

S.C. Highway Patrol Trooper of the Year 2022

Troop 1, Post D

Trooper First Class D.D. Burris-Johnson

Troop 1, Post D nominates Trooper First Class D.D. Burris-Johnson for the 2022 Trooper of the Year. Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson began his career with the Highway Patrol in 2019. On short notice, he is quick to assist by taking additional shifts; he uses his time wisely, and is very proactive. TFC Burris-Johnson stays physically fit and wears the Class A uniform with pride. TFC Burris-Johnson excels at his job duties without being asked and without a promise of reward. He has a genuine concern for the motoring public.

On one occasion while off duty, Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson performed life-saving actions to help a victim of a violent crime. On June 6, 2022, he heard several gunshots in his neighborhood and witnessed a vehicle fleeing the area. Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson went outside and found a teenage male with several gunshot wounds lying on the ground. Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson called 911 and tied a t-shirt around the victim's leg, attempting to control the bleeding. TFC Burris-Johnson, and the victim's brother, loaded the gunshot victim in Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson's personal vehicle and attempted to transport him to a local emergency room. Responding deputies with the Richland County Sheriff's Department intercepted the trio en route. Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson and the brother put the victim on the ground, and a female Corporal with RCSD handed Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson a tourniquet. With help from the corporal, he applied the tourniquet just prior to EMS' arrival. The Sheriff's Department later informed Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson that the victim sustained five gunshot wounds, with one striking the victim's femoral artery. They gave the victim five units of blood at the hospital and he survived the shooting.

First Sgt. A.L. Antley wrote in his nomination form, "I believe that Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson's actions go well above the normal call of duty. This exemplifies the oath that law enforcement officers take when commissioned, and the selfless service that we expect all troopers to provide to the communities we serve. Trooper First Class Burris-Johnson was not in uniform and was off duty when he became involved in this critical incident. It truly shows his character and dedication to his community to take immediate action that, without a doubt, saved a life."

Troop 2, Post C

Trooper A.D. Piszczatoski

Trooper A.D. Piszczatoski is a 2016 graduate of Wayne Valley High School in Wayne, New Jersey. He was employed as a golf caddie at a local golf course and an inventory stocker at Home Depot before accepting an offer from the South Carolina Highway Patrol in 2021.

On January 17, 2022, Trooper Piszczatoski was working US-25 South in Edgefield County when he observed a Ford F-150 pickup traveling at 70 miles per hour in a 55 miles per hour zone. Trooper Piszczatoski fell in behind the F-150 and activated his blue lights. He immediately noticed the vehicle swerve erratically as it pulled onto the shoulder. Although Trooper Piszczatoski had only been a trooper for a few months, his recent Highway Patrol training and fresh law enforcement instincts alerted him that this would not be a routine traffic stop.

Once the vehicle stopped, the passenger door of the pickup suddenly swung open, and a female passenger, along with the male driver, fell out onto the ground. The driver began screaming hysterically, saying that he was on the way to the hospital. The female passenger, however, appeared lifeless. Trooper Piszczatoski asked the driver several times, "What's going on?" but the driver was agitated and visibly distressed. Trooper Piszczatoski then briefly examined the non-responsive passenger. He determined she was not breathing and did not have a pulse. He also noticed her skin color had a blueish tint. He asked the driver if the passenger had possibly overdosed, and the driver confirmed that she had. Trooper Piszczatoski instructed the driver to perform CPR while he called for an ambulance.

Once an ambulance was summoned, Trooper Piszczatoski administered a dose of NARCAN to the passenger, but it was ineffective. He continued CPR and administered a second dose while reassuring the frantic driver that help was on the way. Within minutes of the second dose, the passenger miraculously began breathing on her own and slowly regained consciousness. While waiting for the ambulance to arrive, Trooper Piszczatoski made the disoriented passenger as comfortable as possible. He even put his SChP bomber jacket over her to keep her warm. The ambulance arrived and transported the young woman to a medical facility, where she has since recovered. Additionally, Trooper Piszczatoski used his training in DUI detection, determined that the male driver was impaired, and placed him under arrest for driving under the influence.

His troop commander, Captain J.T. Morf, interviewed Trooper Piszczatoski shortly after this event to commend him on a job well done. He was quick to credit his former field training officer (FTO), Corporal J.A. Ackerman, who frequently reminded him to “Remain calm and always expect the unexpected.” He also credited his Eagle Scout training with helping him stay focused in stressful situations. In his nomination form, Captain Morf stated he was “extremely proud of Trooper Piszczatoski’s heroic actions, which saved this woman’s life.”

Troop 3, Post C

Corporal C.D. Terry

Corporal C. D. Terry is a dedicated law enforcement professional. He is a motivated, hard-working State Trooper who truly makes a difference in the community that he serves. Corporal Terry comes to work each day with a determination to educate, protect, and serve the citizens of Greenville and the State of South Carolina. He takes pride in leading Team A and training fellow officers and recruits, serving as a firearms instructor, speed measurement device instructor, and Drug Recognition Expert instructor.

On numerous occasions during throughout the year, Corporal Terry was asked to assist with training fellow SCDPS employees and law enforcement officers from across the southeast, with his training responsibilities taking him away from the post. In December 2022, Corporal Terry traveled to Winston-Salem, North Carolina to assist with Drug Recognition Expert practical application training. Corporal Terry was also called upon to assist with in-service training and was tasked with completing numerous field proficiencies for fellow Troopers. Despite the demands of these extra duties, Corporal Terry was able to effectively lead his team and guide them in a positive direction. Corporal Terry works alongside his team and is respected by his peers. During 2022, Corporal Terry conducted 477 enforcement stops, investigated 273 collisions, and apprehended 15 impaired drivers.

On April 24, 2022, Corporal Terry responded to a hit-and- run collision in Greenville County. A bicyclist had been seriously injured after being hit by a vehicle that fled scene of the collision. Details on the suspect vehicle were limited; however, based on debris left at the scene, investigators determined the color of the suspect vehicle. In the days following the collision, Corporal Terry returned to the area of the collision to observe traffic, and subsequently located the suspect vehicle

as the driver returned to work at a nearby business. As a result, the suspect was identified and arrest warrants were obtained. If not for Corporal Terry's dedication, this case would likely have remained unsolved.

Corporal Terry's training, experience, and dedication to Greenville County and the State of South Carolina should be commended. Corporal Terry embodies the core values of the South Carolina Highway Patrol: *Selfless Service, Integrity and Responsibility*, and we are a better agency because he serves with us.

Troop 4, Post B

Trooper First Class S.M. Durrenberger

Trooper First Class S.M. Durrenberger started his law enforcement career with the South Carolina Highway Patrol in February 2018. Since reporting to Post B, TFC Durrenberger has been a great asset to the Post and Troop 4, consistently going above and beyond to help his peers and supervisors. TFC Durrenberger serves as a Field Training Officer (FTO) and was the first to volunteer to go back through the FTO program when it was revamped, to ensure he had an opportunity to be a training officer. TFC Durrenberger volunteered and attended the MAIT associate class and has responded to numerous MAIT callouts to assist our region MAIT team with collision scenes. Since receiving this training and having the opportunity to be a part of complex collision investigations, he has brought back valuable knowledge to assist his team with investigations.

After SmartCop rolled out, TFC Durrenberger ensured he was well versed with the program. Since then, he has become the Post and Troop guru, helping anyone if they have a problem and being the first to assist in getting the issue resolved. With this knowledge TFC Durrenberger is now an instructor in SmartCop, helping teach new trainees and serving as the Troop 4 representative on the Special Projects and Technology Team. TFC Durrenberger also used his computer skills and took it upon himself to develop a spreadsheet to input information from SCUTTIES and export vital information needed to complete ticket audits. TFC. Durrenberger also created a troop-wide tow list to import into officer profiles so they could create Towed Vehicle Reports in SmartCop.

TFC Durrenberger, throughout the year, has volunteered to work extra shifts and has been flexible with his schedule to help ensure shifts had coverage to keep Post B operational in times of shortage. TFC Durrenberger is always willing to work on

special assignments and help fill overtime slots when requested by outside entities. Even after working off-duty assignments this year, he still is always willing to help his peers and, if need be, take enforcement action. TFC Durrenberger apprehended an impaired driver and assisted with a fatal collision scene on his way home from working an off-duty assignment. This action speaks volumes of his commitment to the South Carolina Highway Patrol. Throughout 2022, TFC Durrenberger investigated 509 collisions, Issued 1,072 citations, and 576 warnings, and apprehended 12 impaired drivers.

Captain A.S. Darby states, “It is my opinion that TFC Durrenberger consistently goes above and beyond to try and help his peers and the supervisors of Post B to be successful. TFC Durrenberger’s dedication and duty to serve reflects great credit upon himself and the South Carolina Highway Patrol as he displays the core values of Selfless Service, Integrity, and Responsibility.

Troop 5, Post B

Trooper First Class J.L. Baker

On August 9, 2022 at 10:54 p.m., Trooper First Class J.L. Baker responded to a collision on SC51 (Pamplico Hwy) in Florence County involving two motorcyclists striking a car that turned in front of them. Once he arrived on the scene, Trooper First Class Baker exited his patrol vehicle and spoke to a Florence City Police Officer in front of his patrol vehicle. As he was speaking with the officer, a black Nissan Versa drove around emergency vehicles at a high rate of speed into the active collision scene.

The Nissan Versa crossed into the oncoming lanes of the four-lane highway, striking several pedestrians, including an EMS Paramedic and one of the motorcyclists from the original collision, who was on a gurney. The Nissan then struck the Florence City Police Officer and TFC Baker. The EMS Paramedic was launched into the left front of TFC Baker’s patrol vehicle, sadly dying as a result. The motorcyclist on the gurney, to whom the paramedic was tending, also died.

TFC Baker was transported by EMS to MUSC Health Florence Medical Center for injuries received to his head, both arms, a dislocated right shoulder, and right knee. The driver of the Nissan was charged with two counts of reckless homicide.

During the entire event, Trooper First Class Baker demonstrated exemplary poise and situational awareness. Both TFC Baker and the involved Florence City Police Officer appeared to assist each other in moving out of the way of the suspect vehicle. Had either of the officers failed to move, they would most certainly have sustained fatal injuries as well. In addition, Trooper First Class Baker has demonstrated an excellent attitude as he recovers from his injuries.

Troop 6, Post B

Trooper D.R. Brown

After exiting the U.S. Marine Corps in 2015, Trooper D.R. Brown knew that he once again wanted to protect and serve; this time not in the military and abroad, but here at home, among his fellow citizens, and in particular, the highways of South Carolina. With that in mind, Trooper D.R. Brown began applying with South Carolina Highway Patrol as early as 2014, and did so several more times. Perseverance paid off and in September 2020, he was hired as a Trooper and has proven to be a valuable asset to the agency.

Trooper Brown is a family man, living peacefully in Dorchester County with his wife and 7-year-old daughter. He is the Captain of his own fishing vessel “Nova Rae” and spends a significant portion of his free time on the deep sea. He is an outdoorsman and a firearms expert, with aspirations of owning land in the near future where he can enjoy his time living in a rural setting.

Trooper Brown has defined the meaning of true work ethic and excellence; his relationships with the public in Troop 6 are outstanding and he has received numerous commendations, many times in writing, detailing and praising a job well done. Just as quickly as he can treat the public with kindness, compassion and empathy, he can also handle a darker, more dangerous criminal patrol—often making drug and gun arrests in an effort to maintain safety and peacefulness in society. He has been involved in several seizures of money associated with drug trade. A review of his 2022 enforcement efforts show he issued 2,351 cases, 807 warnings, and made 43 DUI arrests. In addition, he made 35 drug cases and seized nine guns, proving his dedication to keeping the highway systems of South Carolina safer. His co-workers respect him, and senior troopers regard him as a motivator of the post. He currently operates one of the Troop’s specialty ACE vehicles and has also recently become certified as a motor officer for the department.

In summary, Trooper Brown is a model law enforcement officer and sets the standard for what it takes to be successful as a Trooper with the South Carolina Highway Patrol. Although a reasonably new trooper compared to some, he listens to his superiors, he leads when necessary, and continues to enjoy the job while excelling.

Troop 7, Post B

Trooper First Class M.R. Burgess

Troop Seven's nominee for the 2022 Trooper of the Year is Trooper First Class M.R. Burgess. Shortly after his high school graduation in Long Island, New York, TFC Burgess attended Suny Empire State College before taking a job as a warehouse manager for All-Tech Fasteners. As a teenager, TFC Burgess and his family would vacation in South Carolina, and it was at an early age that he knew he wanted to live in South Carolina one day. He grew tired of working in the warehouse in New York and decided to pursue his dream in law enforcement, applying to the South Carolina Highway Patrol in June of 2017. TFC Burgess became one of *South Carolina's Finest* in 2018 when he joined the South Carolina Highway Patrol and was stationed in Troop Seven Post B (Calhoun/Orangeburg). He is a certified Field Training Officer, a Standardized Field Sobriety Test Instructor, and a Stop Stick Instructor. TFC Burgess also maintains his certification as a Specific Skills Instructor with the SC Criminal Justice Academy.

TFC Burgess is a valuable asset to Troop Seven and is very dependable, responsible, and a flexible team player. He fully supports the mission of the South Carolina Highway Patrol and the goal of Target Zero. TFC Burgess utilizes his training and knowledge to assist motorists, enforce traffic laws and criminal laws. He comes to work every day and gives more than 100% of his efforts. He volunteers for overtime nearly every day that he is off-duty in an effort to assist his fellow squad members during shifts with low manpower. TFC Burgess makes himself available for any needs the Post may have and is always willing to help in any way.

On September 23, 2022, while assigned to assist SLED in their Allendale Crime Suppression initiative, TFC Burgess and other law enforcement officers were dispatched to the Dale Apartments in the City of Allendale, in reference to a shooting. Once on scene, TFC Burgess located a shooting victim who had been

shot in the leg. TFC Burgess' training and quick thinking took over and he applied a tourniquet to the victim's leg, stopping the bleeding before EMS arrived and took over. This heroic action taken by TFC Burgess, no doubt, stopped the bleeding and saved this person's life. As the events of this stressful incident unfolded, TFC Burgess remained calm and professional and was able to utilize his training to secure a successful outcome.

Troop 8, Post B

Master Trooper K.M. Small

The Troop 8, Post B nominee for the 2022 Trooper of the Year is Master Trooper Kenneth M. Small. At an early age, Master Trooper Small developed his passion for serving and a devotion to duty, and after graduating High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. In 1978, Master Trooper Small said goodbye to his hometown in the rural Pee Dee area of South Carolina and then later arrived at the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina. He successfully graduated recruit training and then began his military career. Among his many stops during his enlistment were assignments to the Marine Corps Air Station in Hawaii and North Carolina. Master Trooper Small completed a 6-year enlistment of service and attained the rank of Sergeant upon his separation in 1984. It was in the same year that Master Trooper Small began his career as a South Carolina State Trooper.

Master Trooper Small is currently a member of the Troop 8 Insurance Enforcement Unit, and has served with distinction and honor while assigned to the unit. In 2022, Master Trooper Small was selected to assist in training a new trooper that was re-assigned to the unit from Troop 5. This trooper is now a successful member of the unit and this is in no small part due to the efforts of Master Trooper Small. Master Trooper Small can also be counted on to step up as one of the senior officers in the absence of his squad's supervisor. His leadership and prior years as a supervisor with the patrol are invaluable. He also knows the importance of planning and using his accrued annual leave. Typically, when troopers take their earned annual leave, more times than not it is spent on vacations or family outings. Every October he takes his annual leave in conjunction with the South Carolina State Fair, allowing him to earn what he calls "valuable Christmas money."

While at the State Fair, he is treated no different than a younger trooper, and is assigned to different traffic control points. In his nomination letter, his supervisor

mentioned how he has witnessed firsthand as Master Trooper Small took a new trooper under his wing and mentored him while at the fair. Master Trooper Small also assists with a neighbor of his by driving him to various medical appointments. He is well respected in the Pee Dee area and the troopers assigned to Troop 5 seek out his guidance when it is asked of him. He can also be counted on to represent the patrol in a positive light and lend a helping hand when needed. Master Trooper Small has been a trooper for nearly 40 years and is still as energetic and devoted as he was when he was hired in 1984.

Troop 9, Post D

Corporal W.M. Lee

The Troop 9 nomination for Trooper of the Year for 2022 is Corporal W.M. Lee.

On September 3, 2022, Pee Dee MAIT was notified of a hit-and-run with great bodily injury on Sandridge Road in Horry County involving an unknown vehicle and a bicyclist. Corporal Lee's call-out team responded immediately to the collision scene. They located parts from the unknown vehicle, including a passenger side mirror along with a wheel well cover. After speaking with the scene supervisor about the area being common to locals, Corporal Lee began to ride around the area in hopes of locating the unknown vehicle. After riding down several roads in the immediate area, Corporal Lee stopped at an RV park security guard shack and inquired about continuing his search inside the park. Upon gaining access to the park, Corporal Lee located a vehicle of interest parked at a camper. Corporal Lee noted the vehicle had damage consistent with parts that were collected at the collision scene. He also noticed a blue paint transfer on the vehicle consistent with the blue framed bicycle. Corporal Lee made contact with the people inside of the camper and later obtained a confession from the driver who struck the bicyclist. Corporal Lee also located a video from the guard shack showing the driver passing through the gate earlier in the night, with the damage on his vehicle.

On several other occasions throughout the year, Corporal Lee has taken small headlight fragments from hit-and-run scenes and put them back together piece by piece, slowly reconstructing portions of the headlights from the pieces found at the scene. Corporal Lee then took the reconstructed headlight pieces to local salvage yards and walked around comparing them to different make and model vehicles until he located a similar headlight. By doing this tedious work, Corporal Lee has

been able to identify the year, make, and model of several at-fault vehicles. This work has helped to solve several hit-and-run cases, and allowed the Highway Patrol to bring closure to victims' families. Corporal Lee is a great asset not only to Troop 9, but also to the Highway Patrol as a whole.

Troop 10, Community Relations, Recruiting and Employment Unit Lance Corporal L.M. Butler

The Community Relations, Recruiting and Employment Unit (CRREU) nominates Lance Corporal L.M. Butler for Troop 10 Trooper of the Year. Lance Corporal Butler joined the South Carolina Highway Patrol in 2016. In 2022, she served as the statewide recruiter for the Highway Patrol, attending numerous recruiting events in an effort to attract quality applicants to apply for a position with the Highway Patrol. One initiative she spearheaded was visiting National Guard armories around the state during their drill weekends. This initiative gave L/Cpl. Butler a chance to speak to military servicemen and women about a career with the South Carolina Highway Patrol.

L/Cpl. Butler also attended colleges, universities, community events, and workforce job fairs throughout the state. She regularly attends PAT testing for new applicants and answers questions from potential applicants through emails and phone calls. L/Cpl. Butler's efforts greatly impacted the agency receiving 1,040 applications within this past year.

Outside of her recruiting responsibilities, L/Cpl. Butler is a servant at heart. She enjoys participating in community projects and happily volunteers with the ROC-SOLID foundation program, which helps to build playground equipment for children fighting serious health issues.

In November of 2022, L/Cpl. Butler transitioned to the Troop 5 Community Resource Officer (CRO) position. This new position allows her to continue to use her skills as a recruiter as well as represent the Highway Patrol during safety talks and media interviews. L/Cpl. Butler always professionally represents the South Carolina Highway Patrol and is an ambassador for our agency.