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Attending the Lifesaving Awards Ceremony are, from left, South Bureau Capt. John Witt, Deputy Dennis Chuck, Deputy Jason Roberts, Deputy Chris Griego, Lt. Holly Perez, Deputy Scott Schneider, Deputy Armando Guzman, Deputy James Chambless, Detective David McAllister, Deputy Elton Simmons, Deputy John Sands and North Bureau Capt. Patrick Jordan.

## Nine Transit Sheriff's Deputies Receive Lifesaving Awards

- Three Deputies Share Their Experiences

By Laura Kloth  
Staff Writer

(July 29, 2009) Nine Los Angeles Sheriff's deputies who work with Metro were among the 40 deputies recently honored July 14 with a Lifesaving Award and uniform pin for performing life saving rescues over the past year.

Some of those whose lives were saved were present at the ceremony to thank the deputies and listened as Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca lauded their heroism.

"There is no such thing as a life that is 100 percent secure," said Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca at the presentation. "There are thousands of heroic deeds that go unrecognized, but today you shine within the Department and within the community. I am very proud of you."

Last year, North Bureau Deputy John W. Sands was taking his uniform in to be cleaned at a laundry in Chatsworth when he noticed a 10-year-old boy pop a piece of candy into his mouth.

A few seconds later, the boy began gasping for breath, and signaling that he was choking. The boy's father had stepped away to the restroom and the only employee in the cleaners was busy in another part of the shop.

"I knew I had to do something. I grabbed him and pulled him toward me,

and immediately started the Heimlich," Sands said.

**Prayer and training**

After several attempts, the boy was unresponsive, went limp and began turning purple. With three sons of his own, Sands felt compelled to keep trying and then began to pray.

"I resorted back to my training, and began the thrust maneuvers trying many times," he said, adding he was willing to break the child's ribs to get him breathing.

Sands was finally able to get the candy dislodged from the boy's throat, when the father returned. Explaining the situation, the father began to cry and said, "Oh my God, you saved my son's life."

Sands left the cleaners deciding not to report the incident. As it turned out, the boy's father is a Los Angeles Police Department sergeant who tracked Sands down to thank him and report the incident to his supervisor.

"I'm glad I was at the right place, at the right time," Sands said, noting that he hoped someone else would do the same for his own sons in a similar situation.

**Day-to-day heroism**

South Bureau Deputy Elton E. Simmons was on his motorcycle patrolling the Metro Blue Line when he noticed an angry truck driver blowing his horn after a female driver had cut him off, and was nearly struck from behind.

The woman, apparently disoriented, suddenly slowed down with the wheels of her car butting up against a berm separating the light rail tracks from traffic.

"I was yelling at her to stop the car, and got around on the driver's side and started banging on the window," Simmons said.

A few moments later, the woman was finally able to stop and put her car into "park" gear, but, a few moments later, shifted back into "drive" and started moving forward. Slowly rolling her window down, Simmons was able to reach into the car, switch off the ignition and remove the keys.

Paramedics were summoned and determined the woman had gone into diabetic shock. After treatment by paramedics, she began to respond, thanking Simmons for saving her life.

"I told her now you owe me. Leave your car here, and go get you some food," Simmons said.

The 23-year employee of the Sheriff's Department, Simmons said he was happy to help but was somewhat surprised by his award, since he deals with "these kinds of things" all the time.

**Saved by the belt**

North Bureau Deputy Christopher J. Griego and his partner were patrolling the North Hollywood Station on the Metro Red Line last September when they noticed a man leaning over a guardrail on the mezzanine level.

"His back was facing toward us. I thought he was a maintenance guy changing a light," he said. "We got closer and realized he was distraught

and kept saying he wanted to kill himself.”

Suddenly, the man began slipping. Realizing he was falling, he began struggling to pull himself back over the guardrail. Griego and his female partner grabbed the man, and began yelling for assistance from passersby.

“Once I grabbed his belt, we were able to slip him back up,” he said. With the mezzanine close to 30 feet over the rail, Griego predicted, the man would have easily killed himself or seriously injured someone else in the fall.

Other recipients of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department Lifesaving Award were: David E. McAllister, Scott A. Schneider and Armando A. Guzman, all of whom assisted heart attack victims; Jason W. Roberts and Dennis R. Chuck, who prevented suicide attempts; and James T. Chambles, who performed a rescue from a burning vehicle.

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