

SC Highway Patrol Medal of Valor Award Narratives

Senior Trooper T.M. McChesney

Senior Trooper T.M. McChesney received the Medal of Valor for his actions on August 6, 2024.

Senior Trooper McChesney received a BOLO for a wrong-way driver on Interstate 20 near Fairfield Road in Richland County. Senior Trooper McChesney immediately began a rolling roadblock to slow traffic down. A Richland County deputy was traveling east on Interstate 20 near mile marker 68 and swerved to avoid the wrong-way driver. The deputy turned around and started traveling west in the eastbound lanes to catch up with the vehicle.

Senior Trooper McChesney made a split-second decision to put his life at risk and stop the vehicle before it traveled head-on into the traffic behind him. As the vehicle approached his stopped patrol car, he accelerated quickly and struck the rear driver side of the wrong-way driver, disabling the vehicle and keeping the public safe from danger. The collision disabled Senior Trooper McChesney's patrol vehicle.

An investigation determined that the wrong-way driver was under the influence of alcohol, and she was arrested. The driver made a choice to drive while impaired, and if it wasn't for Senior Trooper McChesney's act of valor, the drunk driver could have injured or killed someone. Senior Trooper McChesney showed true selfless service with this act of bravery and courage by putting himself at risk of serious injury to protect others who were traveling behind him that night.

For his bravery, and his willingness to place himself in harm's way to protect the motoring public, Senior Trooper T.M. McChesney is awarded the South Carolina Department of Public Safety's Medal of Valor.

Lance Corporal J.T. Wood

On December 22, 2024, L/Cpl. Wood was on routine patrol on Interstate 20 in Lexington County when he noticed and stopped a wrong-way driver who was intent on hitting another vehicle head-on. His quick actions and decision-making prevented a situation that would have likely ended with an innocent person, or himself, being seriously injured or killed.

When L/Cpl. Wood noticed the wrong-way driver entering I-20 from Longs Pond Road traveling west in the eastbound lanes, he quickly made a split-second decision to put himself in harm's way to protect the lives of others.

Without hesitation, he used his patrol vehicle to strike the suspect's vehicle in the driver's rear portion of the vehicle in order to stop it and prevent others from being injured. Amazingly, L/Cpl. Wood and the driver were not injured during this incident. It was determined later that the suspect was mentally unstable and admitted they wanted to hit someone's vehicle head-on when they got behind the wheel.

L/Cpl. Wood put himself at risk of serious injury to protect others, doing so without hesitation, and that goes above the call for duty. For his heroic action in stopping a dangerous wrong-way driver, L/Cpl. J. T. Wood is awarded the South Carolina Department of Public Safety's Medal of Valor.

Corporal W.C. Lewis and Lance Corporal C.J. Arnold

Just after midnight on November 30, 2024, Charleston Telecommunications Center received a call about a possible impaired driver on North Road in Orangeburg County. Charleston TCC continued to provide updates as Cpl. Lewis and L/Cpl. Arnold responded to the area, where they located the vehicle on Redmond Mill Road near Bull Swamp Road.

Cpl. Lewis initiated a traffic stop after seeing the vehicle drive left of the centerline and without its front left tire. After initially pulling off to the shoulder, the suspect vehicle sped away as Cpl. Lewis and L/Cpl. Arnold exited their patrol vehicles. This prompted a pursuit that lasted just over a mile and a half, before the suspect ran off the left side of the roadway and into a densely wooded area.

Cpl. Lewis and L/Cpl. Arnold started to conduct a felony traffic stop when L/Cpl. Arnold noticed that the vehicle appeared to be on fire. As they approached the vehicle, they noticed the suspect was still inside and unresponsive. Both troopers grabbed their fire extinguishers and tried to suppress the fire, which by that point was already burning out of control.

With the suspect trapped inside the locked vehicle, and the fire rapidly growing, L/Cpl. Arnold broke the right rear passenger side window and unlocked the door. He then entered the vehicle, ultimately reaching and unlocking the front passenger door. Cpl. Lewis then opened the front passenger door, grabbed the suspect's arm, and pulled him out of the vehicle. L/Cpl. Arnold made his way back out of the vehicle, at which point he and Cpl. Lewis dragged the suspect away from the fire and to safety.

Dash-cam footage from inside one of the patrol cars shows the flames engulfing the suspect's vehicle within seconds of the troopers pulling him out of the vehicle. The driver was treated for

his injuries and later charged with DUI, failure to stop for blue lights, a seatbelt violation, and driving under suspension. Thankfully, Cpl. Lewis and L/Cpl. Arnold only received minor injuries to their hands.

The quick thinking and bravery of Cpl. Lewis and L/Cpl. Arnold undoubtedly prevented a tragic outcome. Without hesitation, these troopers put the life of another before their own, displaying the definition of bravery.

For their selfless devotion to saving the lives of others, without regard for their own safety, we commend Cpl. W.C. Lewis and L/Cpl. C.J. Arnold, and award them the South Carolina Department of Public Safety's Medal of Valor.