

Trooper of the Year — 2019

Troop 1, Post C

Master Trooper Wayne H. LaBounty

Over his 35-year career with the South Carolina Highway Patrol, Master Trooper Wayne LaBounty served in Troops 1, 2, 3 and 7. He retired from the Highway Patrol in 2003, but loved the job and agency so much that he returned to work as a temporary employee.

Through proactive traffic enforcement, Master Trooper LaBounty focuses on the primary causes of fatal collisions: speeding and seatbelt violations. In 2019, Master Trooper LaBounty issued 1,181 citations and 587 warnings, with 1,385 public contacts.

Master Trooper LaBounty has made outstanding contributions to the overall success of Post C and Troop 1. He has met frequently with county leaders and personnel, not only to advocate for their collaboration but also to help them understand the critical role of the South Carolina Highway Patrol in their community. Master Trooper LaBounty is well known throughout the Columbia area and Lexington community, and has a great relationship with schools and businesses throughout the Midlands area. When there is a traffic complaint, those that know him will ask for Master Trooper LaBounty to come and patrol the area.

Master Trooper LaBounty's willingness to be innovative and embrace change have provided his community with an extraordinary law enforcement officer, and he serves as a model for others. Master Trooper LaBounty attends Mount Horeb Methodist church in Lexington with his wife of 18 years and has two children. Master Trooper LaBounty's exemplary performance of duty and service to our state reflects greatly on the South Carolina Highway Patrol and the Department of Public Safety.

Troop 2, Post B

First Sergeant J.F. Brown

On December 30, 2019, at approximately 12:45 p.m., First Sergeant J.F. Brown was off duty when he was involved in a two-vehicle collision with an impaired driver on U.S. 25 in Greenwood County. First Sergeant Brown was stopped at a traffic light when a Dodge minivan, which was being driven recklessly, hit the left

side of his vehicle. The van continued north on U.S. 25 before exiting the roadway into a wooded area.

Immediately following the collision, First Sergeant Brown checked on the driver of the vehicle and realized that he appeared to have overdosed on an opioid-based drug. Realizing this was a life-or-death situation, First Sergeant Brown immediately began to coordinate life-saving efforts. He contacted Trooper First Class McMahon, who was in the immediate vicinity, and gave him instructions to come to the aid of the driver of the van and bring his NARCAN, due to the driver being slumped over the steering wheel. The driver had no pulse and was turning blue. Trooper First Class McMahon arrived on scene and began to assess the driver, who was still unresponsive. While assessing the driver, First Sergeant Brown observed small flakes of a blue substance in his nostrils. A sternum rub was performed and NARCAN was immediately administered to the man.

About 5 to 10 seconds after the first administration, the driver began to breathe very shallow, and a faint pulse was detected, and First Sergeant Brown continued sternum rubs until first responders arrived and a second dose of NARCAN was administered. The man admitted that he had previously snorted Fentanyl, and was taken to a hospital for further medical evaluation before being charged with driving under the influence by the Greenwood County Sheriff's Office.

First Sergeant Brown's quick and thinking and actions that day were responsible for saving a life.

Troop 3, Post D

Trooper Ephraim J. Bailey

In the early morning hours of May 18, 2019, Trooper Ephraim Bailey was assisting another trooper with a hit-and-run incident involving a pedestrian who suffered fatal injuries. It was nearing the end of his shift; however, Trooper Bailey patrolled the area, interviewed people in the community and was able to locate the vehicle involved in the hit and run, hidden behind a business. Due to Trooper Bailey locating the involved vehicle so quickly, SCHP was able to identify the suspect.

With the assistance of the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office warrant team, SCHP was able to take the suspect into custody at his mother's residence without incident, and he was booked into the Spartanburg County Detention Center within 12 hours after the collision. If not for the extra effort and immediate action of Trooper Bailey, the case could still be open and possibly never solved

Additionally, on September 17, 2019, Trooper Bailey was patrolling Interstate 85 in Spartanburg County when he was advised of a collision on I-85 southbound near the 76 mile marker. Trooper Bailey was in the vicinity of the collision and arrived so quickly that neither fire nor medical personnel had yet arrived on scene. Trooper Bailey was notified that the driver of a tractor-trailer was trapped in the vehicle. As Trooper Bailey rushed to check on the trapped driver, he observed smoke coming from the engine compartment. Trooper Bailey struggled to extricate the driver from the vehicle while a civilian used a fire extinguisher to attempt to put out the fire. Trooper Bailey noticed that the fire was inching closer to entering the cab of the tractor, and he had exhausted any and all means of extricating the driver. Trooper Bailey then retrieved his fire extinguisher to try preventing the fire from entering the cab of the truck. Trooper Bailey was unable to keep the fire from reaching the driver and, sadly, the driver did not survive the fire. Trooper Bailey risked his own life in an attempt to save another life.

Troop 4, Post B
Corporal Roland S. Bennett

On April 18, 2019 at 4:22 p.m., Blythewood TCC informed Corporal Bennett of a BOLO regarding a red Toyota Prius traveling south on I-77 into South Carolina being followed by a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department helicopter. The BOLO stated that the suspect vehicle had been involved in an armed robbery in Charlotte, North Carolina, and that the rear window had been shattered by gunfire. Corporal Bennett observed the vehicle near Exit 82 and initiated a traffic stop. The Prius refused to stop for Cpl. Bennett's blue lights and siren and a pursuit was initiated.

The pursuit traveled south on I-77 and Corporal Shank became a secondary officer near Dave Lyle Boulevard. Corporal Shank positioned his vehicle in front of the fleeing Prius in an effort to slow the vehicle down but was struck from behind by the Prius. After the intentional contact between the vehicles, Corporal Bennett performed a PIT maneuver on the suspect vehicle, but the driver of the Prius regained control after striking the guardrail and continued to flee south on I-77. Corporal Bennett again pursued the fleeing Prius until the driver attempted to exit I-77 at the 75 mile marker. The driver drove through the grass portion of the exit ramp in an attempt to elude the Troopers, where he struck a tree.

Corporal Bennett immediately began heroic efforts in an attempt to save the lives of the occupants of the Prius that had begun to burn due to the collision. Trooper Primes arrived on scene within seconds and joined the lifesaving efforts of his fellow Troopers. As the fire escalated, Corporal Bennett faced with emptied numerous fire extinguishers and used various implements, to include his bare hands, trying to extricate the occupants of the engulfed vehicle. The troopers worked as a team and directed all responding units in their life saving efforts. The Troopers were able to remove two of the three passengers from the burning vehicle.

During this event, Corporal Bennett, displayed amazing bravery in the face of danger by putting his own life at risk as he dealt with the fire while freeing two of the occupants.

Corporal Bennett is also being awarded the Medal of Valor, which is given to sworn SCDPS employees who have distinguished themselves by their acts of bravery and courage while taking great personal risk above and beyond the call of duty. The medal of valor is the highest award bestowed by SCDPS.

Troop 5, Post A Trooper First Class Hunter B. Martin

Trooper First Class Hunter B. Martin is currently assigned to Post A (Darlington/Marlboro) in Troop 5. Trooper First Class Martin works well with his fellow employees and maintains a great working relationship throughout Post A and with other law enforcement agencies. Trooper First Class Martin has a passion for law enforcement and works tirelessly to remove impaired drivers from the highways of this state. During the 2019 year, Trooper First Class Martin had many accomplishments, including a GEM Award for heroism.

On August 30, 2019, at approximately 1:50 p.m., Trooper First Class Martin drove up on a collision on S.C. 34 and Arcadia Road in Marlboro County. He was immediately approached by witnesses who advised him there was an occupant trapped in the vehicle. Trooper First Class Martin advised dispatch that he needed fire and EMS to respond to the scene, but he realized that immediate action was needed. Trooper First Class Martin approached the burning vehicle with little regard for his own safety and shattered the back window, pulling the driver from the vehicle to safety. Because of his quick actions, the subject only sustained minor burns instead of life-threatening injuries.

Troop 6, Post C
Trooper Jeb Fay

A native of Maine, Trooper Jeb Fay moved to South Carolina in 2012 to marry his wife, Katlyn and to be closer to her family. After a stint with the Beaufort County Detention Center, he was hired by the Bluffton Police Department in 2014 and joined the Target Zero Traffic Enforcement Team in 2016.

In October 2018, he was hired by the South Carolina Highway Patrol and graduated with HP Basic 106 in November 2018.

Trooper Fay is an outstanding employee who comes to work each and every day with the mindset that his enforcement actions are making a difference. In 2019, Trooper Fay issued 1,390 citations and arrested 99 impaired drivers. This is extremely impressive due to the fact that he was out of work for almost two months with a shoulder injury he suffered while participating in the Colonel's Cup Softball Game.

Trooper Fay's passion for removing impaired drivers goes beyond the arrest. His reports are immaculate, and he has built a reputation among attorneys in the area of DUI prosecution for being tough to beat in the courtroom. Trooper Fay is a certified Drug Recognition Expert, Drug Recognition Expert Instructor, and DUI/SFST instructor. He also holds certifications in Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement, Criminal Interdiction Techniques, and At-Scene Collision Investigation.

Trooper Fay was outstanding in all areas of law enforcement throughout the year, and did not allow his tremendous efforts in the enforcement area to negatively impact his administrative duties.

Troop 7, Post C
Trooper Adrian W. Hunter

Trooper Adrian W. Hunter moved from Washington state to Greenville, South Carolina, in fall 2017 and started working for the South Carolina Department of Corrections as a correctional officer, but he always wanted to be a state trooper and applied in January 2018. Trooper Hunter began his career with the South Carolina

Highway Patrol in October 2018, graduating from the Academy in February 2019 and assigned to Troop 7, Post B, in Orangeburg.

Although he is just beginning his career, Trooper Hunter has already made an impact. On May 19, 2019, he responded to a private property collision in Bowman. During the investigation, he began to question an involved party. Based on his skills, intuition and training, he determined he needed to investigate further, as the driver's statements did not make sense and were possibly false. Based on his investigation, the driver was taken into custody and booked as Jane Doe.

Furthermore, during Trooper Hunter's investigation, he determined the vehicle was registered to a subject from Georgia and found personal property inside the vehicle. The driver stated she was the caregiver for the owner. Several hours later, law enforcement in Jesup, Georgia, made contact advising they had done a welfare check at the registered owner's residence and that he had been murdered, the crime freshly committed. The driver Hunter had taken into custody was a person of interest, but it had not yet been entered into NCIC. On May 22, 2019, warrants were issued for the suspect in Georgia for murder and aggravated assault.

The level of dedication and intuition Trooper Hunter displayed in fully investigating this incident was excellent, and he went above and beyond. He represented the agency and himself with the utmost professionalism, and he is a fine example of how adhering to your training, hard work and dedication lead to success. He accomplished this just one month after being just released from his Field Training Officer.

Troop 8, Coastal Region 1

Master Trooper William C. Harman

On Nov. 26, 2019, Master Trooper W.C. Harman was on routine patrol on S.C. 31 in Horry County. At approximately 10 a.m., Master Trooper Harman observed a black and silver Chevrolet pick-up traveling south on S.C. 31 at a high rate of speed -- 84 mph in a posted 65 mph zone. Master Trooper Harman initiated a traffic stop and observed the violator yield off the right shoulder. Master Trooper Harman approached the pickup and observed a male subject exit the driver's side door attempting to locate something.

Master Trooper Harman advised the man to have a seat back in his vehicle while he spoke with another motorist that was stopped. While speaking with the other motorist, Master Trooper Harman observed the male subject from the pickup truck

again exit his vehicle and begin frantically looking behind his seat. Master Trooper Harman then made contact with the male subject, who appeared to be in a daze and somewhat confused. Master Trooper Harman also observed a strong odor of alcohol coming from the violator while he attempted to gather his information. When the driver chose not to comply with multiple requests by Master Trooper Harman to exit the vehicle for roadside standardized field sobriety tests, Master Trooper Harman made radio contact with his supervisor, Cpl. M.S. Webb, advising him of the situation and requesting immediate assistance.

Suddenly, the driver produced a large, fixed-blade knife and attempted to stab Master Trooper Harman, who immediately disengaged and presented his firearm toward the threat, giving loud verbal commands and instructing the subject to release the weapon. The driver exited the truck and continued to brandish the knife in a threatening posture. Master Trooper Harman continued to calmly reason with the driver while attempting to de-escalate the situation. A short time later, Cpl. Webb arrived on scene to provide assistance and presented his issued TASER toward the threat, instructing the subject to release the weapon. The subject subsequently dropped the knife and was placed under arrest without any further incident.

Master Trooper Harman displayed great restraint and discipline during this incident. Without question, a potential deadly force incident was avoided all in part to Master Trooper Harman's calm ability to de-escalate the situation.

Troop 9, Coastal L/Cpl. Jeffrey K. Minnix

On Oct. 21, 2019, Post C responded to an auto versus bicyclist hit-and-run that resulted in great bodily injuries to the bicyclist. Vehicle part evidence at the collision scene led to the search for a minivan. L/Cpl. Minnix was briefed on the details of the collision the following morning, and requested to canvass the area for possible surveillance videos. L/Cpl. Minnix was able to obtain several surveillance videos from businesses located near the collision scene, spoke to many individuals in the community and went door-to-door passing out hit-and-run flyers. L/Cpl. Minnix contacted the local law enforcement agencies in the area, to include the Holly Hill Police Department, and was able to gather local knowledge of possible suspects. He also provided each agency he spoke with his contact information so that any leads they discovered could be brought to his attention.

On Oct. 23, 2019, Holly Hill Police Department officers notified L/Cpl. Minnix that they had information that a possible suspect vehicle matching the description he previously gave them was possibly being stored at a “backyard” auto body shop in Berkeley County. L/Cpl. Minnix was able to locate the body shop and discovered the vehicle. He then conducted a thorough interview with the body shop owner. The interview provided MAIT with a timeline for the events surrounding the collision, the name of the driver and various other investigative information. The vehicle was seized subsequent to a search warrant and processed. While processing the vehicle, investigators found a large amount of evidence that linked this vehicle to the collision and also helped prove the involvement of the suspected driver.

L/Cpl. Minnix continued a relentless search for the driver and further evidence in this investigation. On Oct. 28, 2019, the individual believed to have been driving the vehicle at the time of the crash was located. After a long interview and interrogation process, L/Cpl. Minnix and Cpl. James of Coastal MAIT were able to obtain a full confession from the driver. The culmination of the confession and the evidence that was discovered during the course of the investigation resulted in an arrest for leaving the scene of a collision involving great bodily injury.

Without L/Cpl. Minnix’s tireless efforts, the vehicle may have been repaired and the investigation would likely have gone unsolved.

Troop 10, Insurance Enforcement Unit Master Trooper John W. Valdario Sr.

Master Trooper Valdario retired in December 2001 after more than 31 years of service to the Highway Patrol and State Transport Police. But in 2003, Master Trooper Valdario rejoined the Highway Patrol and began working with the Insurance Enforcement Unit. In addition to his duties with the Insurance Enforcement Unit, he closely monitors what is occurring around him and will volunteer without fail in assisting the local troopers with collisions and/or other calls for service.

Master Trooper Valdario continues to perform his assigned duties flawlessly. In 2019, he made 2,674 total contacts, received 2,046 suspension notices from the DMV and cleared 1,714 of those suspensions. He also was vigilant in his duties by confiscating 756 suspended vehicles’ licenses and returning them to the DMV. In addition to his regularly assigned duties with the Insurance Enforcement Unit,

Master Trooper Valdario also wrote 317 other violations and investigated several collisions in Lexington County. Master Trooper Valdario understands that proper collision investigation leads to better traffic education for the motoring public as well as reduces the workload for the troopers of Lexington County. It should be noted that Master Trooper Valdario is 73 years young and entered his 50th year of service with the state of South Carolina in 2020. This is a true testament of Master Trooper Valdario's dedication and compassion for the citizens of South Carolina.

His values and work ethic are beyond reproach. He has true compassion for everyone, regardless of their situation. Year.

Training

Sgt. Arthur Jordan

In January 2019, the S.C. Criminal Justice Academy revised its procedures requiring reserved slots for basic classes and made changes to its curriculum. These revisions meant that training now needed to be done by the agencies to encompass a majority of the SCCJA testable material. The concept of hiring SCHP classes in bulk came to an end. The ability to put trainees into the program was on a "first come, first served" basis. Sgt. Arthur Jordan worked with registration and adjusted start dates on a two-week rotating schedule to keep small groups together in the Academy. His relationship with the Academy staff allowed for SCHP to group trainees together in CJA and reserve range time and classrooms together to effectively complete six weeks pre-academy, eight weeks SCCJA curriculum and the four-week post-academy.

Sgt. Jordan would work with the Academy to recycle trainees due to failure so they would not be left behind. All of this was done with four pre-academy basic classes, one post-academy class and new hires during orientation. He would arrange the schedule to maximize instructors for each class and minimize the need for adjunct instructors from the field. Sgt. Jordan works during the week as an instructor and a facilitator for the Basic side of training and also is responsible for the safe return of all trainees every Sunday. He handles matters ranging from uniforms to class schedules to personal issues. He is always a phone call away and doesn't hesitate to assist staff or students if needed. He goes above and beyond what is requested of him.

Special Awards:

Purple Heart Award – Trooper Michael R. Burgess Troop Seven/Post B

On June 10, 2019, at approximately 11:06 p.m., Corporal R.H. Gleich and Trooper Burgess were conducting a driver's license checkpoint at the intersection of Till and Langley Roads in Orangeburg County. During their checkpoint, these troopers observed a black Honda sedan approach them. As the driver of the vehicle appeared to notice the "checkpoint ahead" warning signs, the vehicle stopped in the roadway, turned off the headlights and started backing down the roadway.

Trooper Burgess immediately activated his lights and siren and approached the vehicle. Corporal Gleich pulled his vehicle behind the violator's vehicle in a rolling roadblock to preserve the safety of the public. Corporal Gleich and Trooper Burgess approached the vehicle, giving verbal commands to the driver, which he disregarded. In an attempt to flee from the scene, the driver continuously made several evasive maneuvers to escape but his actions were clearly an intentional act when he struck Trooper Burgess with the front of his vehicle.

Trooper Burgess tried to get up, but he fell down on the highway. After realizing that Trooper Burgess sustained possible severe injuries, Corporal Gleich called for an ambulance. After being seen at The Regional Medical Center in Orangeburg, Trooper Burgess was treated for a head injury, cervical strain, an ankle and shoulder sprain, and a knee contusion and released the next morning.

The violator fled and after weeks of evading law enforcement, the violator turned himself in. He pled guilty to "Hit-and-Run, involving great bodily injury", "Failure to stop for a blue light" and "Reckless Driving."

After extensive physical therapy, Trooper Burgess was able to return to full duty on July 31, 2019.

Medal of Valor and Purple Heart

Trooper First Class Paul A. Wise Troop 4, Post B

On June 2, 2019, Trooper First Class Paul Wise was on patrol in York County when he observed an unrestrained driver on Mt. Gallant Road. Trooper First Class Wise activated his blue lights; however, the driver refused to stop and a pursuit

was initiated. The driver made several turns in an attempt to elude Trooper First Class Wise and ultimately turned on to India Hook Road. At the end of India Hook Road, the vehicle attempted to turn into a campground, where the driver lost control and struck a post, disabling the vehicle.

The fleeing driver exited his vehicle and started shooting at Trooper First Class Wise. One of the first rounds fired into the patrol vehicle's windshield struck Trooper Wise in the chest, where his ballistic vest stopped the bullet. After the initial volley of shots directed at Trooper First Class Wise, the assailant ran toward Trooper First Class Wise and then ran past the now-disabled patrol vehicle, all the while firing multiple rounds at Trooper First Class Wise. Even after being struck by the initial gunfire, Trooper First Class Wise saw the rapidly approaching shooter, exited his patrol vehicle in an attempt to find additional cover, and started returning gunfire from beside his patrol vehicle. Trooper First Class Wise was able to strike the shooter with gunfire, causing the assailant to fall to the ground approximately 20 yards from Trooper First Class Wise's patrol vehicle.

Trooper First Class Wise, not knowing the severity of his own medical condition at the time, calmly and heroically directed responding units as to the best way to approach the active scene to ensure the safety of all responding units. Trooper First Class Wise was not only struck in his ballistic vest but received other injuries in his head and neck area as well. Trooper First Class Wise requested medical assistance for himself, as well as the assailant, while he stayed behind cover, since he did not know what other possible dangers he faced. Once the backup units arrived, the suspect was placed in handcuffs and under arrest. Trooper First Class Wise recovered and returned to work shortly after the incident.