or run away from it. I was raised to not just think about myself but of other people, and if I get hurt, OK. But mostly you can’t leave a man behind.”

Cmdr. Steven, who will be retiring later this year, was the recipient of multiple awards, including an award for saving a life and for a boat rescue.

“I was humbled because, you know, there were so many people in this room who really deserved some awards,” Steven said. “I try not to make a big deal out of some of that stuff, but when you get recognized once a year, it does feel good. It’s humbling in that you’re in a crowd of really good people.”

A monumental moment during the ceremony was when Sheriff Apperson invited Gregory O’Rourke of the Yurok Tribal Police Department to the front. He presented him with a shadow box depicting the historic moment on Jan. 14 when YTP officers were deputized by the DNSO.

Many heroic acts and selfless services were honored during the ceremony. Sheriff Apperson thanked the deputies, saying the community does not know how hard all of them work.

“I couldn’t be more proud of this organization or the people that make it so successful. I’m excited to see what the new year brings as 2020 will undoubtedly be historical,” Apperson said.