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Citizen on Patrol Tommy Thomas Earns Top Award

One shift as a member of the Perris Citizens on Patrol volunteer in March 2010 was enough to convince Tommy Thomas.

He was hooked.

Since then, the 54-year-old has donated more than 1,050 hours of his time to the COP, which earned him the 2016 Bob Hayes Award, which was presented to him by Perris Police Chief Brandon Ford in a March 16 ceremony at the City Senior Center.

The honor caught Thomas off guard.

"I don't know what to say," Thomas said in a chat shortly after receiving the Hayes award, named in memory of a longtime Public Safety Commissioner. "I didn't know I was going to receive it but I'm honored. It's very nice and I appreciate it."

Thomas was introduced to the COP by his good buddy, Gary Loomer.

Since joining, Thomas has worked traffic control at major accidents, crime-scene security, DUI checkpoints, missing children and adult searches and has volunteered at parades and other City events. The night before taking home the Hayes Award, he spent more than six hours securing a crime-scene while police processed evidence and searched for an armed robbery suspect.

Thomas said his motivation is simple.

"I like to help people and the City of Perris treat us great," he said. "When we're on the job, a lot of people come up and thank us. That makes you feel good."

In remarks made to Perris elected officials and others at the awards ceremony, Ford said COP and Perris Posse volunteers have contributed more than 3,000-hours in the last year, resulting in major savings to taxpayers. He praised the volunteers as selfless, committed to serving and tireless.

"They are incredible," Ford said. "The security in any community rests in community engagement. This community enjoys an extraordinary level of engagement and commitment. The Citizens on Patrol and Mounted Posse volunteers are incredibly helpful to us."

Thomas grew up in Riverside and recently retired from his job as a motorcycle escort for funeral services. His family includes three daughters and 10-grandchildren. For fun, he rides a Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

His retirement means he'll have more free time. He knows how he'll spending some of it.

"I'll be around," he said.



Perris Police Chief Brandon Ford presents Citizens on Patrol member Tommy Thomas with the Bob Hayes Award during a March 16 ceremony at the Perris Senior Center.

Other award winners included:

COP members Crystal Yakkey and Pat McAleavy; Outstanding Service Award.

The pair were called to a tragic fatal shooting in which a 13-year-old boy accidentally killed his brother. Over nearly 10 hours, Yakkey and McAleavy assisted law officers by comforting family members. At one point, McAleavy returned to the residence to pick up medication for the 13-year-old. Both women are mothers themselves and handled this emotionally challenging assignment in a professional and humane manner. Yakkey joined the Citizens on Patrol in 2014 and has 108.5 hours of volunteer service. McAleavy is an original member of the group, having joined in 1998 and donating more than 4,200-hours of service.

COP member Gary Loomer; Merit Award.

Loomer joined the COP in 2009 and has accrued 1,035-service hours since. His duties have included working traffic accidents, crime-scene security, searching for missing children and adults, DUI checkpoints, parades and special events.

COP member Penny Rasmussen; Merit Award.

Rasmussen joined the COP in 2005 and has accrued 995-service hours. Her duties include traffic control at major accident, searching for missing children and adults, DUI checkpoints, parades and special events. She also has worked as a Tribal Liaison.

Perris Posse member Kimber Cadenhead; Award of Excellence.

Cadenhead joined the mounted posse in 2012 and has accrued 215 hours of service. She serves currently as the group's vice-president and training coordinator. She has completed numerous training courses, including one that allows her to evaluate other members during qualifications.

Perris Posse member Gerri Farris; Award of Excellence.

At 79, Farris is the senior member of the posse, with 26 years of service and 5,400 hours of service. She joined the posse in 1990 and served in Riverside and Jurupa before the Sheriff's Department relocated the posse to Perris. Perris law officers say of Farris' continued service: "To see a person of this age serve with enthusiasm and excitement is nothing short of inspiring." Of the seven Mounted Posse Troops in Riverside County, Farris is the oldest and longest-serving volunteer.



Gerri Farris, 79, receives her Award of Excellence from Police Lt. Ed Chavez and Chief Brandon Ford. Farris has donated more than 5,000 hours of volunteer service over 26 years to the Mounted Posse, which moved to Perris from Jurupa Valley in 2010.

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