

WESTLAND OFFICER BURKE LANGE & SERGEANT RICHARD KUMMERT

The stakes are high in the world of illicit drugs. Dealers constantly take huge gambles in order to make big profits. Not the least of their risks is the ongoing threat of being arrested, convicted and sentenced to long stretches in prison.

Thus it's no wonder that a crack cocaine dealer reacted with wild desperation when Westland Police Officer Burke Lange and Sgt. Richard Kummert pulled his minivan over last Oct. 15. Lange was injured and easily could have been maimed or even killed when the subject suddenly hit the gas and raced down busy Venoy Road, endangering numerous innocent people. Fortunately, the dealer, himself, ended up getting by far the worst of the deal.

The two officers were assigned to make the traffic stop and arrest the subject, who had just sold crack to an undercover officer. After the dealer pulled to the curb and stopped, pretending to comply, Officer Lange approached the man and ordered him to put up his hands. Sgt. Kummert came to the driver's side to help take him into custody.

When his door was being opened the subject quickly lowered his hands and tried to shift into "drive." Officer Lange immediately reached through the open driver's side window and tried to dislodge the man's grip from the shift lever.

However, he was in such an awkward position he couldn't gain sufficient leverage. The subject managed to shift into drive, slam down the gas pedal and speed away.

Unfortunately for Officer Lange, and ultimately much more unfortunately for the fleeing dealer, Lange was involuntarily along for the dangerous ride. During the struggle for the gearshift, the officer's arm had become entangled in the driver's sweatshirt. He was pinned against the door jamb, his body painfully twisted and bent as he was being dragged at a high speed.

Naturally fearing for his safety under the perilous circumstances, Lange had a choice – either hope for an extraordinarily lucky break and risk great bodily harm, perhaps death – or take the only action which stood between being powerless and asserting some control over his fate. He chose the latter option.

With his free hand he managed to fire a round from his service handgun, striking the subject in a shoulder. This stunning wound prompted the driver to cut his vehicle hard to the left, which in turn disengaged Officer Lange. Despite his injured arm he ran back to his patrol car and gave chase. He and Sgt. Kummert pursued the speeding minivan through Westland, the City of Wayne and into Inkster, where it turned into a residential neighborhood.

The subject was driving so recklessly there was no doubt he was placing innocent civilians, both motorists and pedestrians, in grave danger. Because of this threat, Officer Lange requested and received Sgt. Kummert's permission to use his

patrol car to immobilize the man's vehicle. He then managed to cause a controlled crash, at last ending the chase, and the subject was taken into custody.

After Officer Lange's injured arm was treated at a local hospital he was released the same day.

The incident didn't end nearly as well for the arrested crack dealer. He subsequently pled guilty to eight felony counts and is currently a Michigan Department of Corrections inmate.

Officer Burke Lange, you acted with outstanding courage and an indomitable will to succeed, despite dire circumstances, in arresting a dangerous drug dealer. Sgt. Richard Kummert, your professional leadership and excellent decision-making in the heat of an ongoing emergency was crucial to closing this incident without civilian injuries or property damage.

The POAM proudly presents you both with its 2013 Distinguished Service Awards.

#####

