



ILLINOIS STATE POLICE

NEWS RELEASE

Brendan F. Kelly - Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ILLINOIS STATE POLICE HONORS THOSE DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

Top Officer, Special Agent, Telecommunicator, Forensic Scientist, and Public Safety Staff Member Honored for Their Actions and Accomplishments During 2023

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois State Police (ISP) Director Brendan F. Kelly gathered today with ISP staff and their families, local law enforcement officers, and distinguished members of the public for the ISP Awards Ceremony. The ceremony was held to recognize individuals for their significant contributions and dedication to public safety.

Director Kelly presented individuals with the following awards; Director’s Award of Distinction, Medal of Valor, Medal for Honor, Meritorious Service Medal, Achievement Medal, and Lifesaving Medal. Each award recipient was recognized for their exemplary service to ISP and the residents of Illinois.

“ISP’s greatest strength is our people – troopers, specials agents, telecommunicators, analysts, forensic scientists – and I am proud and honored to work alongside them all,” said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. “Integrity, Service, and Pride are ISP’s values and the people we are honoring today embody those values. Thank you to those who have answered the call to pursue justice and protect the public.”

In addition to the awards that were presented, eight ISP employees received special recognition for exemplary service during 2023. Special recognition was given to the ISP Officer of the Year, Special Agent of the Year, Telecommunicator of the Year, Forensic Scientist of the Year, and Public Safety Support Staff Member of the Year.

2023 Officer of the Year, Trooper Sterling W. Ross



Trooper
Sterling W. Ross

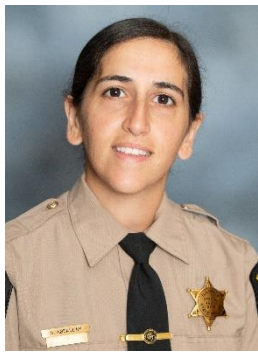
Currently assigned to Troop 3, Trooper Sterling Ross exemplifies the tenets of ISP – Integrity, Service, and Pride. Trooper Ross’ unwavering dedication to serve the people of Illinois is reflected through the daily performance of his duties, his criminal arrest record, and his willingness to mentor his peers. His dedication to removing impaired drivers from our roadways is exemplified through his enforcement numbers.

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Trooper Ross is a four-year veteran of ISP and his passion for removing impaired drivers from Illinois roadways is abundantly clear. Trooper Ross participated in a rigorous multi-week course to become a Certified Drug Recognition Expert, to further his ability to remove impaired drivers from the road and assist other officers with their impaired driving investigations. His efforts earned him recognition by the Illinois Chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists for his superior Driving Under the Influence (DUI) enforcement efforts. Trooper Ross removed 162 intoxicated motorists from Illinois roadways, making him one of the highest DUI enforcement officers. Trooper Ross was also involved in several significant incidents in 2023, many of which involved the recovery of illegal weapons. Trooper Ross is a Field Training Officer who shares his experience and knowledge with probationary troopers. He also provides training to officers for Standardized Field Sobriety Testing as a certified instructor.

Trooper Ross maintains outstanding self-initiated activity. In 2023, Trooper Ross made 162 Driving Under the Influence arrests and 15 criminal arrests, seized six firearms, and wrote more than 740 citations.

2023 Special Agent of the Year, Special Agent Ola O. Abdallah



Special Agent
Ola O. Abdallah

Special Agent Ola O. Abdallah, assigned to the Zone 6 Public Safety Enforcement Group (PSEG) Homicide Unit of the Division of Criminal Investigation is recognized by her supervisors and peers alike as an intelligent, competent, and hard-working investigator frequently sought out to assist in long-term investigations.

In 2023, Special Agent Abdallah played a pivotal role in investigating numerous violent crime cases, including first-degree murder and reckless homicide. She initiated eight criminal cases, the majority involving complex homicide investigations, resulting in 27 arrests and multiple charges in each case. As part of the Zone 6, Homicide team, her efforts helped achieve a 67% clearance rate for PSEG homicides, a remarkable accomplishment that received national recognition.

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2023 Telecommunicator of the Year, Telecommunicator Specialist Kenneth R. Parnell



Telecommunicator
Specialist
Kenneth R. Parnell

Telecommunicator Specialist (TCS) Kenneth R. Parnell proudly serves ISP at the DuQuoin Communications Center and is a great mentor to new Telecommunicator Trainee (TCT).

TCS Parnell is recognized for his careful handling of an incident with a TCT taking a call of a man wielding a chainsaw towards bystanders. The call signal was lost and then filled with static, but TCS Parnell was able to decipher that a taser had been deployed and that a trooper had requested backup. He initiated calls to local police departments and once officers were on scene, he was able to verify the safety of the trooper. After the situation was under control, he effectively communicated to his supervisors the details that unfolded and alerted the oncoming shift about the details of this incident.

A noteworthy highlight from TCS Parnell’s award-winning year was his handling of a call where a confidential informant was battered by a suspect who was shooting at police officers. His professional demeanor, controlled voice, and conveyance of relevant information were integral components in helping to bring a high-risk situation under control.

2023 Forensic Scientist of the Year, Forensic Scientist III Jamie L. Edwards



Forensic Scientist
III
Jamie L. Edwards

Jamie Edwards serves as a Forensic Scientist III in the Latent Prints section at the Springfield Forensic Science Laboratory. Edwards demonstrated unwavering commitment to service in 2023 by distinguishing herself as a model of professionalism, knowledge, and service within the Division of Forensic Services, Forensic Sciences Command.

Edwards has been integral in assisting with remediating a critical quality concern as the Quality Review Coordinator for the statewide Latent Prints section.

Edwards’ expertise, leadership skills, and positive attitude makes her the ideal Latent Prints Command Advisory Board Chairperson. She has been essential in monitoring and integrating the national forensic science standards developed by the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Sciences into the Latent Prints section. Edwards led updates to the procedures manual and Laboratory Information Management System, while ensuring section members were informed of developments and actions. This directly contributed to the reaccreditation of the Forensic Sciences Command laboratory system.

Edwards was chosen to be on the Illinois Forensic Science Commission Subcommittee on Technology. Edwards also has evaluated the feasibility of new, advanced technologies for the section such as the RECOVER Latent Fingerprint System and the Full Spectrum Imaging System. Edwards is an International Association for Identification Certified Latent Print Examiner.

2023 Public Safety Support Staff Member of the Year, Cheri L. Strode



Public Service
Administrator
Cheri L. Strode

Cheri Strode served as a Public Service Administrator for the Patrol and Investigative Records Section within the Program Administration Bureau. In this capacity, Strode oversaw a dedicated team of personnel responsible for processing thousands of records requests each year. Strode was adept at identifying and resolving challenges, as well as providing direction and support to her staff.

As the supervisor of the Patrol and Investigative Records Section, Strode possessed an unparalleled depth of knowledge regarding the various report-writing systems utilized by ISP over the past 40 years. This historical insight is invaluable, as it allows her team to effectively manage records that may otherwise be difficult to locate.

Strode's unwavering commitment to delivering outstanding service to ISP, other law enforcement agencies, and the community has been acknowledged and is deeply valued. After 41 years of dedicated service to ISP, Strode retired on June 30, 2024.

Below is the complete list of 2023 ISP Award recipients:

Director's Award of Distinction

Deputy Devin B. Elliot
Charles T. Veatch

Medal For Valor

Sergeant Boguslaw H. Kramarz
Special Agent Christopher E. Ehlers
Trooper Stuart M. Baits
Trooper Alec R. McCarthy

Medal For Valor (Cont')

Trooper Timothy W. Harper
Trooper Neil A. Kramper

Purple Heart

Sergeant Boguslaw H. Kramarz
Trooper Alec R. McCarthy

Medal For Honor

Master Sergeant Vincent N. Martinez
Trooper Jacob M. Hoffman

Lifesaving Medal

Master Sergeant Jeffry B. Gray
Master Sergeant Mark R. Flack

Sergeant Gregory M. Wilson
Special Agent Michele M. BellTrooper Thomas C. Carlock
Trooper Michael W. Mueller
Trooper Stanislaw Smalec
Trooper Craig D. Bastert
Trooper Benjamin R. Montgomery
Trooper Blake C. Jones
Trooper Haley C. Russo
Trooper Cameron R. Boers
Trooper Cesar J. Esparza
Trooper Alexander J. Leaf
Sergeant Joshua W. Kober
Trooper Abel A. Franco
Trooper Damein R. Cunnungham-Watson
Trooper Jason P. Czub
Trooper Wayne S. Hocking
Trooper William S. Reagan Jr.

Department Commendation

Forensic Scientist III Brian F. Parr
Forensic Scientist III Heather E. May
Forensic Scientist III Jamie L. Edwards
Forensic Scientist III Angela D. Nealand
Forensic Scientist III James E. Riggins
Forensic Scientist III Casey L. Craven
Telecommunicator Specialist Melanie E. Clark
Telecommunicator Specialist Alexis N. Duncan
Telecommunicator Specialist Kenneth R. Parnell
Telecommunicator Specialist Julie R. Friend
Telecommunicator Specialist Mary E. Burton
Telecommunicator Specialist Leah K. Grenoble
Graphic Arts Designer Advanced James G. Chandler
Executive Secretary II Adria A. Martin

Department Commendation (Cont')

Public Service Administrator Cheri L. Strode
Special Agent Zachary L. Hanratty
Special Agent Joshua P. Shirley
Special Agent Water T. Willis
Special Agent James K. Robinson
Special Agent Chad E. Carlson
Special Agent Ola O. Abdallah
Special Agent Justin M. Haney
Special Agent Rex A. Roberts
Special Agent Antoine L. Finner
Trooper Jeremy S. Mueller

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Trooper Simeon L. Siudyla
Trooper Hayden E. Combs
Trooper Nicholas A. Whitbeck
Trooper Micah C. Ransom
Trooper Michael R. Kucharz
Trooper Sterling W. Ross
Trooper Cameron R. Boers
Trooper William P. Smith
Trooper Aaron D. French
Trooper Stephen T. Feurer
Trooper Haley C. Russo
Trooper Paul A. Howard
Trooper Jagger C. Ellis
Trooper Darrell C. Scruggs

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