

Erickson named Hermitage Officer of the Year

Chief reinstates annual department award

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HERMITAGE – Police Chief Eric Jewell can remember only one Officer of the Year award in Hermitage during his years on the force.

So when he became chief in 2016, one of his goals was to revive the annual award.

“As chief, I know that my officers are out there working hard, and they’re committed to law enforcement,” Jewell said. “It’s just a small token of how I can award the best of the best for doing a great job.”

And, last year, Jewell's first full year as chief, he decided to reinstate the award every year.

"All my officers do a great job," Jewell said. "Choosing one person out of a pool of great people is very difficult."

This year, Patrolman Justin D. Erickson is the one person chosen.

Erickson was nominated by his immediate supervisor, Sgt. Jon Wilcox. Adam Piccirillo, deputy chief of operations, endorsed the nomination. He was presented with a plaque, certificate and uniform pin at the end of 2017.

Erickson is from the McKean County area and was hired in 2009 to work his first law enforcement position in Hermitage. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of Pittsburgh and graduated from Mercyhurst Police Academy.

Erickson works in the department's patrol division.

"He is a go-getter," Jewell said. "He has made numerous DUI and drug arrests. He's got a nose for driving under the influence offenses and drug enforcement."

As a standardized field test instructor for driving under the influence, Erickson teaches police officers to catch drunken drivers.

He has received numerous commendations for exemplary service related to drug enforcement and de-escalation.

Jewell said that Erickson is responsible for countless DUI arrests and seizing illegally possessed guns.

Erickson also serves on the Mercer County Drug Task Force. He is always seeking further criminal justice education to stay on top of his field, Jewell said.

“He’s also well-rounded and has a positive personality,” Jewell said.

“He represents this city well. When you are a good guy and a great cop combined, you have a great police officer.”