



# MINNESOTA POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*MEDIA AVAILABILITY: MPPOA Executive Director Brian Peters is available for in-person, computer, or phone-based interviews*

## **Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association names Matson, Priebe ‘Officer of the Year’ - Gazelka, Rosen named ‘Legislator of the Year’ - K-9 Bravo receives Bravery and Courage Award**

(Alexandria, Minn.) - On Saturday, June 12 at its annual convention in Alexandria, Minnesota, the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) announced its Officer of the Year and Legislator of the Year awards for both 2020 and 2021. (Their annual convention wasn't held in 2020 due to the pandemic.)

The nominations for MPPOA Officer of the Year are based on “heroics, outstanding service, or distinguished community involvement in service.” Recipients were selected by the MPPOA Board of Directors from many nominations and announced publicly on Saturday, June 12. The award is considered a very high honor, as it is from the largest association representing public safety professionals in Minnesota.

### **2020 MPPOA Officer of the Year: Waseca Officer Arik Matson**

Waseca Police Officer Arik Matson is the recipient of the 2020 MPPOA Officer of the Year award. He was [shot and nearly killed in the line of duty](#) on January 6, 2020 while responding to a report of a suspicious person. He continues rehabilitation from a Traumatic Brain Injury while inspiring officers and [working to pass stronger penalties for certain crimes](#) at the Minnesota State Capitol.

MPPOA Executive Director Brian Peters said, “Officers run towards dangerous situations every day and Arik’s demonstrating courage and bravery not only as an officer, but in his recovery. We are all Matson Strong.”

### **2021 MPPOA Officer of the Year: St. Cloud Officer Ryan Priebe**

St. Cloud Police Officer Ryan Priebe is the recipient of the 2021 MPPOA Officer of the Year award. He is recognized for his exemplary and ongoing efforts to provide community safety, particularly in St. Cloud’s South Side neighborhood, and [his heroic actions the night of June 14th, 2020.](#)

Officer Priebe is a 14-year veteran of the St. Cloud Police Department with specialized training as an instructor in the use of force, defensive tactics, and firearms. He was also selected for the St. Cloud Police Department’s Community Out Post (COP House) Team which focuses on community engagement and crime reduction through proactive enforcement and relationship building.



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One of his nominators wrote, "Officer Ryan Priebe is one of the most pro-active, driven officers in the St. Cloud Police Department and has distinguished himself among others as a leader not only by example from his work ethic but has been the lead trainer in the department's academy, shaping our new hires to properly prepare them for when they hit the road." Another nominator said, "Ryan Priebe exemplifies what a police officer is and should be. We're proud to recognize his tireless and selfless service. His perseverance and dedication to this community and this profession are an example to all."

## **2020 MPPOA Legislator of the Year: Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka**

Senator Paul Gazelka (R-East Gull Lake) has served as the Minnesota Senate Majority Leader since 2016.

MPPOA Executive Director Brian Peters said, "Senator Gazelka is an incredible champion of law enforcement officers at the state capitol. His thoughtful approach to legislation prioritizes keeping communities safe and supporting those who protect and serve in law enforcement. Thank you, Paul Gazelka, for having our six."

Senator Gazelka said, "Minnesota's rank and file police officers are incredible professionals who work every day to keep citizens across the state safe and provide a strong ally to victims of crime. I'm honored to be able to lift up their voices at the Capitol and make sure they have the support, resources, and policies that provide for a safer, stronger community for everyone."

## **2021 MPPOA Legislator of the Year: Senator Julie Rosen**

Senator Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont) is currently serving her 19th year in the Senate and is Chair of the Senate Finance Committee as well as the Legislative Pension Commission.

MPPOA Executive Director Brian Peters said, "Basically, Sen. Julie Rosen is an advocate for every cop in this state and a fighter for increased public safety. She has steadfastly stood against attacks on police officer protections, pensions, benefits, and more. When faced with proposals that make the police profession untenable or unreasonably dangerous, Sen. Rosen took a leading role to stop them. Sen. Rosen is an incredible partner and we're pleased to recognize her efforts with this award."

Senator Rosen said, "Public safety professionals put their lives and their hearts on the line to keep our communities safe all across the state. They deserve our gratitude, and I was so proud to have been a part of the legislature showing our thanks and appreciation."

## **2021 Bravery and Courage Award: K-9 Bravo, Anoka Police Department**

On February 21, 2021, Anoka Police Officer Jake Sorteberg and his K-9, Bravo, were among those called to assist Blaine Police with a call that began as a shoplifting report but escalated when two suspects carjacked a truck and fled. The pursuit up Highway 65 ended when the suspects' vehicle left the road near Braham. One suspect was apprehended, but the other continued to flee on foot, and Officer Sorteberg deployed Bravo. The suspect fired a gun, striking Bravo in the neck.



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Kevin Short, the attorney for Anoka Police Officer Jake Sorteberg, told 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS Sorteberg's partner, Anoka police K-9 Bravo, "played a critical role in this situation and very nearly saved everyone's lives."

"Bravo was restraining the suspect, who had momentarily dropped his weapon and then recovered the weapon and fired a shot directly into Bravo's neck," Short said. "I believe the suspect then turned the gun on other officers at the scene."

Since the shooting, Bravo spent time recovering and retraining and in May, returned to duty full-time.

MPPOA Executive Director Brian Peters said, "Both Bravo and Officer Sorteberg acted heroically and exactly how they were trained to do. Today we recognize them for their outstanding bravery and courage."

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The Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) represents Minnesota's 10,000+ public safety officials who hold active law enforcement licenses in the state of Minnesota. Members include police officers, correctional officers, dispatchers, and firefighters. MPPOA is the largest association representing public safety professionals in the State of Minnesota.



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