



# Illinois State Police hosts awards ceremony

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SPRINGFIELD – Illinois State Police (ISP) Director Leo P. Schmitz was joined by ISP command staff members to recognize the noble contributions made by sworn and civilian members of the Illinois State Police, government agencies, and the public. The Awards Ceremony was held at Hope Church in Springfield, Illinois, and paid tribute to the acts of heroism and professionalism displayed by the men and women who were honored during the event. Each award recipient was recognized for their exemplary service to the ISP and the citizens of Illinois.

"The men and women of the Illinois State Police are dedicated individuals who are committed to protecting and serving the citizens of Illinois. Their professionalism and pride for this agency are evident in their actions both on and off-duty," said ISP Director Leo P. Schmitz. "We are grateful for the outstanding efforts and sacrifices of all of these extraordinary men and women," he added.

Among the award recipients were six individuals who received special recognition for exemplary service: Special Agent William B. Blackburn – Officer of the Year; Telecommunicator Specialist Cheryl A. Miles – Telecommunicator of the Year; and Forensic Scientist Mary Beth Thomas – Forensic Scientist of the Year.



### **Officer of the Year, Special Agent William B. Blackburn**

As a member of the Zone 7 Methamphetamine Response Team (MRT), Special Agent Blackburn opened 50 cases in 2015 and completed 70 criminal arrests. He responded and dismantled 78 labs, seizing 18,128.4 grams of methamphetamine on 38 occasions. He also conducted 18 formal and numerous one-on-one drug presentations.

Special Agent Blackburn worked with federal prosecutors on two significant cases during 2015. A federal drug conspiracy entitled Operation Centralia Crew resulted in 26 federal indictments and convictions on numerous drug charges. He also worked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on a multi-year federal drug conspiracy entitled Operation King Pencil, resulting in the sentencing of a specific target to 156 months in

federal prison on drug-related charges. As an expert witness, Special Agent Blackburn has testified in multiple federal cases. Special Agent Blackburn looks for ways to improve himself and his team while striving to promote their safety and the safety of our citizens.



### **Telecommunicator of the Year, Telecommunicator Specialist Cheryl A. Miles**

In May, 2015, the Pontiac Communications Center received a phone call from a subject threatening to set off bombs in the Ashkum and Gilman area. Ms. Miles was an integral part of the team that handled this situation. She managed all of the radio and telephone

traffic for all four districts within the Pontiac Communications Center for over an hour. This effort allowed the other Telecommunicators to focus on identifying and tracing the caller.

Another example of Ms. Mile's professional demeanor during high-stress incidents occurred on September 17, 2015. Ms. Miles again played an integral role in an emergency situation involving a suicidal subject. A woman called into the Pontiac Communications Center reporting an acquaintance of hers just texted he was going to commit suicide. The caller only knew the suicidal subject's name and that he lived in Illinois. While the subject's cell phone was being traced, Ms. Miles used social media and other ISP resources to track down the despondent subject at an address in Streator. The local police department was contacted and responded to the address. He was then transported to a hospital for an evaluation.

Ms. Miles is a valued and loyal employee who is clearly committed to her role as a telecommunications professional with the Illinois State Police.



### **Forensic Scientist of the Year, Forensic Scientist Mary Beth Thomas**

Ms. Mary Beth Thomas is a Forensic Scientist III in the Latent Print section at the Rockford Forensic Science Laboratory. Her dedication, integrity, leadership, and pride are demonstrated by her quality work and unwavering commitment to serve criminal justice agencies statewide.

Ms. Thomas not only possesses an exceptional ability to perform thorough, high quality forensic analysis on latent print cases, she does so with noteworthy productivity. In 2015, she distinguished herself as the top casework producing scientist in the statewide Latent Print section. Remarkably, she accomplished this while simultaneously assisting with a complex quality assurance project within the Forensic Sciences Command.

Ms. Thomas has an excellent reputation with law enforcement agencies, attorneys, and judges. She is a dedicated employee who upholds the highest standards while consistently providing exceptional service to the ISP and the criminal justice community.

[Click here to view a complete list of nominees and winners.](#)