



Setting the Table for Chapter Involvement

Pictures by Dean Smith



(L-R) Adam Dismukes, Glenn Mitchell, George Almond, Jim Young, Chris Hoina, and Greg Savage

The PBA has long held the reputation of providing the best member benefits of any law enforcement association in the business. Along with these benefits, members can further facilitate the core values of the association by forming their own chapter. In many instances, chapters also choose to get involved with the community through various outreach initiatives and partnerships that demonstrate the dedication and commitment that officers have for public service.

Such is the case with the Cary Chapter of the NCPBA. The Cary chapter board, in their first year chose to sponsor an Officer of the Year award in honor of retired Detective George Almond. Almond, who is a PBA member, was shot in the line of duty in October of 2001. He survived the shooting and returned to duty as a detective in juvenile investigations before retiring in August of 2004. The award recognizes outstanding achievement in the areas of leadership, community service, mentoring, excellence in performance, and valor. Detective Jim Grier was the 1st award recipient

in 2006.

On March 15, 2008, Detective Jim Young was named the recipient of the 2007 George Almond Officer of the Year award in festivities at the Embassy Suites in Cary. Young was selected from a group of five finalists by the Cary chapter board. The other finalists were Chris Hoina, Greg Savage, Adam Dismukes, and Glenn Mitchell.

Young was recognized for three nominations that were brought forward by separate nominators. In the first nomination, Detective Ryan Suddueth nominated Young for his leadership in a complex investigation. Detective Young was the lead detective in an armed robbery investigation. During the investigation of the armed robbery and the subsequent arrest of a suspect, a gun was recovered that had been stolen during a home invasion. Also taken in this home invasion was an assault rifle and ammunition. If left on the street, this weapon posed a serious threat to the community and officers. According to Detective Suddueth, the information that was revealed during the investigation

created a whirlwind of activity along with increasing stress and urgency to recover the assault rifle. Detective Young provided guidance and leadership to all of those around him through his calm demeanor in an extremely stressful situation. Through tireless interviews the night of the armed robbery, Detective Young gained valuable intelligence and linked additional suspects through the coordination of efforts with other detectives and also patrol officers. These diligent efforts led to a possible location where the assault rifle was being stored, along with developing information on another unsolved robbery. A subsequent search led to recovered narcotics, the assault rifle, and ammunition. In summing up the nomination, Detective Suddueth highlighted how Detective Young worked tirelessly for several days straight to bring the investigation to a safe conclusion and how he inspired others in the process in his desire for justice. According to Detective Suddueth, "I commend Detective Young for his dedication, I respect him for his passion, and I followed him because of his leadership."

Detective Young also received



Jim Young and District Court Judge Craig Croom

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a nomination from fellow officer and firearms instructor, Officer Mike Kirn. In nominating Detective Young, Officer Kirn praised his efforts as the lead driving instructor for the agency. In that capacity, Young took the driving program to a new level and has created a program that is a resounding success. Officer Kirn offered his viewpoints through the lens of a fellow instructor and explained how Detective Young is able to capture his students' attention and to involve everyone in the training. In speaking with other officers, Officer Kirn gathered overwhelming praise for the quality of training and more importantly, Jim's ability to teach, organize, manage, and coordinate what is arguably some of the highest risk training a law enforcement officer can experience. Officer Kirn also noted that Detective Young instilled in him a level of confidence in his driving skills that he did not believe was possible. In closing his nomination, Officer Kirn said, "Our officers have become genuinely excited about driver training and have reaped the benefits of some of the best training offered anywhere in the country. That is due to Jim Young and his extraordinary abilities as an officer, an instructor and most importantly, a leader."

In a final nomination, Sgt. Randy Byrd recognized Detective Young. In April of 2007, Detective Young investigated the untimely death of a teenager who lost consciousness while staying in a hotel room. The young lady and her mother were in Cary with an AAU Basketball team from Washington state that was playing in a basketball tournament. The young lady was transported to the hospital where efforts to revive her were not successful. A few weeks later the mother took the time to write a thank

you note detailing her appreciation of Detective Young. In the note addressed to Young, she wrote the following: "I wanted to tell you that there are a lot of things I want to forget about that night, but I will always remember some things about you: your calm voice, your Mickey Mouse tie, and that you gave me a piece of gum. Your kindness has stayed with me



George Almond addressing those in attendance

all this time. We are home now and it's so very hard. But I wanted you to know that you made things a little easier in those few minutes we talked. I don't know if you have kids to hug (if you don't please hug your best friend), but continue to live as my mom taught me and how I have taught my kids. Above all else, be kind. It meant a lot." According to Sgt. Byrd, "Detective Young distinguished himself through his kindness and empathy for a fellow human being who was truly suffering with a loss. Detective Young through his actions demonstrated the highest ideals of our profession and why we are who we are. This truly exemplifies the legacy of George Almond and what this award is about."

Jim Young was born and raised in Salisbury, N.C. He became an Eagle

Scout in 1985 and graduated from North Rowan High School in 1989. Young graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1993 with a degree in the Administration of Criminal Justice. While attending UNC, he did an internship with the Chapel Hill Police Department and worked with youth in the the Chapel Hill and Carrboro Parks and Recreation Departments' basketball and baseball programs. Young started with the Cary Police Department as a patrol officer in 1994, then worked for the Greensboro Police Department from 1997 to 2001. While with the Greensboro Police Department, he was named as an Officer of the Month in 1998. He returned to the Cary Police Department in 2001 and worked as a patrol and field training officer. He currently is assigned as a detective to the Investigations and Family Services team where he works major crimes. Young is also a certified specialized driving instructor and trains Cary officers in driving maneuvers.

He was a 2006 George Almond Officer of the Year finalist. Young's maternal grandfather, J.K. Kerr, retired as a law enforcement officer in 1979, from the ABC Commission of Rowan County. He is married to Tracie Young, and they have a son named Jace.

The awards program was attended by more than 200 people and had huge support from the community. Cary Crimestoppers partnered with the Cary chapter for this year's event and held a silent auction before the evening's festivities started. A dinner complete with a jazz ensemble started what truly turned into a very special evening. The Cary Police Department Honor Guard presented the colors and Katherine Fritsch returned again this year to sing the national an-

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them. Fritsch has become a friend of the Cary chapter since singing for the first banquet, and attended with her entire family this year. Fritsch also sings the national anthem at the Carolina Hurricanes hockey games. Steve Fonke then presented the invocation and Cary Chapter President Randy Byrd welcomed those in attendance. He also recognized the hosts and sponsors of the event along with special guests in attendance who included members of the Citizens Assisting Police Team, the Cary Crimestoppers Board, Rep. Ty Harrell, Rep. Nelson Dollar, Rep. Paul "Skip" Stam, Rep. Jennifer Weiss, Court of Appeals Judge Linda Stephens, District Court Judge Kristin Ruth, District Court Judge Vince Rozier, District Court Judge Cheri Beasley, Wake County Clerk of Superior Court Lorrin Freeman, Cary Town Council Member Gale Adcock, Cary Town Council Member Erv Portman, former Cary Town Council Member Nels Roseland, Cary Police Chief Pat Bazemore, Deputy Police Chief Barry Nickalson, Major Tony Godwin, Major Dave Wulff, retired Cary Police Chief Windy Hunter, and NCPBA Executive Director John Midgett.

Byrd also read some thoughts from Mayor Harold Weinbrecht, who was unable to attend the event. According to Weinbrecht, "I was serving as an at-large Cary Town Council member the night that Officer George Almond was nearly killed while working to keep our community safe. Then, as now, I am humbled and amazed by the risks that George and so many of you take each day for the rest of us. You, along with your families, make incredible personal sacrifices because of the noble field you've chosen for your profession. To you, George, please accept my personal thanks for all you did for Cary and for the continued inspiration you provide to so many who struggle to



Gerald Owens and George Almond

overcome the most severe challenges. You truly are one of our town's living heroes. To the families of the men and women who choose a public safety career, please know that those of us on the Town Council watch and worry right along with you as your loved ones do whatever it takes to keep Cary the safest place in the State to live, work, and raise our families. And finally to the women and men of Cary's Finest, as Mayor you have my pledge to continue working hard to ensure you have the support and resources you need to do the job you've been called to do and the job that more than 128,000 people count on you for every day. Each of you here tonight makes me incredibly proud to be your Mayor and to be a citizen of Cary."

Gerald Owens was then introduced as the Master of Ceremonies by Byrd. Owens is the anchor for the 10 o'clock news on Fox 50 and the anchor of the 11 o'clock news on WRAL-TV 5. He is also the host of NC Wanted on Fox 50, a show dedicated to solving unsolved cases and capturing wanted fugitives.

According to Byrd, "Gerald's work with this show is a tremendous benefit to law enforcement and helps make the streets safe."

Before introducing District Court Judge Craig Croom as the featured speaker, Owens mentioned how honored he was to be in attendance and among law enforcement officers. Owens said, "I have the utmost respect for what you do every day and for the careers you have chosen to keep our communities safe."

Croom is a former law enforcement officer who started his career as a police cadet with the Cary Police Department while a senior at UNC. He later worked as a deputy for the Wake County Sheriff's Office before leaving that agency to attend law school at North Carolina Central University where he

graduated cum laude in 1994. Croom then clerked at the Court of Appeals before going to work for the Wake County District Attorney's Office as an assistant district attorney. Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. appointed him to be a Wake County district court judge in 1999 and he has since been elected twice. He currently presides over juvenile court and is committed to helping young people through his judicial role and in the community.

Croom gave a warm speech mixed with anecdotes and humor that highlighted the spirit of George Almond's service and the nominees' commitment to public service. In describing Almond's character, he spoke of meeting with Almond prior to the event and how he discovered one trait above all others that defines Almond, and that quality is perseverance. According to Croom, the definition of perseverance "is to persist in spite of difficulties, and he has persisted in spite of difficulties." Croom added, "I am amazed by his spirit. I am amazed at how positive he is. I am amazed by the fact that he holds no ill will towards

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anyone. I am amazed by his forgiving heart.” Croom continued with his speech by quoting an excerpt from the book of Matthew. Croom used this excerpt to acknowledge Almond’s commitment and sacrifice while recognizing that police officers are unsung heroes who rarely receive thanks despite making sacrifices every day in their jobs. According to Croom, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” In continuing his speech, he took time to personally recognize the five finalists individually and comment on how each of them has achieved greatness. Croom, in quoting Shakespeare, stated “Be not afraid of greatness; some are born great; some achieve greatness; some have greatness thrust upon them.” He also added his own remarks that personalized the quote for the audience, “And no matter what the outcome here tonight for the five finalists, you have all achieved greatness.”

Gerald Owens then returned to the podium to introduce George Almond as the guest speaker. Almond gave a heartfelt speech that recognized that the

events involving his shooting were one of the most difficult times in his life. According to Almond, the words of Helen Keller have provided a path for him. Keller said, “When one door is closed, another opens.” Almond contrasted this quote with his own personal experiences. Almond said, “When the door of my career in law enforcement closed, my fellow officers were there to open a new door for me. When the members of the Cary Chapter of the PBA told me they wanted to start recognizing outstanding officers by naming an award for me because of my commitment and sacrifice, I was humbled. This award means a great deal to me.” Almond went on to highlight the achievements of the finalists and how they are more than just officers clocking in to do a job. According to Almond, “There is more to putting on the badge and just coming to work.” “Whose life will you affect today?” was a question that Almond said he always thought about when reporting for duty. Whether dealing with a small child, teenager, or an elderly person, a police officer may be the only person that they see who cares. In a poignant ending, Almond summarized the importance of a police officer’s greater work. “People will sometimes forget what you say or what you did, but they will not forget how you made them feel.” Almond finished his speech by taking time to recognize the officers and spouses in attendance.

Gerald Owens continued with the program by recognizing the achievement of the five finalists as Almond presented each of them an awards plaque. Almond also gave his personal thoughts about each of the finalists, before being joined on stage by the 2006

award winner, Jim Grier, who presented the final award to Jim Young. In a short acceptance speech, Young offered his appreciation for receiving the award.

As a special part of the program, Nels Roseland, who had finished two terms with the Cary Town Council, was presented a plaque on behalf of the membership by Randy Byrd and George Almond. In presenting the plaque, Byrd read the inscription which sums up the chapter’s appreciation: “This plaque is presented in appreciation of your dedicated and loyal support of the Cary Police Department and the Cary chapter of the North Carolina Police Benevolent Association. Your tireless efforts have improved the quality of life for both active and retired officers. On behalf of the Cary Chapter of the North Carolina PBA, we offer our best wishes for your success in future endeavors, and we thank you for a job well done.”

After a round of door prize presentations and a word about the Police Benevolent Foundation, Brisco Gasperson gave the benediction to close a truly memorable evening.



Katherine Fritsch singing the National Anthem



Randy Byrd presenting a door prize as Katherine Fritsch and George Almond look on.

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