

FARMINGTON HILLS OFFICERS

**ERIC BUCKBERRY, MICHAEL CONNOLLY, MICHAEL MEISTER,
ANDREW PLEMMONS, THOMAS SHIVAK & CHRISTOPHER WEISS**

On April 16 of last year Farmington Hills officers working the midnight shift were dispatched to a family residence to check out a domestic assault report. The initial responders expected to be confronted with a violent situation. The 911 caller, a 17-year-old boy, told the dispatch operator that his estranged 19-year-old adopted brother and a second assailant had broken into the house and were beating members of his family with a baseball bat.

What the officers found at the location was far worse than they could have imagined. The scene was described as “one of the most horrific any officer may encounter in his or her career.”

Over the minutes immediately following their arrival, the officers discovered the body of the father of the household, Robert Cipriano, who had been brutally beaten to death, and two others – a mother and son – who had suffered life-threatening head injuries. They located one of the suspects in the home and learned that the other was at-large in the area. There were two uninjured victims: the 911 caller, who had been hiding from the suspects when he contacted police, and his 6-year-old sister.

This was the start of what came to be called “The Cipriano Case” by the media, an ongoing crime story that shocked the suburban community where it occurred and made headlines for weeks. The highly professional and outstanding job performances of six officers who played key roles on that crucial first night earned all of them special recognition.

Officers Michael Meister and Eric Buckberry were first on the scene.

Through a window next to the front door they saw 6-year-old Isabella Cipriano and called for her to let them in. When she tried to do so she was knocked to the floor by a subject, later identified as Mitchell Young, who then ran upstairs to a bedroom. The little girl got up and let them in. They quickly took her out of the house and out of harm’s way.

That done, Meister and Buckberry secured Tanner Cipriano. At the time they did not know he was the 911 caller. Shortly thereafter they took the suspect, Young, into custody. They searched the upstairs, then the basement, looking for the second suspect, Tucker Cipriano. They learned that Tucker Cipriano was no longer in the house, but the officers found Mrs. Rose Cipriano, the mother, and her son, Salvatore. Both were severely injured. After clearing the residence of any further threats to family members, other officers, themselves and medical emergency responders, Meister and Buckberry assisted the semi-conscious mother and battered Salvatore until medics took over their care.

Both mother and son survived their injuries.

It is important to note that subsequent investigation revealed Tucker Cipriano and Mitchell Young had planned to kill the entire family and steal all of the money and valuables they could find.

Officer Meister and Officer Buckberry therefore likely saved the lives of four members of the Cipriano family. They acted with commendable professional expertise, bravery, and calmness under dangerous circumstances.

When he arrived at the scene, **Officer Christopher Weiss** saw Isabella Cipriano standing in the road, wearing a blood-soaked nightgown. He quickly secured her in his patrol car to provide the best available temporary protection. He then entered the house and conducted a search of the main floor, in order to supplement the searches of the second floor and basement. After clearing the main floor he drove Isabella to the police station. He then returned to the Cipriano house to provide security for arriving medics.

Officer Weiss's actions protected Isabella Cipriano and swiftly removed her from a terrible, traumatic situation. He demonstrated compassion and bravery while implementing sound tactics.

Officer Tom Shivak teamed with Officer Weiss in searching the main floor of the house for possible additional suspects. Officer Shivak, recognizing that he and his colleagues at the scene were potentially in danger, then conducted perimeter

security outside. He knew that the second suspect, Tucker Cipriano, had brutally attacked his own family, was possibly armed with a rifle, and was at-large.

He unhesitatingly performed his duties with professionalism and bravery.

Officer Andy Plemmons, instantly understanding the dangerous possibilities he and his fellow officers were facing, unhesitatingly joined the searches of the upstairs and basement. Once those areas were cleared, he met a K-9 team that had been dispatched by the Southfield Police Department and once again put himself in harm's way. He, the dog and its handler set out in the dark through unfamiliar terrain in an effort to track the at-large suspect, Tucker Cipriano, who was possibly armed and certainly dangerous.

Officer Plemmons displayed commendable professionalism and courage throughout the incident.

Officer Mike Connolly worked with fellow officers in the search of the home's interior. Knowing that Tucker Cipriano was murderously dangerous, potentially armed and possibly nearby, he provided security for the medical teams as they brought the injured victims from the house to their vehicles. Once this process was finished, he rode in the medic truck transporting suspect Mitchell Young. At the hospital he used his personal phone to take photos of the suspect before hospital personnel cleaned him up, thereby documenting Young's condition at the time he was brought in.

Officer Connolly stayed with the suspect throughout his treatment and obtained numerous unsolicited statements that subsequently were ruled to be admissible evidence by the Oakland County Circuit Court.

Officer Connolly's actions reflected his bravery, experience, tactical expertise and professional efficiency.

These six officers -- Eric Buckberry, Michael Connolly, Michael Meister, Andrew Plemmons, Thomas Shivak and Christopher Weiss – have earned our admiration, gratitude and special recognition. We honor them with POAM's Distinguished Service Awards.

#####

